

 *Hugo Award Winner*

# NIEKAS

42

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SCIENCE FICTION AND FANTASY



## USUFORM ROBOTICS

ANTHONY BOUCHER'S  
FUTURE HISTORY  
Joe R. Christopher

\$3.95



# NIEKAS #42

Hugo Award Winner

SCIENCE FICTION AND FANTASY

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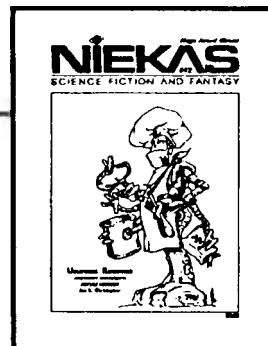
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Founded 1962 • Hugo Winner 1967



# Of Cons & Hugos

## Bumbejimas

by Edmund R. Meskys

Noreascon III is now history. It was both Sandy's and my fifteenth worldcon. While my first was Newyorkon in 1956 and hers was St. Louiscon in 1969, she missed far fewer than I.

The Boston fen pulled it off well despite many problems. When the Sheraton dumped Boskone two years ago they also tried to renege on their contract with MCFI (Massachusetts Convention Fandom, Inc.) for Noreascon. It took considerable legal expense to force the Sheraton to honor its contract. The Sheraton managed to force the concom to pay for many extra, expensive, security guards. The hotel and Hynes Convention Center also had very strict catering and corkage requirements which put a crimp in social events.

The Prudential Center is a good location for a con because inexpensive restaurants and groceries are very convenient. The NIEKAS crowd ate a number of times at the Pour House bar and grill directly across from the Hynes, and the Pru itself had a Brighams, two Au Bon Pains, a Ground Round, and (I believe) a muffin place. Also there was a Star 24-hour supermarket within the center.

It is a shame that the Sheraton has taken such a dislike to fandom. This makes it very unlikely that there will be another Noreascon. A couple of years ago there had been joking references to a *Bozton* in '98 bid but the Sheraton-Hynes combination is essential for a con to take place.

The Boston fen put on excellent cons, efficiently run, at which attendees have a good time. Why else were Boskones pushing 4000 attendees when the concom had to change the con? Some things, like eliminating open parties with booze, were forced on the concom to satisfy the hotels by keeping down the walk-in teenage crowd. The Boskone committee also went back to basics to emphasize literary stf rather than keep Boskone a (not so) miniature worldcon. A worldcon has to appeal to all fen, media, print stf, comics, costuming, gaming, etc.; and Boskones had, before the ax fell, diversity, scope, and size approaching that of a

“

*The universe is  
perverse. We wanted  
a Hugo and didn't  
get it, while  
Charleston, South  
Carolina, didn't want  
one but got it.  
ajb*

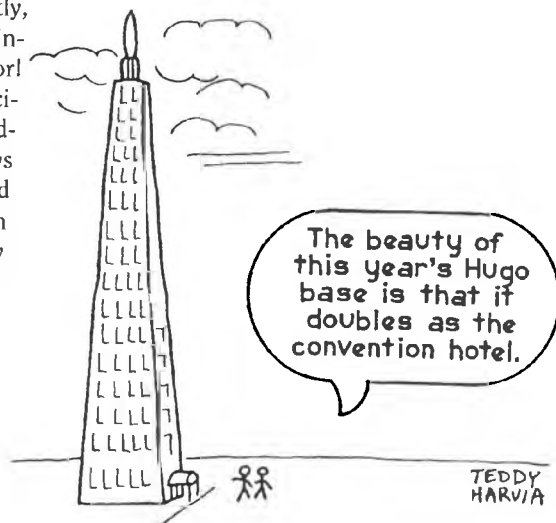
worldcon. This contraction has engendered some hostility and a new group has started a new con in Boston, called Arisia, in direct competition with Boskone. Originally it was supposed to be held on the same weekend as Boskone; but they couldn't get hotel space, and it is going to be the week after. The Boskone people wish them the best of luck and are glad of the additional pressure taken off of their con. Others object to the strict rules, mostly imposed by mundane considerations, that Boskones have had to impose. A mock Boskone XXXX flyer is in circulation implying, not very subtly, that the NESFen are fascists. For instance Albert Speer is Guest of Honor!

Virtually everybody closely associated with NIEKAS was there, including David Palter and Pat Mathews whom we rarely see. Even Sherwood Frazier was there for his first con in about eight years. Absent were Harry Andruschak, John Boardman, Anne Braude, Diana Paxson, and Fran Woodard. Twelve of us were in three adjacent rooms in the Back Bay Hilton, across from the Sheraton. Jane Sibley and her group were in the Sheraton.

Every night the concom had a major event. Boxboro fandom

was infamous for wild, elaborate, parties every Boskone, which survived the contraction and drying of the con. Friday night they held Louis Wu's birthday party. They had most of the second floor of the Hilton and had an electronic music environment with video light show in one room, a live band in another, and other environments. Featured were several people in Pierson Puppeteer costumes. As we entered and left the hotel several times that evening the line to get in stretched over a block in length. Finally, at midnight, it was gone, so Todd Frazier, Larry Laflam, my son Stanley, and I went in. The noise was too much for Stanley and me so we left rather hastily and went to the Orlando bid party. Did see Drew Whyte there, whom I had not seen in several years. He is now living in Brazil. The cash bar there, and at other functions, was very high priced—\$4 for a mixed drink and \$3.25 for beer. All events were catered by the hotels or Hynes and the prices were uniformly high, give or take a quarter.

There was no con suite with free soft drinks and goodies; instead, a large room in the Hynes, set aside for mingling, was made into an indoor replica of a park with astroturf and park benches. It had a vending stand set up which sold dogs and burgers, soda and beer. For catered items the prices and qual-





ity were excellent. For \$2.75 I had a giant hamburger which was flame broiled and very tasty.

The con had a number of interesting exhibits on fan history. Bruce Pelz had put together a display of (virtually) all the Hugos from the first in 1953 to the present. Only four years were missing from the display. The first was handmade by Milt Rothman on

Other exhibits included old fanzines, including a copy of NIEKAS 10 and a *Locus* so early that it included Dave Vanderwerf and me as coeditors. "50 years of Worldcons" included official publications and banquet photos. Visitors were asked to confirm identities in the photos for a permanent record.

On a more mundane (!?) note there was a video loop of the Neptune flyby. I understand

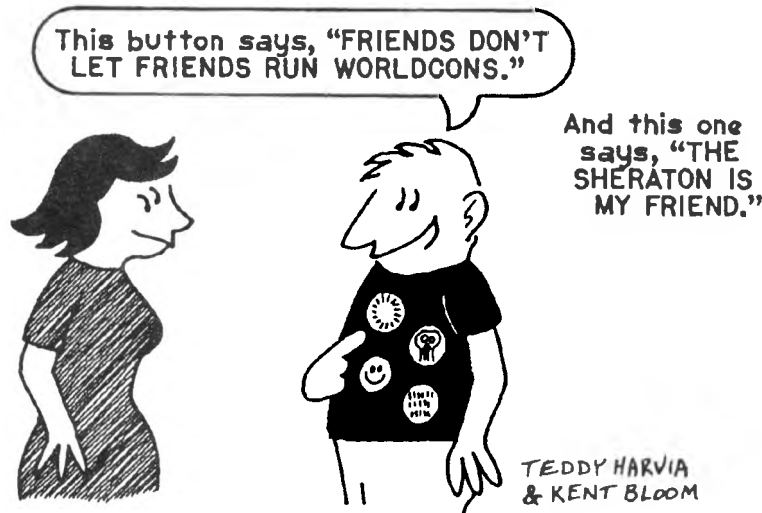
ping him on the shoulder and bringing her to the front. There the candidate had to prove worthiness by drinking a glass of the holy water from the magic well—150 proof Polish vodka. The badge was a patch to be worn on a blazer.

Originally inductions were held only at Eastercons, as I said, and a few US fen joined the ranks, TAFF winners and the like. Then occasionally ceremonies were held at state-side conventions. The last one I attended was at Baycon in Oakland in 1968. The SCA had been in existence for about two years at that point and SCAdians present were offended by the inauthenticity of the supposedly medieval elements of the ceremony.

Current members vote on new ones and I believe there is a blackball mechanism. In the early 70's one big shot in England blocked the admission of Hal Clement and as a result of the rancor few inductions took place after that. The order faded from faanish memory. Hal was, however, eventually inducted though I do not know just when.

Noreascon wanted the Knights and Dames to act as an honor guard for the Hugo ceremony. I understand they received no response from the British Knights but the Stateside ones responded independently to the call. It is good to see the Knights as such participating at a con function again. I do not know who was there other than the few I spoke with while waiting for the ceremony. Ones I was aware of included Hal Clement, Bjo Trimble, Dave & Ruth Kyle, and Dick Eney. It would be wonderful if new fen could be inducted to replace deceased members like Ron Ellik, but I gather this is most unlikely. Not only is the mechanism for making nominations in disarray, but there is no one function at a worldcon where all candidates are likely to be present so they can be "tapped."

Noreascon was *very* good to the Hugo nominees. It is, of course, an honor just to be nominated. All nominees were given certificates suitable for framing, Hugo lapel pins (though with three fins rather than four), and special ribbons for their badges. I believe this was the first time this was done, though an earlier Noreascon had awarded plaques to those in second and third place. The ceremony itself was very nice. We met in a special preparation room, where we were given boutonnières and marched into the hall. A Knight or Dame of St. Fantony carried each award and all nominees followed him or her. Irreverently, this made me think of a bunch of dogs running after a piece of meat dangling from a string, but the cer-



a lathe in his basement, and the rocket was half the size of the current standard. These were done as a one-shot gimmick but Clevention brought them back as a permanent feature in 1955. Ben Jason made the molds and announced in progress reports that they would be available for all future consoms. This escaped the Newyorkon concomm the next year and they used an Oldsmobile hood ornament. The use of the Jason mold came and went several times, and at one point it had to be redone. In 1967, the year NIEKAS got the award, the concomm could only get the Hugo cast in Lucite. While it was the standard rocket, it was the only one in clear plastic glued to the base. Alexei Panshin's and mine came off their bases on the day they were awarded. Despite many attempts to re-attach it, it is off right now, with one fin broken off. Sigh!

The current standard was established about five years ago and several years' worth are cast at a time. The rocket is standardized but the base is different for each con. The consoms have competed for elaborateness, massiveness, and beauty. Atlanta had a granite base, and New Orleans had the rocket rising on a mound of flame and smoke. Noreascon had a marvelous base which reminded me of the stage setting at the Metropolitan Opera for Wagner's *Ring* in 1968.

that the Batmobile from the new movie was exhibited, but when Sandy and I got there only photos were present.

The huckster room was very well set up. There were 300 tables, each with a lot of room behind it for storing luggage and moving around. Cindy Gold told us they could possibly have squeezed in another thirty tables but felt it was more important for the hucksters to have the space behind their tables and to have wide aisles for the customers' comfort.

The con did a very nice job of setting up the Hugo ceremony. For the occasion they brought back the Knights of St. Fantony. St. Fantony was established in England as an honor society with mock-medieval pomp. It can best be described as a cross between the Society for Creative Anachronism and a college honor fraternity. It was primarily set up to honor fen who did a lot of work putting on conventions. (I thought it was to honor all classes of hard-working and achieving fen but had this explained to me at Noreascon.) The induction ceremony took place at the annual British convention, Eastercon. After a reading of the Legend of St. Fantony, the patron saint of fandom, members would scour the audience looking for the candidates for the year. They would purposely pass him or her by a couple of times before clap-



emony was good and did work well. While we paraded around the hall someone read the "Legend of St. Fantony." We sat in a special block of seats, each of us having an aisle seat.

Fred Pohl was a masterfully master of ceremonies. He was witty and sincere and dignified. The concom had set up a tight schedule to limit the ceremonies to two hours. First came Forrey Ackerman's "Big Heart" award and the First Fandom award, then the Japanese awards for the best translations into Japanese and a new award created by Andre Norton for the best fantasy novel by a previously unpublished woman author. Then came the Hugos themselves. The procedure was almost military in its precision; but Fred did a wonderful job and it really worked. As each winner was called, he or she went up on stage from the left, received the trophy in front of the podium, had a ten-second picture opportunity, had 60 seconds behind the podium to give his thanks, had another measured picture opportunity, and was led off to a special "winners' circle."

The concom showed the winning movie, WHO FRAMED ROGER RABBIT, 15 minutes after the end of the ceremony, followed by BATMAN.

The Hugo Losers party was in the SFWA suite, a function room in the Hynes which had a cash bar but free soft drinks and snacks. We gathered there for several hours and spoke with many interesting people. G.A. Effinger stopped by with his Hugo and I got to feel what the base was like. With the big, elaborate bases in use today, someone like Charlie Brown or Michael Whelan must be hard-pressed to find room to display them.

And that, of course, brings us to the question of repeating winners. Without checking my Franson/deVore booklet, the ones that stand out in my memory are Charlie Brown for *Locus*, F.K. Freas and Michael Whelan for artist, and Richard E. Geiss for fan writer. The editors of *Analog* and *F&SF* have also racked up a goodly number.

What does it mean when someone receives the award year in and year out? Some would say that the voters get into a mindset and will not even consider someone else. Others would say that the winner has been the absolute best for all this time. Take Whelan, for instance; obviously I cannot judge art, but I listen to what people say. In recent years the only year he did not receive the award was when he declined the nomination in order to give someone else the chance. Only the winner gets into the listings of future worldcons and most other refer-

ences, though all nominees are listed in the Franson/deVore book. While Whelan is an outstanding artist, I think he did right to step aside for one year in order to allow another artist to receive the recognition and place in the record books that he deserves. While Whelan is outstanding he is not the only artist doing good work worthy of recognition.

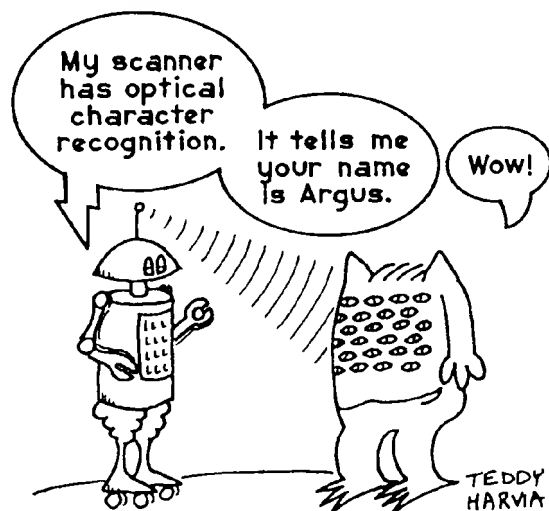
Anne Braude made the suggestion that if someone wins in a category three times a row he or she be declared a "Grand Master" Hugo winner and be no longer eligible to compete in that category. Every year's nominating ballot instruction sheet and program book would include a listing of past Grand Masters. *[I was going by analogy to sheepdog trials! ajb]*

On the other hand, "Best Artist of the Year" is a rather nebulous category. I know Marsha Elkin Jones voted for him on the basis of one book cover. There have been suggestions that the "Best Artist" category be replaced by "Best Color Illo" and "Best B&W Illo." Before the fen voted to change the rules in the late 60's the dramatic presentation award went repeatedly to THE TWILIGHT ZONE. Movies couldn't win against the continuing series for different fen would remember different episodes they liked and would vote for the series rather than for an individual movie. The rules were changed so that individual episodes had to compete just when STAR TREK came along; and at least one of its episodes, by Harlan Ellison, won.

If we were to do something similar with artists, would this really be fair? Is it better to recognize one really outstanding illo by an artist who might not have done much else of note that year, or to recognize a whole year of superb performance? But then, are fen remembering the calendar year in question? And if an artist fades or has a bad year would fen still vaguely retain an impression of all the great art of past years and simply assume that it has continued?

And if we change the pro artist category to "best individual pieces," should we also change the fan artist category? I would say no, for fan art is far more scattered among fanzines of limited circulation and con art shows. Individual pieces could win by receiving only a score of votes.

In the fanzine/semi-prozine category,



newszines seem to have a built-in advantage. In the early days *Science Fiction Times* won about three times, and *Fanac* once. Since Charlie Brown first won the Hugo for *Locus* in 1971, I do not think there has been a year in which he didn't win. After the semi-prozine category was created specifically to give other fanzines a chance, Mike Glycer won twice in a row with his excellent faanish newszine, *File 770*. He then declined the nomination and for three years other zines won. I am not sure whether he declined all three years, but one year still another news zine won, *Texas Enquirer!* This year Mike Glycer won again.

The Noreascon daily newsletter said that *Lan's Lantern* came in second and NIEKAS third. Lan Laskowski stopped by the NIEKAS table Monday morning and said he saw the press release on the voting. He came in only 4 votes behind Mike, and had been 5 ahead in the nominations. He didn't remember the statistics for NIEKAS and when we went up to the press room it was closed.

We now have the stats which came in the mail. *File 770* led in first place votes and NIEKAS was second. The top three zines changed places several times as the bottom placers were eliminated and their votes re-assigned. We were behind by about 20 votes in the semifinals when we were eliminated. Second, third, and even fourth place votes are important in the final outcome. It was sobering to realize that it took only 24 nominations to put us on the ballot! We shared last place with *Other Realms*, a fanzine I am not familiar with. From talk at the con I gather that *OR* is the wave of the future. While a few print copies are produced, most of its circulation is on computer bulletin boards.



We are still honored to have been nominated and will display our certificates and wear our pins with pride.

Of course we would have liked to be recognized again after a gap of 22 years. It is a different magazine with a new staff. It has taken us a long time to achieve prominence again and to make it to the ballot. To use the battle cry of the old Brooklyn Dodger fans, "wait till next year!"

These considerations raise the question of just what a fanzine is and why people vote for a particular title. People have told us we look too professional for a fanzine. Both *File 770* and *Lan's Lantern* are mimeod, and the latter is a large zine with the look and feel of the NIEKAS of the 60's. A certain portion of the public will vote for something that has the right "feel"; and these will complain about the others who vote for something like *Loccus* which is not a "real" (according to them) fanzine. While NIEKAS is amateur, not paying for material or receiving advertising (and losing money!), still people are beginning to perceive it as a semi-prozine.

I remember SaMoskowitz reminiscing at an ESFA meeting around 1960 about how he and some other kids found a place that sold mimeo stencils for only a nickel each and were able to mimeograph their zine. Except for a few that were done with hand-set type on a letterpress, most zines of that time were done on a hektograph, a very primitive form of flatbed duplicating akin to spirit duplicating but using water as the solvent. He said that their zine had been received as if it had been a zine in the late 50's professionally typeset and with a five-color cover. Well, technology has advanced tremendously and we at NIEKAS make use of all that we can. I use a talking IBM clone to write and copy-type material, and Mike transfers that to his Macintosh. He also has a scanner with OCR (Optical Character Recognition) and inputs many articles that way. Then he lays it out and makes it up on his laser printer. This gives the magazine the appearance of almost professional typesetting. (Linotype or other "real" typesetting would be a hair better.) More and more faneds are using what is misnamed "desktop publishing," but we at NIEKAS are proud of our excellent columnists and contributors. The contents makes the magazine worth reading. The appearance makes the recipient *want* to read it. Mike has a genuine artistic talent for layout. Without his talent behind the mouse the Macintosh would only produce pedestrian results.

Back in the 60's it was Roy Tacket who first

mentioned the possibility of NIEKAS getting a Hugo. This time it was Margaret Simon though she mentioned a fan writer Hugo for Anne Braude rather than a zine one for NIEKAS. We lost in '66 and got it in '67. Let's see if the pattern repeats itself.

We have now been nominated twice for Readercon awards. These are given for excellence in small press publishing. The first time was for *A Silverlock Companion* in the nonfiction category while the second was for the magazine as a whole in the criticism category. While we didn't win either time, it was an honor to be nominated. Since then *The Once and Future Arthur* Special Publication was, I think, the best issue of NIEKAS we have ever produced. I would have liked to see it considered for the Readercon Award.

Finally Anne Braude, our best writer, deserves recognition too.

Just getting nominated helps get the name of NIEKAS around and increase our readership and stature. And, of course, the recognition leads to a good feeling! While we print and eventually sell or trade almost a thousand copies, our initial mailing to subscribers, contributors, and trades is under 300. If we could increase that, we would not only be presenting the excellent material to the larger audience it deserves but also reducing the amount by which we have to subsidize it.

In the old NIEKAS I spent much of Bumbejimas gossiping about my travels and the doings of Bay Area fandom. The marvelous Gilbert & Sullivan theater parties we had were especially prominent. At its peak we had over a hundred attending, with a score driving up from LA and a half dozen from San Diego. The cast joined us after the show and the party often went on to 5 a.m. In my older age and greater isolation in rural New Hampshire, I just do not engage in many such activities any more. And of course I myself have changed in the intervening quarter century and do not know whether I could still burble on in that way. I had no upper limit on the issue size and ran a few *very* long articles. While we now have a 60 page limit, except for specials like the Arthur issue, we get more words on a page and probably carry just as much material. I want NIEKAS to be equally divided between stf and fantasy. The heavy emphasis on fantasy of the last few issues should be balanced by the stfnal slant of this and the

next regular ish. My chatty editorials also gave the readers a feeling of involvement, a feeling of belonging to the NIEKAS family. I still want all of you to feel that you are a part of NIEKAS. Please bear with us, participate by writing Letters of Comment or other material for NIEKAS and joining us in partying at cons, and submitting other material like art and reviews. And help us find more readers who can become part of the family.

[Ed, possibly we should get lessons in recruitment techniques from the Moonies. *ajb*]

## OF STUPIDITY AND PROCRASTINATION

You never learn until disaster strikes *you*!

I keep all of my software on a hard disk but use floppies for most of my data. The one exception is my mailing list. I am supposed to back it up onto floppies every time I modify it but I get lazy. When the disk crashed I had not backed it up in several months and I lost about 200 names plus a number of extensions because of LoCs, material, trades, or money.

I have done my best to reconstruct the lost data but am sure I have missed some people.

Please check the number on your mailing label. If you think we owe you more issues than are indicated on the label please let us know and we will do our best to correct the matter.



## OF NOBILITY AND PREJUDICE

I just finished reading Darrell Schweitzer's excellent biography of Lord Dunsany, *Pathways to Elfland, the Writings of Lord Dunsany*, Owlswick Press, 1989, \$25.00, xiv+179 pp. This kind of book either interests you or it doesn't. It gives the basic  
*See BUMBEJIMAS, Page 61*



# Same Song, Second Verse...

## Mathoms

by Anne Braude

### SPECIAL DELIVERY

This is going to be a bits-and-pieces Mathoms, similar to the usual form of Bumbejimas. First, a comment or two on the Norton special issue. This is the first of the NIEKAS special issues that was produced under the gun, so to speak: although we had been muttering about it for some time, we only really got to work on it around the first of the year. All the others had matured over at least a year of meditation and solicitation of material, like a fine wine—or a really good compost heap. There was no general and public request for contributions until the mention that the issue was forthcoming, which appeared in NIEKAS 39; and the copy for the special was already being typed by the time #39 was mailed. Some of the contributions we had been offered never arrived because the writers had problems or commitments that took precedence, which is one reason why I wound up writing so much myself. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank all those who *did* get their stuff in on time. As for the rest of you, you know who you are; *we* know who you are; and what is more important, *the moles* know who you are. Think of your toes as temporary, people.

In order to decrease the problems caused by lack of lead time by letting all of you out there know what is either in the works or a gleam in somebody's eye, here are the specials and chapbooks currently planned:

Mike Bastraw is doing a second volume of stories of 50 words or less (*Attack of the Fifty Extremely SF\* Stories*), and will be doing a Best of NIEKAS Special drawing on the 20 issues of the First Incarnation.

Anne Braude will next be doing a Best of NIEKAS Tolkien Material Special, also garnered primarily from the First Incarnation but with some new material, and is planning for another special in a couple of years on animal fantasy.

Ed Meskys has nothing on the blocks at the moment outside of regular editorial duties (so he should be able to finish *at last* dubbing my recording of *Duncton Wood*) but will be thinking about what to do for our 50th issue. We are open to suggestions as to

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*A foolish consistency  
is the hobgoblin  
of little minds.  
Emerson*

*That's exactly what I  
say. Always. No  
matter what.  
ajb*

a theme for it. My own proposal is that in a sort of tie-in to the theme of #25, Religion and Science Fiction, we do one on Science and the Ethics of the Future, focusing more on fact than fiction and considering such topics as the legal/scientific/religious debate over when human life begins, and the implications of such corollaries as custody battles over frozen embryos (and their inheritance rights if any) and fetal tissue transplants; the virtual extinction of the traditional nuclear family and what sort of marital and parental institutions might succeed it (cf. the current legal recognition in some jurisdictions of committed homosexual relationships); the transformation of the American workplace by technology, with the result that highly-paid skilled blue-collar jobs and mid-level white-collar jobs are increasingly being eliminated, which means in effect the elimination of the middle class, leaving only highly-paid high-tech or managerial jobs, low-paid service or unskilled manufacturing jobs, and a permanent underclass of the unemployed.

A few other questions also come to mind: Aggression has been a basic survival trait in our species ever since it evolved; is it still useful, or will it now lead us only to Mutual Assured Destruction and extinction? What

about the sheer cost of medical miracles? Is it desirable to save the lives of premature or low-birth-weight babies who will be severely handicapped all their lives? To feed drought victims so that more people survive than the land they farm can support? Do developed countries have a right to prevent Third World countries in the process of development from acting in ways that damage the planetary environment—i.e., to use force to prevent Brazil from burning off rain forests, a procedure that both threatens the ozone layer and enhances the greenhouse effect?

If this interests you, or you have a better idea, let us hear from you. We are also going ahead with Joe Christopher's proposal of a special on horror fiction, with Joe as editor; I declined the honor on the grounds that horror fiction *scares* me.

### CREATION SCIENCE: ONTOLOGY FOR THE OXYMORONIC

One theme I have been pursuing in these pages for quite a while is the misperception of the creation-vs.-evolution controversy—and the demand by proponents of the former view for equal time in science classes—as a free speech issue rather than a conflict between scientific knowledge and a nonscientific misrepresentation of both the nature of science and the facts in question.

The Summer, 1989, issue of *The Skeptical Inquirer* reports a couple of hopeful developments. The California State Board of Education (which in 1985 rejected all proposed junior-high science textbooks for failing to cover adequately such topics as evolution, ecology, and reproduction) has approved an Anti-Dogmatism Statement requiring clear separation between science and nonscience in both method (hurrah!) and evidence. *SI* quotes from the statement: "Neither the California nor the U.S. Constitution requires, in order to accommodate the religious views of those who object to certain material or activities that are presented in science classes, that time be given in the curriculum to those particular religious views.... As a matter of principle, science teachers are professionally bound to limit their teaching to science and



should resist pressure to do otherwise." *SI* adds, "The statement notes that students need to understand the nature of modern science, including the fact that science changes through time. They are free to disagree with the conclusions of science, but they must understand its data and methods."

A separate item reports action taken by the chief of the California State Department

the co-author of *Teaching As a Subversive Activity*. In 1985 he was one of several distinguished foreign writers funded by the German magazine *Stern* to travel through Germany and write up their observations and impressions. Postman's essay is published in its original English in his recent collection *Conscientious Objections: Stirring Up Trouble About Language, Technology, and*

"situation." Gradually, I began to take my "schizophrenia" metaphor more seriously, for in clinical terms a split personality is not a matter of a character deficiency but a response to one's inability to resolve an intolerably paradoxical situation. I soon realized that if I were to find evidence of cultural schizophrenia, I would have to find it in situation, not character.



of Education to deny the Institute for Creation Research its approval to continue to grant master's degrees in science education, biology, geology, and astro-geophysics (whatever that is). Without the state's approval, the school cannot grant degrees and its students are ineligible for state financial aid. Unfortunately, the subsequent issue has a follow-up detailing how the ICR has fought off the action and is still in the business of granting science degrees. [See *SI*, Summer, 1989, pp. 345-346 and Fall, 1989, pp. 9-10.]

### SPRECHEN SIE NAZI?

Brian Earl Brown and others have taken exception to some comments of mine and Ed's, adapted from George Steiner, about the relationship between the German language and the rise of Nazism and the general willingness to go along with, if not to actively participate in, the Holocaust. Part of the disagreement may be due to the ineptness of my paraphrase of Steiner's essays, which I hope those who disagreed with me (and everyone else, for that matter) will read for themselves. Another perspective on the matter is provided by Neil Postman, professor of communication arts and sciences at NYU, who is best known to my generation as

*Education* (Knopf, 1988) as "My German Question." I am going to quote from it extensively, since there is a continuing interest in the subject among the readership and Postman's views both complement and contrast with Steiner's.

On the one hand, about half of the heritage of Western humanism and learning is of German origin. On the other, there is an ancient, mystical German impulse to barbarism that has cost world civilization dearly and that found its most recent and hideous expression in Auschwitz, the madmen who invented it, and the people who nourished them. Is this not a form of cultural schizophrenia? Could this be what the great Goethe meant when he said, "I have often felt a bitter sorrow at the thought of the German people, which are so estimable in the individual and so wretched in the generality?"

As I moved through Germany talking to everyone who would talk to me, including TMOS (The Man On the Street), the question of "character" began to recede. At the end, it had disappeared altogether, to be replaced by a question about the German

...West Germany is devoid of a usable past. It is not just a new country, but a historically barren one. Germany's great cathedrals, universities, music, and literature are merely artifacts, objects fit for archeologists to study. They are of no use to modern-day Germans. For to use them, to refer to them, to revere them requires that one ask, What did they lead to? What spiritual inspiration did they give? What lessons did they teach? And the answers are devastating, for they led, in this century, to a twice-shattered culture that produced people who derived aesthetic pleasure from both Bach and Buchenwald. Germans know this better than anyone else. It is not, in the end, a question of hiding one's past from oneself or even of failing to do one's grief work. The Germans know their past—all of it—and have silently and reasonably concluded that it cannot be used as a guide to the future. Not now. Perhaps not for a century.

Thus, *Germany is terrified of itself*. [Italics Postman's] Who would not be who cannot trust anything one has created? A journalist in Frankfurt told me that the most powerful carrier of the past, the German language itself, has become suspect. The word "Israeli" has replaced the word "Jew." "Volkdom" and "Aryan," even "Fatherland," can no longer be spoken seriously. Not only is much of the style and vocabulary of the Third Reich too frightening to be used in serious public discourse, even the traditional style of German abstruse thought is considered suspect.

A psychiatrist in Frankfurt told me that in his work with German patients the most common form of mental illness is "delusions of grandeur," but, significantly, very few believe they are Hitler or Kaiser Wilhelm or Frederick the Great or, indeed, any German at all. What should one make of this? In France, insane asylums have no shortage of Napoleons; in Britain, Henry the Eighths and Churchills can be found ruling the realm of the mad; and in



America, our insane specialize in Jesus Christ (who we Americans tend to believe spoke English fluently and would have been an American if given the chance). Apparently even the crazy in Germany find the past unusable.

But it is not the unusability of its past alone that creates a schizophrenic situation in Germany. A pathological paradox needs two unsupportable conditions. And America provides the second... [I]t is clear that Germany continues to be, and, out of desperation, wishes to be, conscious of itself only through the reflection of American culture....I am referring to the living symbols of spiritual dependence, the massive intrusion of the American language and American films, fashions, food, music, style, iconography, design, credit cards, products, television, advertising. These have been swallowed whole as the antidote to a culture bereft of a trustworthy identity of its own.

As Germans flee from the first terror—a culture without a past—they recoil from the second—an American culture that offers them intimations and shadows of that which ruined them. I do not say that America today is in most respects like Germany in the 1930's, and I do not believe that America is capable of producing an Auschwitz. But the point is that the Germans do not know this. They sense that they have imported a culture with little intellectual coherence, uninterested in its own traditions, and preoccupied with the creation of spectacle. Even those who adore Ronald Reagan (and with few exceptions TMOS told me they do) know that he is incapable of conceiving and putting together five consecutive sentences of political substance and logical force. He is a good image for his country, Germans told me. He is not afraid of the Russians and hates Communists. He encourages optimism and confidence. He is an aesthetic delight. Whom does that remind you of? What does that remind you of? I am sure that Germans know the answers (even if Americans do not) and they are disgusted by them.

Does this situation make Germany dangerous? I should think it does. A culture that is frightened at looking back and contemptuous of the only future that seems to lie ahead must always be considered dangerous. As to when and where and to whom, I do not know. But this much can be said: there can be no laying the past

to rest, no embarking on a creative future, no peace of mind as long as the twin nemeses of dread and loathing hover over Germany.

Of course, the one thing that can always be said of history with complete accuracy is that it is subject to change without notice; and the events of recent months (I write in mid-March 1990), bringing a real possibility that Germany may be reunified by the end of the year, let alone the end of the decade, may change the way Germans from both sides of the Wall think about their relationship to their common past. The pastors of Leipzig sent the people into the streets to sing and march fortified with readings from Martin Luther King on nonviolence as well as from Saint Augustine and the Bible (and presumably Martin Luther); as Robert Darnton, a Princeton history professor on a year's fellowship at the Institute for Advanced Study in Berlin, reports in *TNR*'s January 22, 1990 issue:

[T]he Christmas "Demo" of December 18, the last of the year, included 150,000 persons. They formed a human chain all the way around the old city. The marchers were ordinary people from all classes, mothers pushing baby carriages, fathers with children on their shoulders, saying very little, simply carrying candles and bearing witness.

An hour earlier, in the Thomaskirche, the faithful prayed for peace, for their church, their souls, and the souls of their enemies; they prayed for Mikhail Gorbachev, and for Hans Modrow and Helmut Kohl, the leaders of East and West Germany, who were to meet for the first time on the following day; and they prayed for the Stasi [secret police], who had threatened to mow them down in the streets only a few weeks before.

But he also reports a darker side:

But it has not all been sweetness and light. An ugly variety of nationalism, tinged with neo-Nazism, surfaced in the demonstration of December 11. One banner read, "Germany with the borders of 1254—Naples is ours." . . . Some confronted left-wing demonstrators with the salute of the neo-Nazi movement in West Germany....

Is right-wing nationalism a real danger? In a pre-Demo coffee gathering, a graduate student said he had heard anti-Semitic remarks directed at Gregor Gysi,

the new leader of the Communist (or Socialist Unity) Party, who comes from a prominent Jewish family. One young historian said that neo-Nazism was a danger precisely because it has always been the biggest taboo in East Germany. In West Germany, he explained, former Nazis were reintegrated into business and government. They grew old, retired, and died off, while neo-Nazi fringe groups were confronted openly. In East Germany Nazism was repressed by its dialectical opposite, Stalinism. Now that the lid is off, the old, pathological nationalism may revive, and the common people may turn against the intellectuals.

As the Hag remarked to Prince Caspian in a not dissimilar situation, "Who ever heard of a witch that really died? You can always get them back." Watch this planet for further developments.

## FRYING THE FLAG

In handing down their decision on June 22, 1989, legalizing the burning of the flag as a form of free speech, the justices of the Supreme Court proved at least that they must have been reading my columns in *NIEKAS*. The subsequent flap in political circles in Washington proves that we need to sell a few more subscriptions in the area. Now, I personally do not favor burning the flag (unless Oliver North happens to be wrapped in it at the time); in fact, as an Army brat growing up in an assortment of temporary residences in various parts of the U.S. and Europe and therefore lacking a home town, I feel for the flag the emotional ties that most people feel for their homes in addition to the normal patriotic sentiments. When I see TV news clips of a protester burning an American flag, I want to slug him—hard. But this is what we have a system of laws for: so that justice will not be left to the emotional reactions of those personally affected by an act (as Michael Dukakis should have said when asked if he would change his opposition to the death penalty if his wife were raped and murdered).

After witnessing the tragedy of Tiananmen Square, I felt like going out and burning the flag of the People's Republic of China; I didn't, mainly because I don't have a Chinese flag and, unlike the flag-burner in the Supreme Court case, I wasn't inclined to steal one belonging to someone else. Presumably not even the most conservative of Republicans would deny my right to exercise free



speech by burning the Chinese flag; but in that case, what is the rationale for criminalizing the burning of the American flag? Both are equally symbolic.

Interpretations of our Constitution in recent years have been pretty hostile to the idea that there should be one law for Americans and another for foreigners resident in the U.S.A., even illegally: although aliens cannot vote or serve on juries—or for that matter hold public office—the courts have held that they are entitled to send their children to public schools and to receive public assistance and medical benefits even if they are illegals. And of course, if accused of a crime, they are entitled to all the legal protections included in the Miranda warning and the Fifth Amendment. It is entirely consistent for the Supreme Court to deny to the American flag a sacred exemption from the trammels of the normal protections of free speech that is not accorded to any other national or foreign symbol.

I remain uneasy, however, at the decision's tacit encouragement of the desecration of symbols, and I look forward with a sort of cringing fascination to the first lawsuit citing this precedent on behalf of a Nazi arrested for painting swastikas on a synagogue; I don't think it will work, any more than the decision will be construed as a legitimizing precedent for stealing flags from bank buildings. One must consider the nature of symbolism itself, and how the desecration of a symbol affects the mind and emotions of the one who performs it. Desecration of Christian symbols is a well-known behavior of those who practice black magic; and the effort to eradicate Christianity in Imperial Japan involved forcing converts to prove their recantation by defiling a crucifix.

The use of symbolism in anti-Semitism is too familiar for me to need to document it here. And I remember how shocked I was when some mallet-wielding maniac attacked Michelangelo's *Pietà* in the Vatican; my immediate (if morally indefensible) emotional response was that this was a worse crime than an attack on a person, because a person could be held responsible (however unfairly) for an offense against the attacker but a work of art is totally innocent and helpless—especially this one, which is a masterpiece of love and grief, not blatant propaganda like the crucifix-in-urine “artwork” that has so enraged all those cultured aesthetes in Congress. (Another piece in the same exhibit involved placing an American flag on the floor and inviting people to walk on it [cf. Imperial Japan, above]. I can see both these

as political statements, duly protected by the First Amendment; but I'm damned if I can see how they constitute *art*.)

The problem with protecting this sort of display is that it encourages similar behavior toward what is symbolized: first you blaspheme against the Eucharist, then you find yourself practicing human sacrifice; you start by making the Star of David a badge of exclusion and contempt, and end by perpetrating the Holocaust. In C.S. Lewis's *That Hideous Strength*, when the elite in the N.I.C.E. want to initiate Mark Studdock into the practice of scientific diabolism, outraging a crucifix is one of the more advanced steps in the process. It is the point at which Mark rebels, for psychologically interesting reasons:

Christianity was nonsense, but one did not doubt that the man had lived and had been executed thus by the Belbury of those days. And that, as he suddenly saw, explained why this image, though not itself an image of the Straight or Normal, was yet in opposition to crooked Belbury. It was a picture of... what the Crooked did to the Straight—what it would do to him if he remained straight. It was, in a more emphatic sense than he had yet understood, a *cross*. . . .

This Man himself, on that very cross, had discovered it [Christianity] to be a fable, and had died complaining that the God in whom he trusted had forsaken him—had, in fact, found the universe a cheat. But this raised a question that Mark had never thought of before. Was *that* the moment at which to turn against the Man? If the universe was a cheat, was that a good reason for joining its side? Supposing the Straight was utterly powerless, always and everywhere certain to be mocked, tortured, and finally killed by the Crooked, what then? Why not go down with the ship? He began to be frightened by the very fact that his fears seemed to have momentarily vanished. They had been a safeguard. . . they had prevented him, all his life, from making decisions like that which he was now making as he turned to Frost and said,

“It's all bloody nonsense, and I'm damned if I do any such thing.”

Lewis himself said that he always felt that the worst possible reason for espousing a cause was the argument that it was destined to

triumph; but research has shown that his attitude is not typical. Both history and psychological experimentation have shown that man is, on the whole, a herd animal, for whom it takes exceptional confidence and courage to rebel against the majority. That is why our species invented symbolism—as a way of inculcating the primitive and savage young, in a state of nature, with the values and views of civilization. This is fine if the prevailing value system for the group enshrines, let us say, honesty, charity, and not beating your wife; it is less attractive—though no less successful—if the group ethos includes wanton slaughter of foreigners, infanticide, and chattel slavery.

I remember learning, at some time during my college years, the distinction between a symbol reaction and a signal reaction, using as an example a chimpanzee trained to drive a car and to obey traffic lights. If it saw a red light, it would stop; if it saw green, it would proceed: this is a symbol reaction. A human driver, on the other hand, would treat the lights as signals, stopping on green if there was a pedestrian still in the crosswalk, proceeding on red if the light changed when the car was in the middle of the intersection. In their attitude toward the flag-burning decision, the members of Congress have been figuratively making symbol-reaction monkeys of themselves. The points about symbolism with respect to this issue are pretty well summed up by Hendrik Hertzberg in the TRB From Washington column in *The New Republic* for July 17/24, entitled “Flagellation” (see, I'm not the only one who comes up with terminally coy titles):

Amid the current hysteria an important ontological point has been overlooked: you can't burn the flag. It can't be done. A flag, yes. *The* flag, no. *The* flag, the American flag, is an abstraction—a certain arrangement of stars, stripes, and colors—that exists (a) in the realm of Platonic ideals and (b) in the minds and hearts of people. To say this is not to denigrate the flag; on the contrary, it is to place the flag where it belongs, in a higher realm of existence than the material. A flag, any particular flag, is merely a copy. You can no more destroy *the* flag by burning *a* flag than you can destroy the Constitution by burning a copy of the Constitution.....

All the [Supreme Court] opinions in this case are notable for their passion. The  
*See MATHOMS, Page 61*



# In the Cotton-Fields of Academe

## Patterns

by Diana L. Paxson

In January of 1989, some twenty-two years after originally receiving my teaching credential in English, I found myself facing a classroom of college freshmen for the first time. It has been an interesting experience. There are times when I understand exactly why I didn't pursue an academic career as soon as I got my M.A.; there are times when I reflect that if I had done so, I would probably have tenure by now; and there are times when I am glad that circumstances kept me out of teaching until an age when most professors are beginning to wonder how soon they can retire.

The delay was not entirely voluntary.

When I was growing up, teaching was considered a nice safe career for a woman. In the wake of the baby boom, educators foresaw an exponential increase in enrollments, and were madly encouraging people to go into the field. As a result, by the time I got my degree in the late sixties, teachers were glutting the market. Certainly there were no jobs available in the Bay Area, and the thought of going out to teach (gasp) bonehead English in a Community College somewhere seemed a fate worse than death.

Instead, I got a job as a secretary at the Berkeley YMCA, where I found myself with enough time on my hands to begin writing fiction again despite the repressive effects of my college creative writing class (but that's another story). After a year or two I did manage to move into the short-lived field of Educational Development at Far West Laboratory, the result of a temporary liberal political climate in which the government decided to actually fund conscious planning and research into improving education. I soon found myself writing both teacher training and student materials for things like career education for Native Americans, and Environmental Education. It was certainly educational—for me, anyway, since the government only funded development, not dissemination, and many of our carefully tested materials never got used.

At the same time, I was beginning to sell my fiction. When the Republicans dismembered the Department of Education, the only

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*If I had only myself to feed I could probably cope with dilatory editors, advances that are always late and royalty statements that are undecipherable if you get them.*

dlp

thing we could get funding for was Civil Defense (the last thing I worked on at Far West was a cheery little booklet on how to set up a ventilation system in a fallout shelter). Clearly, it was time for a change.

Ten years later, I find myself moderately well established as a writer. If I had only myself to feed I could probably cope with dilatory editors, advances that are always late and royalty statements that are undecipherable if you get them. A wife who worked would solve the problem. Instead, everyone else in my family writes too, I have a great barn of a house and far too many cats, and a son who is still in school. By the end of last year the savings were beginning to run out and the prospect of a paycheck, however small, that would arrive on schedule was starting to look very good to me.

It was at this point that I sent out my resume to all the colleges that have proliferated in the Bay Area since the last time I went job-hunting, and waited for the educational world to beat a path to my door. And thus it was that I entered the ranks of the part-time instructors—the migrant laborers of the academic world.

Since I last looked at the teaching profession, several things have changed, and during the past year I have developed a new

perspective on a number of areas I had not thought about before. As the baby boomers moved out of the educational system, enrollments fell, and suddenly everyone was being steered towards careers in business or computer science. I don't know what the situation is in the public schools, but for the past fifteen years, the faculties of our colleges and universities have admitted very few newcomers. But now the teachers who glutted the market when I was in grad school are beginning to retire; in another ten years most of them will be leaving, and there is serious concern about where their replacements will come from.

Meanwhile, enrollments are up again, and especially in the basics, there are already more classes than teachers. Theoretically, this is a promising situation for the job-hunter. However in most colleges, getting permission to hire new permanent faculty is roughly equivalent in difficulty to amending the U.S. Constitution. The usual solution is to hire people part-time.

Presumably, full-time jobs are supposed to be created as the workload gets larger. Therefore at most schools part-timers are only allowed to teach a limited number of units (usually one major class or two less important ones). But somewhere along the way, budget-conscious administrators seem to have realized that part-timers don't have to be given raises or benefits, and therefore it is much cheaper to hire lots of them to teach one or two courses each than it would be to create new full-time positions. I suspect that the cost of the extra paperwork may somewhat offset that, but it comes out of a different part of the budget so no one notices.

The result is that although faculties are already becoming understaffed, there are still not enough full-time positions for those who are looking for jobs. There are, however, lots of part-time opportunities, and so we find what a friend of mine calls “freeway teachers”—people who commute from school to school, teaching one class at each, in an attempt to put together a full workload.

The disadvantages to the part-time in-



structor are obvious. There are disadvantages to students as well. Instructors who are only on campus part of the time and who have to share office space with half a dozen others cannot keep effective office hours, nor are they usually around for faculty meetings, even if they are allowed to attend, so they are not part of departmental policy making and implementation. In schools which make class assignments at the last

basis for comparison.

In both schools, however, the part-timers are second-class citizens. Having discovered that teaching two classes involves only about half again more upset to my writing schedule than teaching one, I suspect that teaching three (the normal Cal. State workload) would still leave me time to get my own work done. I would like to teach full-time. Unfortunately, getting a permanent teaching po-

They are already well aware of economic realities.

And when I tell them how important it is to communicate effectively, they believe me.

When I graduated from college, my goal was to find a job in a prestigious English department teaching something esoteric and writing carefully footnoted papers for obscure journals that don't even pretend to pay. I would probably have been bored silly in five years. These days, I find myself increasingly focused on technique and process. It does not matter how good your ideas are if no one can understand what you want to say.

Freshman English covers the basic tools of writing: narrative, description, analysis, persuasion.... After twenty years of writing both fiction and non-fiction, I am convinced that the basic process for both is much the same. Whether one is writing a story or an essay, it is still necessary to consider style and structure, theme and purpose and audience. One has to make the words behave. After having avoided English grammar for most of my life, I am acquiring the technical language to describe what it is I do when I use words. I am learning as much as I teach the students. Now that I've been around for awhile, the Department chair is offering me a chance to teach 1-B, which introduces literary analysis, as if it were a reward. I'm not sure that I want to do it. As time goes on I have less and less patience with literary criticism, and if I thought the kind of literature which is usually assigned was interesting I wouldn't be writing science fiction. I can get away with my grubby practical approach to writing in 1-A, but the department might not appreciate my opinions on literary fiction.

I have learned to be a bit careful about telling people what I write, how much I write, and the fact that I get paid for it. It is still, in the academic world, just a little declass   to be in "trade." A Real Writer is dead. If not, he or she should suffer for his/her art, or at least be politically correct, and I have never pretended to be either. The academic world is still prejudiced against commercial fiction. Despite my credits, I have seen creative writing jobs go to people with far fewer publications—but much better academic credentials. Don't they want students to learn how to write stories that will actually get published? My conclusion is that they don't. Nobody has asked the students what they want.

Meanwhile, I continue to pick cotton in the fields of 1-A. And I don't really mind.

See *PATTERNS*, Page 61



minute, part-timers have no time to prepare lesson plans before classes begin. It is inevitably going to be harder for the part-time teacher to do an effective job.

I knew none of this when I began teaching at Chabot Community College last January. I was not at all sure that I wanted to be teaching at all, and generating instant lesson plans for one class (I was offered the job two weeks before the quarter began) was quite enough for me. It was only when I realized that as a part-timer I would be making the same hourly wage as a first-year regular instructor with a B.A. degree that I began to suspect there might be some inequities.

Chabot treats its part-timers unusually well. They have representation in the Faculty Senate, and the Chair of my department has been extremely supportive. Indeed, my earlier prejudice against community colleges has been reversed. They are affordable, and they are rescuing many victims of the public school system from educational oblivion. They are also somewhat more relaxed than the four-year colleges, and they focus not on research, but on teaching. During the spring quarter I taught freshman English at the Cal. State University at Hayward as well as another course at Chabot, so I have some

situation has become almost as difficult as it used to be to get tenure.

Perhaps one of these days my books will make so much money that I won't need a job. But I'm beginning to think that I might want to keep on teaching anyway....

I've discovered that I like it. I even like teaching English 1-A.

Of course I do have a few bad habits to overcome. Years of fighting to get a word in on convention panels does not prepare one for a class full of earnest youngsters who have to be begged to speak above a whisper. Years of sounding off to fans has got me into the habit of lecturing, and I shouldn't, because if one can get them to open up, these people have a lot to say.

I generally start the class off with a biographical essay, and each time I am amazed by the variety of experiences the students have already had. Some of them describe what it's like to start learning English at age 12. Some grew up speaking two languages and are still struggling with the conflict. Some were traumatized by sadistic teachers in high school; some are trying to go to school while working full-time or dealing with heavy responsibilities at home, or are returning students who have already raised families. Most of them work or have had jobs.



# Getting It Right

## Tape from Toronto

by David Palter

This column is going to be somewhat informal, so bear with me as I careen from subject to subject.

I was amused by a letter in the May, 1989, issue of *Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine* from Gordon L. Remington of Salt Lake City, Utah, in which he complains about Orson Scott Card's current alternate-world series, the Alvin Maker series. It has gained considerable prominence and includes one novel on the Hugo ballot. Remington objects to the fact that Orson Scott Card, like many other science fiction writers, has written an alternate history in which an entirely different series of historical events has given rise to a world in which nonetheless some of the same people exist, who are not only similar to people in our universe but in fact have the same names and identities and clearly are the same people. It is as though somehow they were inevitably going to exist no matter what happened in history. Of course this is not plausible. If historical events were greatly divergent from the reality that we know, the world might still be full of people but they would all be different people. There would not be one person identical to the person that would otherwise have existed in the original history.

How do I know this? Well, this is based on the assumption that we are the result of essentially random processes of the universe. I am assuming that there is not a big black book in heaven in which God has written thousands of years ago that on March 25, 1952, a person named David Palter shall be born in Brooklyn, NY, and that somehow this fact becomes immutable so that in any version of history, somehow, I will be born. There is no reason to believe this. My existence can be traced to a complex chain of events which obviously would not have occurred in the same way if history were different in any major respect.

Isaac Asimov replies to this letter, saying that he agrees that this is not the most plausible way of writing an alternate-world story. However, he also believes that it works dramatically and is therefore worth doing anyway. Of course Asimov has commented

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*In science fiction we are expected to believe that it is possible because the author has done his homework and is in fact engaging in a plausible line of speculation...*

dp

in the past that he often writes about things he does not believe in, simply because they produce more entertaining fiction. The most conspicuous example of this is the faster-than-light drive which Isaac Asimov believes will never exist and is not possible, but which he nonetheless uses in the *Foundation* series and in other works in which he wishes to write about an interstellar community.

It would, of course, be possible to write about an interstellar community that does not depend on faster-than-light travel. However it is obvious that in such a case the various constituent planets of the community would be rather isolated and the community would not function in a very cohesive way.

So my feeling is that in this particular case Asimov is correct, as he generally is. Orson Scott Card's writing is extremely effective and I can easily overlook the relative implausibility of this mechanism. But it did occur to me that there might be a useful rationale that would make this approach more plausible, one borrowed from a device Poul Anderson used in his time-travel series which included the novel *The Corridors of Time* where he proposed that although you can change history, history resists being changed,

and this tendency he termed "conservation of history."

Now we have no specific reason to believe that there is such a thing as conservation of history. On the other hand we are acquainted with the fact that in nature a great many different types of things are conserved such as mass-energy and momentum and we know that in some cases there is a sort of inertia seen in the world in which the forces of nature in various ways seem to resist things that we try to do. This is seen in the most obvious case where it takes force to accelerate a mass and it's seen in more indirect cases such as the fact that when we wipe out populations of insects with insecticides we simply wind up breeding insecticide resistant insects and so our effort to change the world that way and make it insect-free is also seemingly opposed by the inertial qualities of nature.

This sort of resistance of the universe to human intervention is seen in many areas. And so it would somehow seem fitting that there was also a conservation of history so that if human beings traveled in time and altered history there would be some sort of tendency in the universe to cause history to revert back to something fairly close to its original form.

Now an alternate world series is different from a time-travel series because in an alternate world series we are not necessarily ever told that this alternate form of history was the result of time travel. The usual assumption, I think, is that the alternate variant of history exists in addition to the universe as we know it and that there may be a great many different universes and perhaps even an infinite number of them all of which exist in a distinct and separate state in some sort of higher dimensional space.

The question as to where all these alternate universes come from would probably be answered by the theory that at certain decision points in history where an event can happen either one way or another way it winds up happening both ways and the universes bifurcate or split apart for that reason.

This theory is not only a science fictional



theory but is considered to have some degree of scientific plausibility. The multi-universal view of reality is an extremely bizarre one and it's startling to think that it actually has currency in the scientific world.

Incidentally, I personally doubt that there is more than one universe.

Anyway, there were a few other amusing things in this particular letter in *Asimov's*. Remington asks, isn't it time some guide-

detailed guidelines the stories you would enjoy most would be the ones that violated your own guidelines.

Another amusing thing that he says in this letter is, "I spoiled RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK and THE PRINCESS BRIDE for my friends by pointing out that uniformed and armed Nazis would not have been flying in and out of Cairo in the 1930's and that Australia was unknown to medieval Europe-

knowabout—this is not a very serious movie. It's not a satirical movie like *THE PRINCESS BRIDE* but at the same time it is clearly a very playful one.

I was inspired to give some thought to the subject of plausibility in science fiction in general. It is true that a scientific inaccuracy or a historical inaccuracy or any factual error is very jarring in science fiction. It's jarring in any form of fiction but particularly in science fiction because science fiction as a genre derives much of its appeal from the fact that it uses science to give greater plausibility to imaginative speculations. This is the critical difference between science fiction and fantasy, both of which engage in wide-ranging and fanciful types of imagination and which in the case of fantasy we are expected simply to accept for the purposes of the story. In science fiction we are expected to believe that it is possible because the author has done his homework and is in fact engaging in a plausible line of speculation which is in itself an interesting artistic accomplishment as well as being useful as a means of actually thinking about the possible types of futures we may be faced with and becoming thereby better prepared to deal with them. He would do well to remember that fantasy does deal with reality although it deals with it in a metaphorical way.

But the interest of any form of fiction lies in its relationship to reality. Fiction which was utterly divorced from reality would also be utterly without interest. So when a work of science fiction has seriously blown its effort to be credible through some factual error I do find this very irritating. I have noticed many examples of this over the years and have occasionally written in to the prozines to comment on these things. In particular I have twice written letters about errors pertaining to the law of conservation of angular momentum. Both of these letters have been published.

One of the most spectacular scientific errors that comes to mind occurs in a novel by Piers Anthony, *Phthor*, in which he tells us that the chemical element fluorine combines with every known element except oxygen and that if fluorine were forced to combine with oxygen as he speculates in this novel some bizarre cataclysmic result would occur. In fact fluorine combines with oxygen quite readily and many oxygen fluorides exist. There is one element that fluorine does not combine with which is helium although even if fluorine were in some bizarre manner forced to combine with helium I would not



Margaret B. Simon

lines were laid down for this type of story?

I thought this was quite remarkable because the author seems to be saying that somebody (he doesn't say who) should be issuing rules for how science fiction should be written and which in some manner will be binding upon all science fiction writers everywhere. What he probably meant, however, was that guidelines for the stories appearing in *Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine* should be laid down. Obviously there isn't anyone in a position to lay down guidelines for science fiction everywhere although anybody can make suggestions. And anybody can ignore those suggestions.

There are, of course, guidelines for science fiction written for *IASFM*. When I first saw this magazine appear it suggested to me by its title that the guidelines would be, people would have to write something similar to what Isaac Asimov writes. But that, in fact, is not the philosophy of this magazine. The philosophy is really one of publishing good science fiction in a variety of styles and there are no great restraints as to how the author should go about it. Indeed such restraints would be counter-productive because one of the most enjoyable things in science fiction is to see when someone thinks of a new way of writing it. And probably if you did have

ans."

As I'm sure the NIEKAS readership is aware, the movie *THE PRINCESS BRIDE* was wholly satirical in intent and the author of the screenplay, William Goldman, was well aware of the fact that Australia was unknown to medieval Europeans and he introduced it as a deliberate anachronism for humorous purposes.

In the case of *RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK* one wonders why we should quibble about this minor historical point when we have a movie in which the Ark of the Covenant falls into the hands of Nazis and God is outraged by this sacrilege and sends forth bizarre supernatural manifestations causing their bodies to melt. Certainly from the theological viewpoint it's very peculiar that the Holocaust is not in itself sufficient to bring forth any miraculous manifestations of divine horror but you know if you handle this particular sacred relic in an inappropriate manner then God will perform his biblical-type miracles. This is the point I find particularly implausible but Gordon Remington chose instead to complain about a historical inaccuracy which to me is a very trivial one. I could speculate that our record of history is imperfect and that perhaps there were Nazis flying into Cairo that we don't happen to



expect the kind of bizarre consequences which Piers Anthony speculates about.

In any event this particular piece of imaginary chemistry is of central importance to this novel and because it is blatantly false the novel therefore is nonsense. It is still an amusing novel in other respects and Piers Anthony is always entertaining even though he makes these kinds of errors. Nonetheless I could not accept this as a good novel because of this flaw.

But in other cases I don't mind overlooking implausibilities. Orson Scott Card in one of his Hugo winning novels, *Speaker for the Dead*, has created an alien race that has a life cycle that is stupendously improbable in which a humanoid entity at a certain point in its life is elaborately vivisected and from the dismembered pieces of this body a type of sentient tree will grow which forms the next phase of the life cycle. Although it is not impossible for an organism to have this kind of life cycle I find it extremely difficult to believe and I cannot even vaguely imagine what kind of evolutionary forces would have given rise to this kind of process. It certainly doesn't have any obvious biological function and, as I say, it is staggeringly implausible. Nonetheless the novel, *Speaker for the Dead*, is an exceptionally beautiful novel, a very poignant novel with magnificent characterization, ingenious plotting, and that special Orson Scott Card touch that we have come to recognize over the years. I consider it to be one of the best novels I have read in spite of the fact that it does contain this implausible element.

So my reaction to a particular implausibility varies quite a bit. But the most important factor here is that certain things are just flatly impossible and if an author insists on including them in his writing I am just not going to believe it. But if you include something which is perhaps grossly implausible but which cannot absolutely be ruled out then I would be willing to accept it if I feel it serves a legitimate dramatic purpose and the author has a good reason for doing this. If he does it gratuitously just to make his writing strange, and there are authors who do that, then I don't like it. But if you make really good use of some implausible type of speculation then I figure this is legitimate science fictional process.

## TIME IS TO TRAVEL

One special category of the implausible science fiction novel might be the time travel novel in general, that is, a novel which involves travel into the past. If you have time

travel into the future there is nothing particularly implausible about that. In fact we know that it is possible to travel into the future at an accelerated speed through the use of Einsteinian time-dilation and one could achieve similar effects through some form of suspended animation. Travel into the future creates no real problems of plausibility but travel into the past does. The idea that an event which has already occurred can retroactively be caused to have occurred in a different way seems contrary to all human experience and logic and creates ghastly and dire paradoxes as well, since we find that if it is possible to do this then it becomes possible for an event to cause itself. In other words, for example, someone pops into my living room traveling back into time from the future and gives me a time travel machine, then at some point in the future I take this time travel machine and travel back in time to myself and give it to myself. This is a plot device I've seen more than once in science fiction novels and the question is, where did this time machine come from? Nobody ever built it. Nobody ever invented it. It simply created itself, seemingly out of thin air, and yet if time travel is possible then this scenario can occur. And again it is an offense against logic. It doesn't necessarily mean that it's impossible, but it does mean that it is very hard to believe.

Oddly enough time travel is not as implausible today as it once was because recent work in advanced theoretical physics seems to indicate that in a sufficiently intense gravitational field of a certain configuration there is a sufficient distortion, according to Einsteinian theory, of the space-time matrix to make time travel possible. It's also true that the same gravitational field produces tidal forces so intense that anything passing through it would be disassembled down to a subatomic level. But those subatomic particles, in theory, could travel into the past and so we have seen at least a type of time travel being possible. This, of course, remains wholly theoretical and is probably a theory that will never be tested since the equipment needed to test this theory would be so difficult to build. This is more of a vindication of the concept of time travel than I ever expected to see. Incidentally, the theoretical work on this was done by a physicist named Tipler and his theoretical construct is called "The Tipler Time Machine." It has already been used in a number of science fiction novels, most notably the novel *Tau Zero* by Poul Anderson.

Anyway, when we have time travel novels

the plots can become truly bizarrely complex since even after things happen they can subsequently be made to have happened differently; so the end result is, it's very hard to know what happened or if what happened is really what happened and will continue to be what happened. One odd example of this I recently read is the third volume in a series called "The Destiny Makers" by Mike Shupp, *A Soldier of Another Fortune*. It consists almost entirely of descriptions of events which turn out not to have actually occurred because just at the end of the novel someone goes back in time and cancels them all out by one quick surgical maneuver. And we have to wonder after reading this why we have had to read such a detailed description of events which did not occur. I mean events in any novel did not actually occur but these events did not even occur in terms of the novel we are reading. On the other hand they did occur before they were caused to have not occurred.

It can be argued that they should not be considered science fiction at all. I was recently reminded by Buck Coulson that Anthony Boucher once commented that there is much more evidence for the existence of werewolves than there is for the belief that time travel may be possible. At least time travel for anything but subatomic particles. Of course we are dealing with a rather far-out branch of advanced physics where the theories are in a state of constant flux.

But I would also say, implausible though they are, that science fiction novels dealing with time travel are often very entertaining and that some excellent time travel novels have been written. I would mention Isaac Asimov's *The End of Eternity* as being a very good time travel novel but there are a great many and I suppose I should include the first time travel novel as well, H.G. Wells' *The Time Machine*.

Of course we have already seen that faster-than-light travel is another frequently used device which may be implausible. I must agree with Isaac Asimov that I cannot really envision any way in which such devices will ever be invented. Nonetheless they are extremely useful for science fictional plotting and are worth using. If they are treated as science rather than as magic, even if they may ultimately not be scientifically possible, the stories should be considered as science fiction. I think it would be foolish to try to eject them from the classification of science fiction. We should bear in mind that however much we may doubt that these particular

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# Quid Pro Quo

## Across the River by Fred Lerner

Every day, 75,000 acres of tropical rain forest are destroyed. Every year, 10,000 species of plant and animal life disappear forever from the Earth. Our inheritance of beauty and diversity is being squandered at an unprecedented rate. But these losses upset us for more than aesthetic reasons.

Conservation is more than ever a matter of vital economic importance to everyone on this planet. We are only beginning to understand the role played by tropical rain forests in maintaining the planetary climatic balance. We have only recently learned of the importance of tropical plants to our agriculture and pharmacology. And we are beginning to realize the necessity of conserving the genetic resources represented by the world's wildlife.

But that's a fact more quickly grasped in economically developed societies than in the Third World. An undernourished, landless peasant is justifiably more concerned with securing a homestead, feeding his family, and providing for his children than with worries about future generations. And the leaders of developing nations are justifiably more concerned with the needs and aspirations of their own people than with the opinions of Western environmentalists.

We in the West are also concerned with the welfare of the Third World, whether our concern stems from guilt, altruism, or geopolitics. But we have been pretty clumsy in articulating our concern. Too much Western technical assistance has been directed toward ill-conceived mega-projects that have created problems equal to or greater than those they were intended to solve. And too much Western aid money has gone into the pockets of Third World despots and corrupt officials.

Foreign aid has been unsuccessful not only from our

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point of view. No people likes to depend upon the goodwill of outsiders; and all too often well-meaning donations have had catastrophic effects upon the economies of their recipients. From the political point of view, foreign aid has seldom repaid the expectations of donor countries: the vast sums lavished upon Iran and Vietnam by the United States over the past several decades have earned us nothing.

Perhaps the time has come to realize that foreign aid has been a failure. But that does not mean that developing countries need depend upon exporting their natural resources to the West in order to transcend subsistence farming and earn the money needed to build a modern infrastructure and to finance the transformation to a post-industrial society. The Third World has something that the West badly needs, and the West should pay for it.

If the industrial world wants the developing countries to preserve their rain forests and save their wildlife from extinction, let a consortium of industrial nations (such as the OECD) contract with individual nations in the Third World to do just that. Surely our economists are ingenious enough to arrive upon an equitable payment for services rendered, and surely a combination of on-site observation and satellite reconnaissance can ensure that the agreements are carried out properly.

By establishing a cash value for the preservation of natural resources we will do more to convince people in the developing world that rain forests and endangered species are valuable to their future as well as to ours than any torrent of words from Western environmentalists will accomplish. And we will be able to encourage the conservation of these resources without feeling hypocritical about our own sorry environmental record.✱





# A Genre In Search of Itself

## The Haunted Library

by Don D'Ammassa

There was a time when I read virtually everything published in the field of science fiction, fantasy, and horror. The explosion of publishing, the rise of fantasy and horror as almost separate genres, and other factors have made this impossible recently, which is in some ways unfortunate. Never again will readers be able to say that they really "know" what is happening in the field, because no one could possibly read everything already published and stay caught up as well.

On the other hand, horror fiction—at least in its latest surge of popularity—is a recent enough phenomenon that I discovered about a year ago that I had read virtually everything published in softcover in this country. A spark of inspiration lit inside my mind. There have been numerous reader's guides to SF published over the years; why couldn't I develop the same thing for horror fiction? Computers are wonderful, and it was a simple matter to construct a manuscript consisting of mini-reviews of everything I had read. I spent two months reading the few dozen titles that I had shelved without reading, chasing down copies of most of the books I knew existed but had not yet purchased. I finally found myself in possession of a manuscript approximately 120,000 words in length, consisting of short reviews of 2000+ novels, with appendices listing single author collections, anthologies, and so on.

As of this writing, three publishers have chosen not to purchase the book, one because they were not prepared to publish non-fiction, two others because they were not convinced that horror readers are loyal enough to the genre to support the book. In other words, the people who buy and read horror fiction are, by extension, unwilling to consult a reference work to find other reading matter. They would rather use their own judgment, or evaluate books by the cover art, or use some other criteria. Leaving aside the arguable merits of my own writing on the subject, I'd like to examine the implication that horror readers are somehow different from SF readers, or even mystery readers, who have their own fandom.

There is an organized horror fandom, al-

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*Horror Fiction is  
intensely  
introspective, while  
SF is largely focused  
on the external  
world.  
Characterization is  
more important...  
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though its conventions are not as widely attended as those of SF. Horror novels regularly make the bestseller list, although for the most part they are restricted to the Big Five - Stephen King, Dean Koontz, Clive Barker, Robert McCammon, and Peter Straub. Indeed, King has his own small but loyal group of fans. The proliferation of semiprofessional horror magazines including such titles as *Eldritch Tales*, *Festering Brain Sore*, *Fantasy & Terror*, *Weirdbook*, *Haunts*, *2AM*, *Horrorshow*, and many others clearly indicates that there is in fact a loyal following. But is this following numerous enough to support commercially marketed non-fiction?

The appeal of horror fiction is, I think, to a wider and less focused audience. Science fiction fans sometimes read horror, but many express open distaste. SF is rational, they say, and horror fiction irrational, or at least non-rational. Which is absolutely true, of course, and absolutely irrelevant. Many horror novels, particularly those which become bestsellers, are purchased and read by the non-compulsive reader, people who want something to go to sleep by, or read on long trips, or when their favorite television program has been pre-empted by politics or some other crisis. They read infrequently

and stick to a handful of familiar authors, or to the titles they hear most frequently. These readers are not about to go looking for the latest title by talented midlist writers named Hautala, Costello, Masterton, McDowell, or Farris, except by accident. Certainly they wouldn't go out and buy a book to tell them which books to buy.

Horror fiction, in its most recent incarnation, doesn't even have much of a history. Its shape is still emerging; there are no clear schools of writing, although there have been some tentative polarizations of late. The series character is almost unknown outside of a few vampire series. To a large extent, horror fiction is formula bound as well. The classic ghost story is a form almost as rigid as the traditional sonnet. Traditional monsters reflect long-standing rules—vampires fear sunlight, werewolves are killed by silver, and so on—and although some authors are varying from that formula, their experimentation stands out largely because of the contrast to the existing formula. The prospective reader looking for a vampire story really doesn't care much about a particular writer; he's looking for a particular kind of story and may not even care very much how original or well written it is.

Finally, horror fiction is intensely introspective, while SF is largely focused on the external world. Characterization is more important in horror fiction because the reactions of the characters and the reader are more important than setting, original ideas, or panoramic events.

Science fiction, some argue, was actually helped by its ostracism from the mainstream. The long period of isolation enabled it to develop a loyal readership who felt the camaraderie of sharing something unpopular, and this core readership sustained it during those inevitable years when there was flagging interest from the general readership. It is possible that horror fiction, by becoming popular so rapidly, is endangered as a genre, doomed to pass into obscurity just as the pseudo-gothic romance novel of a few years back has become almost extinct. With only a small handful of truly popular writers, the



field may lack the staying power which will sustain it during the inevitable periods of lax interest.

Only time will tell.

(My listing of classic horror [NIEKAS 39] apparently led to some misconceptions. The entries were not listed in any particular order, so please don't assume that #1 on the list was judged to be superior to the rest.

Now I want to talk a little bit about horror films this time, and the relationship they bear to horror literature. The disparity between science fiction as literature and the vast majority of celluloid interpretations thereof is and has been so enormous that they have almost come to have two different names, SF for the literature, Sci-Fi for the films, although in the minds of the majority

ghosts, demons, clairvoyants, psychokinetics, ancient curses, possessions, evil witches, hidden cults, ghouls, and other monsters will remain a large part of the field no matter what new directions arise. SF continues to use space and time travel, alternate histories, other dimensions, alien races, future dictatorships, plagues, disasters, and such; every field has its conventions and to escape from them completely, even if possible, would mean cutting off our literary roots. In Shakespeare's day it was understood that it was not so much the story that counts, as how you tell it.

Why such an enormous discrepancy between literature and screen? After all, a number of real books have been made into successful horror films over the years, starting with the classics, *Frankenstein*, *Dracula*, *Dr. Jekyll & Mr. Hyde* and others, progressing through the collected works of Stephen King, rounded out by Peter Straub's *Ghost Story*, Whitley Strieber's *Wolfen* and *The Hunger*, and Ray Russell's *Incubus*, among scant others. The truth, of course, is that the film industry, rightly or wrongly, believes that the viewing public is interested primarily in rehashes of your basic slice and dice plot, preferably involving a handful of nubile teenagers who take their clothes off at almost any excuse. The horror film formula is even more precise than that for SF films, which at least allows some variation of plot.

All of this naturally makes it difficult for a prospective horror writer to produce a book which has any reasonable chance of making it to the screen, hence the big bucks. Even Dean Koontz, one of the most popular horror writers, has been brought to the screen only twice to date, his earlier SF novel *Demon Seed* and his fine horror thriller, *Watchers*, the film version of which is...unfortunate. None of the works of Robert McCammon, Michael McDowell, or countless other skilled authors have had any of their books made into films. Even Clive Barker produced three of his five films from original scripts, and the other two from a story and a novella.

Does this mean that good horror novels cannot be made into good horror movies? Obviously not. One of the more heartening bits of news recently is that Chelsea Quinn Yarbro's *Hotel Transylvania* has been purchased. Suzy McFee Charnas' non-sensational vampire novel, *The Vampire Tapes*, has been optioned a number of times. Arguably the finest horror film of all time was made from Shirley Jackson's classic novel, *The Haunting of Hill House*. Any

See LIBRARY, Page 62

## I WAS A MIDDLEAGE STF NAZI

COMING SOON FROM ARMENIAN-INTERMUSCULAR!!!!



Secondly, James's "Turn of the Screw" is, as Jane Yolen pointed out, a novella, not a novel, and was left off for that reason only.

More disconcerting were some of the objections to horror fiction voiced by SF fans. Terry Jeeves is angered by the "mislabeling" of some SF as horror and vice versa. Since I don't accept that the border between the two fields is always distinct, I can't get very excited about the problem. Dean Koontz's *Lightning* is a pure SF novel, marketed here as horror fiction. It probably tricked a number of unsuspecting readers into buying and, hopefully, enjoying a thoughtful SF story.

Brian Earl Brown castigates horror fiction for appealing to the "prurient fears" of readers. I wish he'd been more explicit in his complaint. Granting for the sake of argument that horror fiction does in fact do so, why is an appeal to the emotion of fear any less legitimate than an appeal to some other emotion? Are there other subjects which Brian feels writers should not write about, and why? Although there is a lot of terrible and unpraiseworthy horror fiction being written, the same is true of any other field. I could understand a reaction to the wave of militaristic SF being published recently. After all, why should we tolerate writers appealing to our pruriently violent urges?)

of non-sf readers, there is no real distinction. Even today, when a number of serious, well plotted SF novels are transformed to the screen—sometimes quite well as with Clarke's *2010*—the closest image of the true nature of literary SF conveyed to the general public is that of STAR TREK.

Horror fiction suffers from a very similar malady, one which even affects SF fans. When one longtime reader and occasional writer of SF learned that I had sold a horror novel, he called and commented that I had probably had great difficulty writing an "intellectual slasher novel". Ask the average person on the street what horror literature is about and you'll probably here about Jason, Freddy, and Michael Myers even before the words vampire, werewolf, and zombie are spoken.

Naturally, there's a degree of truth in the charge. There are many mindless slasher stories being published, just as there are numerous STAR TREK novelizations (often surprisingly good, I admit) and other, less memorable SF and fantasy clearly reflecting a media perception of what the public wants. It is also true that a very large proportion of new horror novels still make use of standard, familiar themes, though often handled from a new perspective. Vampires, werewolves,



# The Satanic Versus

## Nihil Humanum

by John Boardman

Prior to the current fuss, the Anglo-Indian author Salman Rushdie had established himself a minor reputation as a satirist and stylist. Rushdie had been born in India under the British occupation, in a part that later became Pakistan. Accordingly, he considers all three nations to be legitimate topics of criticism, and had doled out much of it even before writing *The Satanic Verses* (Viking Penguin Inc., 1988, \$20; but available from discount sources for as little as \$13 if you know where to look). An earlier work had been banned in Pakistan; though nominally a work of fiction, it struck too close to the roots of Zia al-Haq's dictatorship to be welcome to him.

Rushdie has done it again, and on a much larger scale. The two principal characters of *The Satanic Verses* are Indian Muslims (nominally) in show business. Though originally given the names Ismail Najmuddin and Salahuddin Chamchawala, they are professionally known respectively as Gibreel Farishta and Saladin Chamcha. But, as soon develops, they are also the Angel Gabriel (which is what "Gibreel Farishta" means) and the fallen Angel Satan, contending for the soul of the prophet Mahound and for the whole City of London as well.

This latter element will remind the experienced reader of fantasy of James Branch Cabell's 1923 novel *The High Place*. At the end of that novel, Florian de Puyssange, having got himself in difficulties with both Heaven and Hell, finds the Archangel Michael and the demiurge Janicot both intimately involved in his case. Rather than having an angelic combat over his soul, the two agree that he is a rather poor specimen of humanity and would not be a suitable trophy for either of them to win. They instead decide to send him back to his childhood, in hopes that he can avoid getting himself into this mess again.

The confrontation of two angels is not the only thing that will remind the reader of *The Satanic Verses* of Cabell. Although Rushdie writes in the idiom of India rather than that of the American south, he has the same richness of style and flowery language that

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*Rushdie's satire does not exhaust itself on Islam as a target; there is enough left over for Margaret Thatcher's England.*  
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characterized Cabell's works. And, as with *Jurgen*, *The High Place*, or *The Devil's Own Dear Son*, the action varies between our ordinary sublunar world and the realm of fantasy. And, like Cabell, Rushdie deals heavily in humorous satire.

The British and American ways of using the English language have long been recognized as two great and equally valid idioms for expression. Rushdie's novel will be the first evidence, for millions of readers, that Indian English is a third English idiom, different from but of equal status with the others. For Rushdie sometimes gets intoxicated with the English language. He enjoys such compound usages as "wayupthere" or "Ellowen Deeowen," which is not a woman's name but a city's. (Pronounce it.) He even delivers himself of a pun about "bottled djinn." And he throws in a great many Anglo-Indian expressions, some of which you will have to pick out of context, as no commonly available dictionary will give them to you.

Related to this is Rushdie's commentary on the Indian who is so thoroughly assimilated to English culture that he tries to be taken for English. The author may be poking a little fun at himself there. Saladin is such an Indian, and much of the novel deals with his and Gibreel's reactions to getting stuck in London after getting turned into angels.

It is the process of their "angelicization"

that begins the book. As you are sure to know if you've read the reviews, an airplane hijacked by terrorists blows up over the English Channel, and Gibreel and Saladin plummet from an unsurvivable height—and survive. Except that, when they land, Gibreel has a halo, and Saladin begins to grow horns and goatish legs which continue to develop in the following days as he has a run-in with the immigration authorities. Rushdie's satire does not exhaust itself on Islam as a target; there is enough left over for Margaret Thatcher's England and the harsh way in which immigrants from the former Empire are treated. At one point, Saladin has a run-in with three immigration officers who show that they are made of the same stuff as Americans of that calling. (They bear the fine old English names of Stein, Novak, and Bruno; here also people of recent immigrant stock tend to give the hardest times to newcomers.)

Three plots are interweaved, with minor incidents hanging around the edges of them. One deals with the lives of Gibreel and Saladin, in India and after their angelicization in London. Another deals with the prophet Mahound, founding his new and rigidly monotheistic religion in the Arabic city of Jahilia (Mecca) until he is forced into a 25-year-exile in Yathrib (Medina), from which he returns in triumph. During this time he gets direct and very convenient revelations from Gibreel. Yet Mahound's Jahilia does not seem to be located in the modern world; the technology is entirely 7th-century. The third plot deals with the inhabitants of a 20th-century Indian Muslim village which, under the influence of a young woman of exotic beauty named Ayesha, decides to go on pilgrimage to Mecca, secure in the belief that when they reach the Arabian Sea it will open and let them pass. (The village is named "Titlipur," which seems to remind us of another village in another country in another work of fiction.) Ayesha and her strange entourage of butterflies are also being inspired by Gibreel, though the local Hindus claim that she is a living image of the god-

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# It's Literature, But Is It Science Fiction?

## Linkages

by Pat Mathews

The borderline between science fiction and mainstream literature is beginning to fade a little. Gates are opening up in the ghetto walls; in some cases, eight-lane interstate highways run through those gates. One of the biggest proofs we have of this is that the border guards—critics, reviewers, and members of professional organizations such as SFWA—on both sides of the line are screaming bloody murder.

Whenever there is a semi-open border, there will be traffic across it in both directions. Anyone who has seen the El Paso-Juarez bridge or its counterparts elsewhere knows that, in both directions, it looks like any major urban road. We have Yankees going into Mexico; Mexicans coming into Texas; Mexicans returning to Mexico; and tourists coming back into El Paso. Likewise with the border between literature and science fiction: the traffic is now going both ways.

Is Margaret Atwood's novel *The Handmaid's Tale* science fiction? Only Atwood herself and some of her mainstream coterie, terrified of being ghettoized, deny it. It reads like a prequel to Robert Heinlein's *Revolt in 2100*. If Atwood had deliberately set out to explore what effect the reign of the Prophet Incarnate had on the women of the first generation of the suppression, and how it came about, she would have written the same book.

If she had been a lifelong science fiction fan setting out to pay tribute to Heinlein, the only thing changed would have been some points of style. For instance, the academic postscript is something Delaney and Yolen have played with; Heinlein, no academic, never bothered.

Are technothrillers to be classed as science fiction? They were in Heinlein's day. Now, a major yuppie suburb has been built outside the walls of the ghetto and the intellectual children of the first science fiction writers are moving in.

What about 'magic realism' and what does the term mean? As far as I can see, fantasy. Not elves and unicorns, but traditional, classic fantasy in a tradition going back to *The*

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*Golden Ass*. (I have also read the books of Carlos Castaneda and Lynn Andrews; they are first-person fantasy pretending to be autobiography, with the taste of cardboard that often comes when 'skim milk masquerades as cream.' But their popularity proves there is a market for first-person fantasy, as long as it's not labeled as such. I am reminded of the conventions of the True Confessions magazines.)

Now, after all these years of mainstream writers writing science fiction and fantasy and insisting it is literature, we have novels published as science fiction that could just as well have been called literature to begin with. They fall as much on the outside of the ghetto walls as on the inside. Two of these are Elizabeth Scarborough's *The Healer's War* and Lewis Shiner's *Deserted Cities of the Heart*.

Scarborough's novel is the memoirs of a nurse in Vietnam. It is CHINA BEACH with the gloves off. What makes it science fiction—or fantasy—is that, partway through the book, an old Vietnamese gives her protagonist the ability to see peoples' auras; hence their true character (or emotional state) and makes a true Healer out of her. This heightens her reaction to the horrors around her, both medical, bureaucratic, and inherent in the nature of war. It changes very little. *The Healer's War* could have been

issued as a modern, female *Red Badge of Courage*.

Perhaps she wrote it as science fiction because this is what she knew. Perhaps it was accepted as and assumed to be science fiction because she was already known as a science fiction writer. Perhaps it was much easier to find a publisher for it as science fiction than as a war memoir.

None of this changes the basic character of the novel.

*Deserted Cities of the Heart* is as much science fiction (or fantasy) as OLD GRINGO, which is now filmed as a straight historical romance.

*Cities* takes place in Maya country. The suspension of disbelief comes in accepting, not the fantasy elements, but the politics. Shiner has a game of guerillas-and-contras going on in contemporary Mexico; the reader must take it on faith that this is not modern Central America; or Mexico a few years down the road.

The central character is not the hero, but the object around which the heroes' actions revolve. Eddie is a burned-out hippie who has been living in a Maya village for some time. A reporter for a paper like *Rolling Stone* has been following the guerillas around; one of his photos includes Eddie; Eddie's wife and brother head into the outback to find him. Upon finding him, they are promptly entangled with guerillas (mostly good guys), contras (all bad guys), local Maya villagers (recognizably people, warts and all) and the love affair which has been inevitable from Day One.

Eddie, zonking out on Magic Mushrooms, has been mentally time-travelling back to the ancient days of the Maya Ascendancy. Basically, what the mushrooms reveal is that the Cycles of Cycles is coming to an end; a New Age is coming; the Mayan calendar says so; and there's your fantasy.

Drug-induced visions do not qualify a book as fantasy in my viewpoint; especially visions as modest and down-to-earth as Eddie's. This man makes more sense under 'shrooms than sober. One charming interlude 're-

See LINKAGES, Page 63



# Referencing Reviews, Reviewing References

## What Is Past...

by Sam Moskowitz

*Science Fiction & Fantasy Book Review Annual*. Robert A. Collins & Robert Latham (ed.). 1988. Meckler Publishing, 11 Ferry Lane West, Westport, CT 06880, 486 pp. \$65.00.

This is the first of what is hopefully an annual volume in which the outstanding books of the previous year will be reviewed, both non-fiction and fiction, to offer a guide to librarians and collectors as to what is most desirable to order for their shelves. This same role was filled on a monthly basis by the late, lamented *Fantasy Review*, edited by Robert Collins with the book review assignments handled by Robert Latham. *Fantasy Review* had reliably showed up in the mail box for over 100 issues and in its last years tried to review all the books of fantasy interest, hardcover and paperback, that appeared and in that aspect gave as comprehensive a coverage as the field has ever seen. Additionally, it ran features, often by prominent figures in the professional field, that were both timely and worth reading. The editor, Bob Collins, seemed to have a talent for embroiling himself in a variety of disagreement with various members of his readership, some innocently, others from apparent lack of good judgment. Part of the reason for the high level of interest maintained by his magazine may be attributed to the fact that he paid for the feature material—but not for the book reviews.

There were so many reviewers of disparate abilities and the deadlines were so tight that an unpardonably high element of unreliability entered into using the magazine as a guide to what to purchase and read. Instead, its primary purpose consisted of being a guide to *what had appeared* with supplementary information as to its content. Therefore, it was with a decided lack of confidence that I began the reading of the annual volume. My task was made a bit easier because unlike the magazine, the *Annual* is handsomely printed with a good-sized clear type. I started with the non-fiction section, because my primary interest rests in scholarship, but before I completely finished it I



*Pierce does not  
possess...the desire  
to impress readers  
with the profundity of  
his pronouncements,  
as did James Blish,  
yet he makes his  
points with validity.*

sm

began dipping into some of the reviews of fiction that I was familiar with. Something strange had happened. In many cases, the same reviewers who had proven so unreliable in the magazine were making good sense with most of the material I was qualified to judge. Whereas the magazine was an unreliable guide, the *Annual* was a *reliable* guide to the content and quality of the volumes reviewed.

What had happened? Perhaps abandoning their initial goal of reviewing *everything* and narrowing down to reviewing what seemed of some importance, added to the full-year deadline instead of the monthly deadlines, the reviewers actually had time to *read* the books instead of sampling the beginning, the ending and a few passages in between. Many of the reviews were longer and perhaps the editors had time to appraise them more carefully than they did on a monthly basis. It is not because more of the reviews agree with my own reactions to the books under discussion, but because even when I disagree with the hypothesis or conclusions, they still make sense in context.

The reviews, of course, are the main reason for being of the volume, but there are other features which possess considerable

value. For example, Neil Barron has a chapter on "The Year's Research and Criticism" which can be used as a substitute for reading all the non-fiction reviews or as a guide to which ones that should be read. Interestingly, he sometimes offers a different opinion from the reviewer.

Michael Levy contributes "The Year in Science Fiction" and even provides us with "The Top Ten." One wonders, considering the quantity of science fiction appearing, whether he could actually have read the majority of new novels that appeared to provide us with that guide, but to quibble is to risk being told "If you don't believe me, read them yourself" and that would be something I feel I would be physically incapable of doing and rather low on my list of preferred projects. He even provides a short list of "The worst novels of the year," four of them by L. Ron Hubbard, not forgetting to insert the disclaimer that they are *all* bestsellers! He goes on to comment on trends within the field.

"The Year in Fantasy" is covered by Charles de Lint. He informs us that there were, according to *Locus*, 256 titles the past year of which among the most important was Peter S. Beagle's *The Folk of the Air*. Beagle is an author of considerable ability who obviously does not depend upon his writing for a living, otherwise he would produce considerably more. His coverage does convince me that a separate article is needed for the specialty book publishers. They are producing some very distinguished and appealing titles and I have not checked to see how adequately they are covered as to individual reviews. I know that as far back as the late forties and early fifties I found it necessary to give them (specialty publishers) specific coverage.

As a digression, in 1951 I compiled for Bob Tucker's *Science Fiction News Letter* (March, 1951) a list of *all* the *hardcover* science fiction and fantasy books published in 1950. There were 60 and I had read them all, bought them all, and as a dealer sold them all—at 20% discount! A. Langley Searles for the same publication, same issue, compiled a list of foreign science fiction and fantasy



(original only) and out-of-the-way collections and novels that might have been missed. He only could locate 12 such in England and The Continent! As a dividend I listed all the magazines. Lest one grow disdainful, there were 28 *neusstand* titles in 1950 publishing 117 issues. There were relatively few paperbacks; the magazines offered too much competition at that time.

There was a period when horror anthologies were more numerous than horror novels, but that time is not now, according to Michael A. Morrison, who has not gotten to 1988 yet but covers horror fiction for 1987. His summation: "too few excellent books, too many not-very-good books by very good writers, and far too many poorly edited, seriously flawed first novels...The ratio of chaff to grain in 1987 was higher than any other year this decade." Morrison gives excellent coverage to an area of publishing that has had an explosion in terms of numbers, not failing to include the many semi-pro publications which are the major source of the short fiction, most lamentably amateurish but holding hope for tomorrow's stars to be born among them.

There is a very good essay on "The Author of the Year" and for this honor Orson Scott Card has quite understandably been selected and profiled by Mark L. Van Name.

The volume is immensely readable. In addition to the reviews serving as a reasonable guide to selection, the various essays provide the quickest short course in what is happening in the broad view of the fantasy/science fiction field to be found anywhere, presented with clarity and preciseness. I think this is a volume which many fantasy and science fiction collectors might not only enjoy but find useful. Its value to librarians is obvious, but it may get a bit annoying for their patrons to be inspired to ask for books which are enthusiastically reviewed in the book but are not to be found on the library shelves.

### TRILOGIES NOT CONFINED TO FICTION ALONE

*Foundations of Science Fiction, A Study in Imagination and Evolution* by John J. Pierce. Foreword by Frederik Pohl. Greenwood Press, Inc., 88 Post Road West, Box 5007, Westport, CT 06881. 290 pages. 1987. \$35.00.

*Great Themes of Science Fiction* by John J. Pierce. Foreword by Thomas J. Roberts. Greenwood Press. 250 pages. \$37.95. 1987. *When World Views Collide* by John J. Pierce.

Greenwood Press. Foreword by Lester del Rey. 238 pp. 1989. \$39.95

These three volumes, written as a trilogy, united by the subtitle "A Study in Imagination and Evolution," are a valuable and refreshing addition to the history and criticism of science fiction on several counts. In appearance (formal without jackets), in format (bibliographies, sources, notes and indices all in place) and price (all up in the thirties) they give the visual impression of proper academia, but in style and content they may well become icons of what such preparations should aspire to.

The range and variety of works included is impressive. Unlike the all-too-frequent device of an academic selecting a dozen or so books and making them complete representation of the point he wishes to make, Pierce sweeps with total familiarity across hundreds of works covering the past two centuries. That would be enough to distinguish his volumes in subject matter from most others that have appeared, but he does not stop there. He blends into the mix the *magazine* stories of the past century whether they have appeared in book form or not and displays equal familiarity with them. Only a few academics have displayed enough periodical acumen to attempt this approach, one of the few Paul A. Carter in his volume *The Creation of Tomorrow, Fifty Years of Magazine Science Fiction* (Columbia University Press, 1977), but he was a contributor of fiction to several of those magazines. The reason Pierce can accomplish this so adroitly is that he has been a collector as well as a reader of science fiction for a number of decades, as well as a friend of other collectors with massive libraries to use for consultation. He was also editor of *Galaxy Science Fiction* for a period, attesting to his familiarity with magazine fiction, and the fact that two prominent editors and writers, Fred Pohl and Lester del Rey, have no hesitation to writing forewords to the volumes is no trivial validation. The proper academic format results from Pierce being a college graduate himself who was taught the methodology of a work involving research, reference and criticism.

Beyond that, all of his working life Pierce has been a professional journalist. Making his living on newspapers and magazines (as he still does) he has mastered the art of securing and organizing information and presenting it in the proper order with verve and clarity. There are no coined words and definitions that make so many academic

works dense. There are no impenetrable masses of pseudo-erudition. Pierce wants the reader to understand what he is offering them, because he understands it himself. Thomas J. Roberts of the Department of English of The University of Connecticut in his foreword to the second volume sums it up precisely when he states: "The first thing to say about John Pierce's *Great Themes in Science Fiction* is that it is a pleasure to read. That is not the most important thing we will all be saying about this volume in the years to come, but I hope we will always remember to salute Pierce's easy command of all the materials, his eye for just the right example, and the clear assurance of his style. This is one of those studies of sf that is as much fun to read as sf itself."

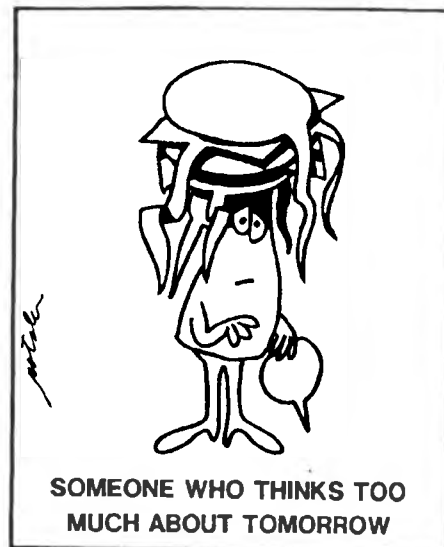
The last point is of special interest, because in the past 10 years several hundred books *about* science fiction have appeared, and the majority of them have succeeded in the impossible; they have made an exciting and vibrant subject dull! I'm afraid this reflected the limitations of the various authors' background because if a researcher brings enough new information to the fore it will override any limitations of style.

Another great virtue of the works are their objectivity. Pierce does not possess, at this stage in his life, the desire to impress readers with the profundity of his pronouncements, as did James Blish, yet he makes his points with validity. For example he recognizes the satiric thrust of many of the Edgar Rice Burroughs novels and refuses to relegate them to the category of mere escapism. At the same time, in quickly reviewing Otis

See PAST, Page 63

BALLOONS

ROTSLER



SOMEONE WHO THINKS TOO MUCH ABOUT TOMORROW

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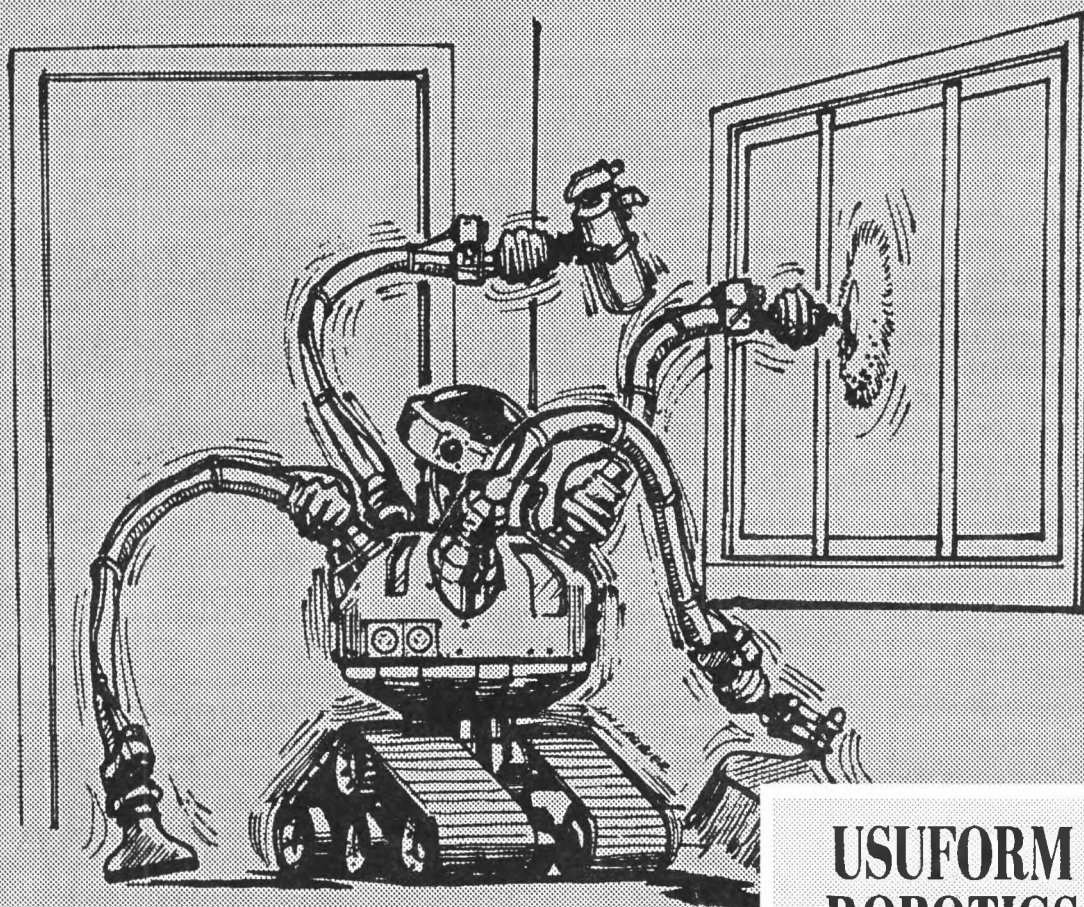
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## USUFORM ROBOTICS

ANTHONY BOUCHER'S  
FUTURE HISTORY

BY JOE R. CHRISTOPHER

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# Usuform Robotics

Anthony Boucher's Future History

by Joe R. Christopher

*There is aesthetic satisfaction in observing the grand sweep of time and change in these major future histories—analogueous to watching the growth in an individual's perceptions of life in a psychological novel—there is also a lesser satisfaction in observing the parts of a history which does not quite coalesce—*

Illustrated by Laurier

The future history, like many things in science fiction, was essentially invented by H.G. Wells. In his sequence of stories—*The Time Machine*, *When the Sleeper Wakes*, "A Story of Days to Come," and "A Dream of Armageddon"—he depicted a consistent history of the future, one involving a truly scientific understanding that evolution does not imply progress.<sup>1\*</sup> On the other hand, the most famous future history by a writer, that by Robert A. Heinlein, is less a consistent history<sup>2</sup> and is based on material progress—on the development of new inventions, including immortality. Whether Heinlein has been able to depict any psychological progress is far less certain.

But if there is aesthetic satisfaction in observing the grand sweep of time and change in these major future histories—analogueous to watching the growth in an individual's perceptions of life in a psychological novel—there is also a lesser satisfaction in observing the parts of a history which does not quite coalesce—at least, there is if the parts themselves are interesting. In the case of Anthony Boucher's four or five stories about usuform robots, it may be suggested that, although the history is flawed, at least three of the stories are significant in themselves. And, besides, perhaps the history does coalesce; that is one of the issues not yet decided.

Boucher's history begins with two stories which are directly interrelated, "Q.U.R." and "Robinc." These appeared in *Astounding Science-Fiction*, both in 1943.<sup>3</sup> Very briefly, the plot of the first story is this: in New Washington, Oklahoma, Doug Quinby (a recent technical college graduate), Mike Warren (a factory worker), and the narrator (the chief repair

man for Robinc—that is, Robots, Incorporated) set up Q.U.R.—Quinby's Usuform Robots—to manufacture robots which are not humanoid. Of course, this being a commercial story of its day, the plot is stated in terms of problems: first, what is causing the humanoid robots to malfunction, to have the equivalents of nervous breakdowns? The answer is that the human shape is not the best one for their varied jobs. No doubt this part of the story can be faulted, in terms of realism, for having a rash of breakdowns at the same time, in the heat of the Oklahoma summer, as if the robots were suffering from heat prostration. But any time, at the same time, is a flaw: shouldn't they break down in a certain period after their manufacture, as each one realized the flaws in his design?

The second problem, growing out of the first, is how to get around the legal and extralegal controls that Robinc has on the robot-manufacturing process. It is solved by getting the Head of the Empire's Council to support the three men's cause. Their method of gaining his support will be pointed out later.

Now then, what is it which removes this story from a large number of forgettable short stories which *Astounding* published, even during the "Golden Age" of the '40s? Two qualities distinguish it, of which the first is the hardest to define. This is a certain humaneness, a certain humanity, which a number of the Campbell writers did not have. For example, L. Sprague de Camp's stories of the Viagens *Interplanetarias*, which appeared about six years later, have deftly interwoven plots, linguistic skill, and humor; but they seldom have warmth. De Camp

\*Footnotes begin on page 64.



is like a trivial Ben Jonson and Boucher is like a lesser Shakespeare; de Camp presents humor characters in artificial situations, while Boucher presents—at least, more often—warm and ethical characters in moral situations. An example will illustrate the latter. In the eighth paragraph, Boucher writes,

*...I wasn't happy that afternoon. It didn't make me any happier to see a crowd in front of the Sunspot engaged in the merry pastime of Venusian-baiting. It was never safe for one of the little green fellows to venture out of the Venusian ghetto; this sport was way too common a spectacle.*

*They'd got his vapor inhalator away from him... Despite the heat of the day, I shuddered a little. Then I crossed to the other side of the street. I couldn't watch the game.<sup>4</sup>*

Thus Boucher sets up the parable of the Good Samaritan, for Doug Quinby, unlike the narrator, charges to the Venusian's rescue. "I liked him because his action had asked me what I was doing crossing over to the other side of the street, and I didn't have an answer. The only way even to try to answer was to cross back" (p. 76). And it seems typical of Boucher that the third of the protagonists—Mike Warren, the factory worker—who ends up after the street brawl drinking with the other two in the Sunspot, is one of those who was mistreating the Venusian. In Boucher's stories, there is the possibility of conversion, even at the social level.

Further, this is a comment about racial prejudice, as the use of the word ghetto makes clear. (The term had stronger connotations in 1943, when the story first appeared; the Nazi "final solution" of the Jews was then going on.) Boucher's liberalism is clear in his making the political Head of the Empire's Council a Negro—"The white teeth gleamed in the black face in that friendly grin so familiar in telecasts" (p. 88)—and having Quinby predict that someday a Venusian would be Interplanetary Head (p. 89). Also, one probable reason for introducing Mike Warren was to get a sympathetic working man into the story, for Boucher in personal life was pro-union.<sup>5</sup>

And finally there is a quality of humaneness in simply the fact that three friends get together in a bar to drink and to talk things over among themselves and with the Martian bartender. Obviously, others have used bar settings: Arthur C. Clarke's White Hart, and Gavan's Bar, described by de Camp and Fletcher Pratt, come to mind. But by and

large the settings are used for the purpose that Lord Dunsany established—the tall tale told by a drinker. Boucher uses it as a setting for *philia*. Of course, it has a function in the story—or the bartender does—but that develops later, and the impression of the earlier friendship is not obliterated because of subsequent plot structure.

This has been a long discussion of a quality not easily defined, but the other aspect of Boucher's writing is not so hard to identify. In a piece of advice intended for would-be mystery writers, Boucher suggests they combine ideas into stories.<sup>6</sup> No doubt this can be overdone, or poorly done, but if done with tact it gives a richer texture to the story than does the development of a single idea.

In "Q.U.R.", in addition to the matters already discussed, at least three other aspects—or ideas—can be isolated. For example, since a bar has just been mentioned, it is notable that this is a story which turns on the invention of a robot bartender.<sup>7</sup> In a genre which traditionally hinges on the invention of a new ray-gun in military confrontations between humans and aliens—however much that stereotype is in actuality false—the solution of a political impasse by having a robot capable of mixing a drink to perfection which involves a liquor from each of the three inhabited planets is certainly outside the pulp tradition; it also reflects Boucher's own interest in food and drink, but more importantly it is a reflection of a truth of human culture, that the amenities are often essential.

Second, the Martian in the story, Guzub the bartender, speaks in dialect. For example, his first speech:

*Guzub was beaming at us. When you know your Martians pretty well you learn that that trick of shutting the middle eye is a beam. "Youzure bolished 'em ub, boys," he gurgled. [p. 77]*

And his second speech:

*"That'z the zbird," Guzub glurked. "Avder all, we're all beings, ain'd we? Now, wad'll it be?" [p. 77]*

Perhaps it was Boucher's background as a mystery writer which caused him, after creating this dialect, to withhold any comment on it until the last Martian speech in the story (p. 96). Presumably the reader is supposed to stop and puzzle over the dialect's principles. Since Boucher had an M.A. in German and was fluent in at least three languages besides English, what he does here is simple enough for him. His Martians just cannot pronounce voiceless con-



sonants, so s's become z's, p's become b's, and so on. This linguistic interest is not unique to Boucher, for de Camp also writes accurate dialects; but few besides the two of them were consistently interested in language. Perhaps a few readers of this essay will recall Boucher's "The Barrier," in which a future totalitarian regime has regularized English.

Third, the title—"Q.U.R."—is worth consideration. The narrator, when trying to decide on a name for the company the three men plan to establish, says that they need

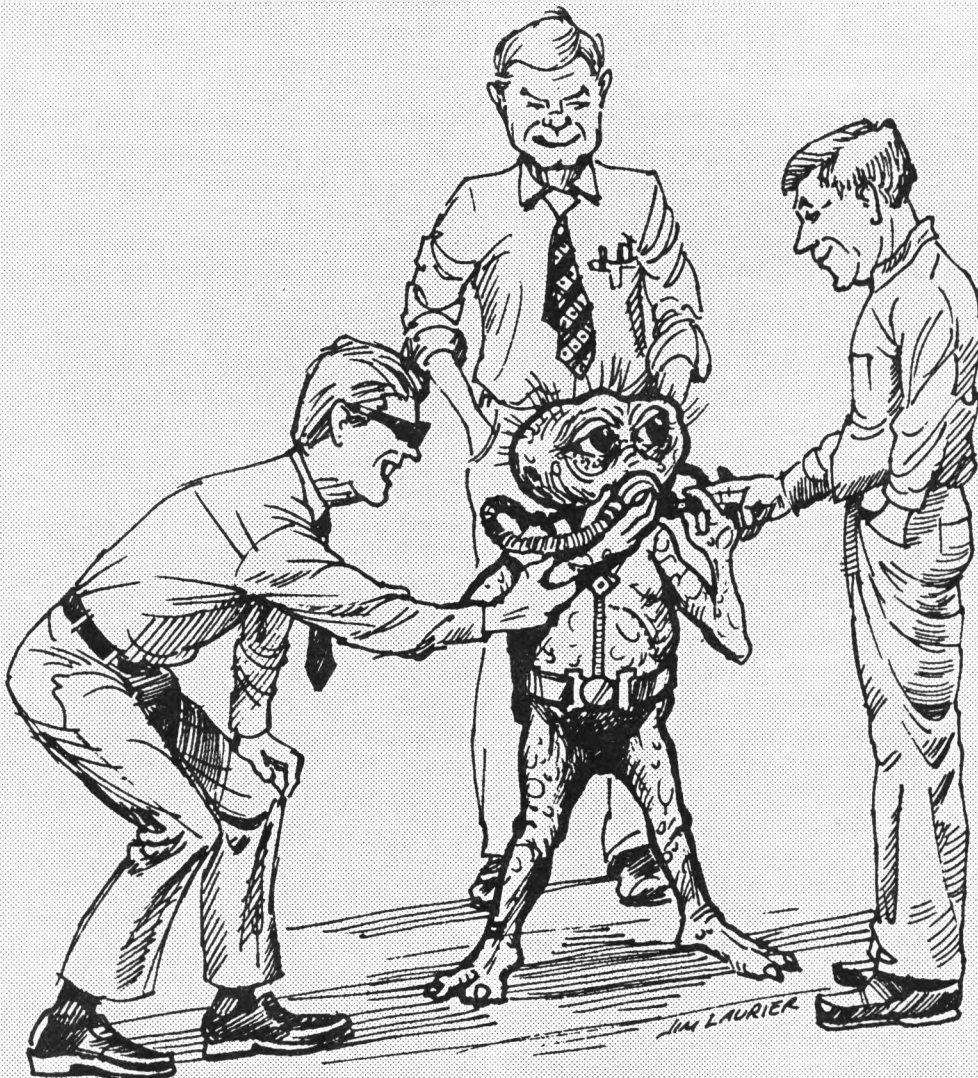
*"A good name. Keep robots; that's common domain, I read somewhere, because it comes out of*

*a play written a long time ago in some dialect of Old Slavic. Quinby's Something Robots."*

*"Functionoid?"*

*"Sounds too much like fungoid. Don't like. Let me see—" I took some more Three Planets [the drink]. "I've got it. Usuform. Quinby's Usuform Robots. Q.U.R." [p. 84]*

Thus the company is named. Q.E.D. But of course Q.U.R. echoes *R.U.R.*—Rossum's Universal Robots—the play by Karel Capek in that "dialect of Old Slavic." Boucher is here being allusive, but functionally. One of the unstated points is the contrast between Capek's androids who take over and Boucher's robots who are having nervous break-





downs.

This echo of *R.U.R.* leads to two other points. The lesser of the two is another allusion, or perhaps a science-fiction "in" joke, late in the story. The narrator comments, after they have delivered the proper drink at the proper time, "I feel like...hell, like Ley landing on the Moon" (p. 96). This reference to Willy Ley, who was then alive and an occasional essayist for *Astounding Science-Fiction*, was a graceful acknowledgment of his early interest in rockets in Germany, before World War II. But it contrasts with the Capek allusion in not being functional in the story. (That American astronauts have named a small Moon crater for Ley is interesting but beside the artistic point.)

The major of these two ideas suggested by the titular allusion is another indirect reference, but another functional one. The narrator quotes a definition to the Head of the Council, after Quinby has rebuilt his malfunctioning robot into a brain case, eyes, one arm, and a typewriter:

"A robot," I quoted, "is any machine equipped with a Zwergenhaus brain and capable of independent action upon the orders or subject to the guidance of an intelligent being." [p. 90]

Where did Zwergenhaus come from? That is, why did Boucher choose that name? It may have been partly a reaction against John W. Campbell's editorial encouragement of Anglo-Saxon or Scottish names.<sup>8</sup> But, more than that, there is the possibility that Boucher uses a z in place of an a, going from one end of the alphabet to the other; that, in short, Zwergenhaus stands for Asimov. Given Boucher's penchant for personal references, this does not seem impossible. Asimov's first positronic robot story, "Robbie" (under the title "Strange Playfellow") had appeared in *Super Science Stories* in 1940. In 1941 "Reason" and "Liar!" had appeared in *Astounding Science-Fiction*; in 1942 "Robot AL-76 Goes Astray" in *Amazing Stories*, "Runaround" in *Astounding*, and "Victory Unintentional" in *Super Science Stories*. In short, there were enough of Asimov's series published to help support the theory that Boucher is insisting that Asimov's human-shaped robots were not well conceived. More generally, Boucher attacks the premise of all humanoid robots in science fiction, and, of course, history has proved him right. Computers and memory systems handle many types of work today, but humanoid robots are pointless.<sup>9</sup>

For a short story these themes and motifs add a richness to the narrative which brings the story

above the usual level of pulp fiction. It is not a masterpiece, something meant for the ages, of course, but, in Herbert J. Gans' useful set of classifications, it is an example of the upper middle level of taste.<sup>10</sup> This is another way of saying that it is a well-written piece of popular fiction which offers more than clichés; it is certainly limited by its field and will not be of interest to all readers, but such limitations are inherent in all areas of popular fiction.

So far the story has not been discussed as a future history. Mankind obviously has expanded into space: the First War of Conquest was fought on Venus, and the gilled, generally human-shaped Venusians lost—hence they are mistreated and live in ghettos when on earth (p. 78); the Second War of Conquest, on Mars, was not successful—and hence the Martians, with their three eyes (p. 77) and numerous tentacles (p. 93), are men's equals. Further, the de-population of the earth in the Second War was the opening for the introduction of robot labor (pp. 90–91). Presumably Washington, D.C., was wiped out in this Second War, since the story is set in New Washington, Metropolitan District, Oklahoma (p. 75). The actual political structure on earth is not completely clear. The government which waged the wars and which is still in power is called an Empire (pp. 78, 91), but it seems to be under the control of a Council, with its chairman called its Head (pp. 86–87, 89). No emperor is mentioned. This need not be a flaw, for political terms shift in time, and linguistically it is quite possible to develop an Empire without an emperor. Other details could be added, but these are enough of the future history for this article's purposes.

The second story, "Robinc," adds nothing of significance to the political history. It is essentially an industrial espionage story—a struggle between the newly founded Q.U.R. and the maker of humanoid robots, Robinc. Q.U.R. does one thing to introduce usuform robots to the general population, and Robinc reacts to counter it; then Q.U.R. does another thing, and so on. The same three men are in charge of Q.U.R.: the same Martian bartender and Head of the Council show up. There are additional details, naturally: one learns that the Martians—or at least those living in the mountains on Mars—have idols which they will fight to protect (p. 111); there are a few references to the Verhaeren factor which is used to give creativity to the Zwergenhaus brain: "it's used in the robots that turn out popular fiction—in very small proportion, of course" (p. 104).

This second story is being passed over quickly for two reasons: first, as a direct sequel to the first, it does not involve a time lapse, and hence adds no



developments to the future history; second, of necessity this survey will have to avoid doing full analyses of each story.<sup>11</sup> The third story, then, appeared nine years later. Boucher had turned from writing for magazines to writing radio mysteries, and then to reviewing mysteries for the *New York Times*. So the occasional short stories of his later years were widely spaced.

This third story—probably Boucher's best-known short story and one which Poul Anderson has said is "generally acknowledged to be [Boucher's] masterpiece" in science fiction—is "The Quest for St. Aquin."<sup>12</sup> As the title indicates, the plot is that of a religious quest, specifically within Boucher's Roman Catholic tradition. The story begins:

*The Bishop of Rome, the head of the Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, the Vicar of Christ on Earth—in short, the Pope—brushed a cockroach from the filth-encrusted wooden table, took another sip of the raw red wine, and resumed his discourse.* [p. 253]

The paradoxical contrast of rhetorical styles between the elaborate and traditional parallelisms of the opening of the sentence and the specific details of the setting in the latter part establish the gap between the universal claims of the Church and its status under persecution.

The future history involved in this story seems to be far later than that in the previous two. There are three indications of this. First, the protagonist, a priest named Thomas, who is sent on the quest by the Pope, rides a robot ass—contracted as *robass*; he says to the robot, "I am glad that we—at least they, the Technarchs—have wisely made only usuform robots like you, each shaped for his function, and never tried to reproduce man himself" (p. 260). This suggests that the early humanoid robots have been forgotten, and this ties into the second point: that the time is after an atomic war. Since the previous stories were laid in New Washington, Oklahoma, this indicates a series of atomic wars, which may not be surprising, given man's propensity to wage war (and, in the earlier stories, the Martian tendency to fight back).<sup>13</sup> "The Quest for Saint Aquin" is set, at first, in a fishing village (p. 254) near the radioactive San Francisco and Berkeley area (pp. 255, 257). The quest ends near a mountain village; the text suggests that it is on Mount Diablo, which is due west of Berkeley (p. 260). But the point here is that the radioactivity suggests war, and one of Thomas's thoughts while at the village, reported in the third person, also suggests the same: "The

technically high civilization of the Technarchic Empire, on all three planets, existed only in scattered metropolitan centers near major blasting ports. Elsewhere, aside from the areas of total devastation, the drifters, the morons, the malcontents had subsided into a crude existence a thousand years old, in hamlets which might go a year without even seeing a Loyalty Checker" (p. 263). One might wonder if Technarchic is supposed to be a blend of *technology* and *archaic*.<sup>14</sup> Be that as it may, it is presumably this war which has brought the Pope to America—one assumes Italy may be mainly radioactive, due to some European phase of such a war—and which has caused the Roman Church to allow the theology of Thomas Aquinas to slip into disuse (p. 267).

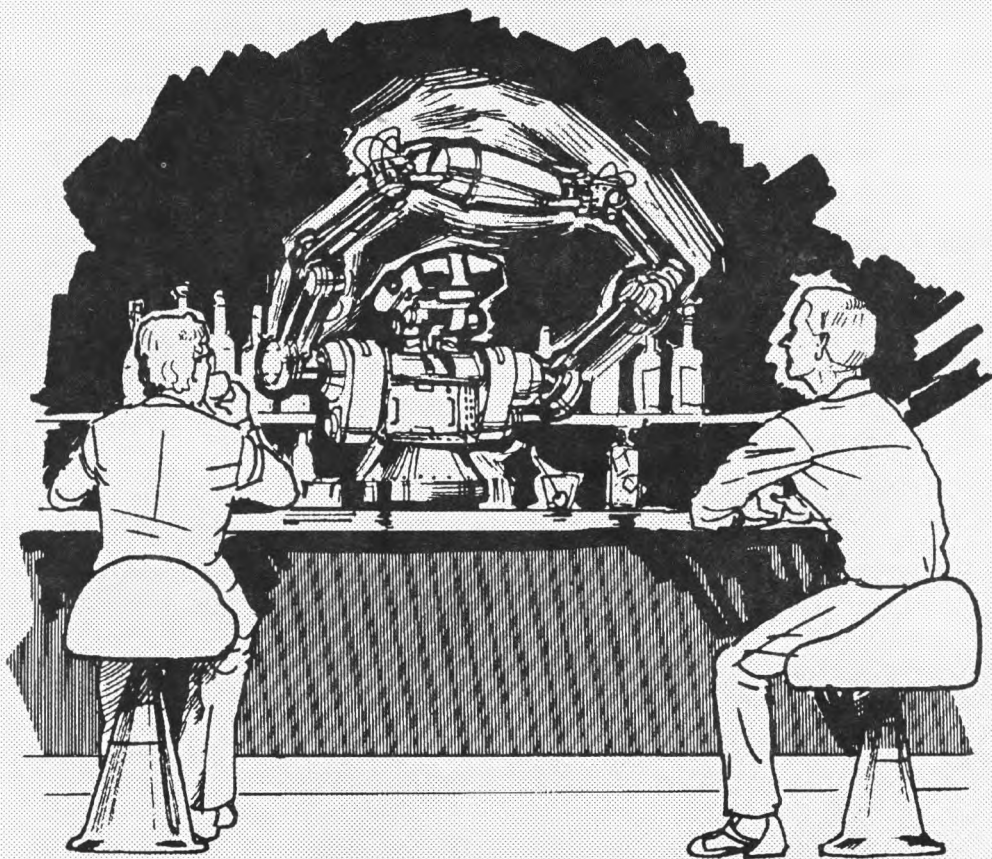
The third indication of the time which has passed since the previous stories appears in a waitress at the one inn in the mountain village.

*[She] was obviously a Martian-American hybrid. The highly developed Martian chest expansion and the highly developed American breasts made a spectacular combination.... Thomas thought of her chest and breasts—purely, of course, as a symbol of the extraordinary nature of her origin. What a sign of the divine care for His creatures that these two races, separated for countless eons, should prove fertile to each other!* [pp. 262–263]

This passage surely indicates a long period during which there was no space flight, during which the earthmen left on Mars developed the large lungs which today are associated with the Incas of the Andes. Boucher is also humorously projecting the pin-up emphasis on large breasts in America into an evolutionary development in which those women with large breasts have been the most sought-after and hence have had more offspring than other women. The joke no doubt seemed funnier in 1951 than it does with a different social consciousness today.

This sets up the future history with fair clarity. Sometime, in the far future, after another atomic war, a rigid government has taken over. It has redeveloped enough technology to re-establish a three-planet empire. Boucher in this story tells us nothing of the native Martians and Venusians of the first two stories. It is, however, easy to fault aspects of this future. The name *San Francisco* is still used and the place of the first cyclotron is still known; these references, part of Boucher's chronicling of his native state in a number of stories, are understandable if not the best verisimilitude. More bothersome is a chronological discrepancy. Near the end





of the story, an orthodox Jew who has played the part of the Good Samaritan in Boucher's retelling of that parable again, Abraham by name, comments, "My own faith... *nu*, it's lived for a long time on miracles three thousand years old and more" (p. 268). Presumably he means miracles like those performed by Moses or Elijah; no matter how one stretches "three thousand years" it will not cover a period from the Old Testament until a future so distant that the Martian humans and earth humans can only have sterile offspring (p. 263), like horses and donkeys. In Abraham's phrase, "three thousand years and more," the *and more* certainly has to cover a long period.

There are two attitudes a critic can take toward these discrepancies. First, he may say the "three thousand years" and the unchanged California names are slips, but not serious enough to destroy the story. Or, second, he may decide that Boucher is a trivial writer, more interested in effects at various points in his story than in consistency of the material. This latter is always a danger with

popular writers, who need the immediate impact of their story and a sustained series of impacts throughout to make their sales and to be remembered by their casual readers. The present writer's view is somewhere between these two extremes. Boucher presumably intended the story seriously; he certainly was an active Catholic—a lay reader in his parish church and a participant in the weekend retreats called *Cursillos*.<sup>15</sup> Both the faith and the knowledge of honest doubt in the story follow from his intellectual Catholicism.

But if the theme is seriously intended—the plot of a doubting Thomas, riding a tempter ass to the mountain of the devil, in search of the uncorrupted corpse of a miraculous saint—this does not mean that all the details are successful. As indicated, a few are inconsistent. The inconsistency itself is the slip, the error, in the story. Either a far future with a lapse in spaceflight and a forgetfulness of humanoid robots or an immediate future with a single atomic war in which the Bay area was bombed and without any history of more than one humanoid robot could



be defended. There are details in the story which could support either one; why Boucher combined them is difficult to imagine. How can a story be laid in two different times simultaneously?

At any rate, if a reader may be confused and bemused by the future setting of this story, he may find many other things to admire. One of them is the style, certainly more highly polished than most science-fiction short stories. The opening sentence has been quoted already; perhaps the last few sentences will make for balance:

*His prayers arose, as the text has it, like clouds of incense, and as shapeless as those clouds. But through all his thoughts ran the cry of the father of the epileptic in Caesarea Philippi:*

*I believe, O Lord; help thou mine unbelief.* [pp. 272–273]

There is no playing of styles against each other here; but there are two quotations, one of them, a simile, extended with a second similitude; the other, a paradox which sums up the whole need to search for a new saint, for a new miracle. This, in other words, is not a conclusion which strives for an immediate effect without regard for the whole work; it is a conclusion which sums up the story's theme.<sup>16, 17</sup>

The characterization is also well done, although it would take this essay too far from its future-history theme to discuss it fully. But Thomas's troubled faith has been indicated. The robass's temptations of Thomas, all stated in the robot's flat monotone which cannot indicate questions or exclamations by tonal variation,<sup>18</sup> are also successfully presented; the lack of emotion in the voice making the suggestions slightly more devilish perhaps, slightly more a "disinterested" evil. And Abraham's wryness—"Believe me, if there's one thing I'm not, it's a Samaritan" (p. 267)—may be more in the Yiddish-American practice of Jewishness than universally tied to that religious tradition; but it is effective enough in this story.

Structurally, beyond the quest plot, there is a nice balance in phrasing from early in the story and late. Early, the robass says to Thomas,

*"To believe in God. Bah." (It was the first time Thomas had ever heard that word pronounced just as it is written.) "I have a perfectly constructed logical mind that cannot commit such errors."* [p. 259]

And late in the story, after the discovery that Aquin

had been a robot, Thomas echoes the phrase about the mind back to the robass:

*"This is your dream. This is your perfection. And what came of this perfection? This perfect logical brain—this all-purpose brain, not functionally specialized like yours—knew that it was made by man, and its reason forced it to believe that man was made by God."* [p. 271]

The argument goes on, but this is enough to indicate the structure: the claim of "a perfectly constructed logical mind" balanced by a "perfect logical brain," each reaching different religious conclusions.

Three other, minor aspects of Boucher's story deserve mention. First, there is a reference to "a bawdy set of verses of *A Spacesuit Built for Two*" (p. 265). This is a space ballad attributed to Rhysling in Robert A. Heinlein's "The Green Hills of Earth"; probably this allusion is on the same level as that to Ley's landing on the moon in "Q.U.R."<sup>19</sup> But it does, in a minor way, indicate Boucher's interest in music—particularly, in real life, in opera<sup>20</sup>—and prepare for greater emphasis on music in the fifth story.

The second aspect is another possible allusion: the robass refers to hearing "of one robot on an isolated space station who worshiped a God of robots and would not believe that any man had created him" (pp. 259–260). This is probably a reference to Asimov's "Reason," which as indicated earlier had been published in *Astounding* in 1941; it had been collected in *I, Robot* in 1950, the year before this Boucher story appeared. There are several possible echoes between the two stories; for example, Asimov's QT-1 announces that since he functions more efficiently than humans do and all the time, unlike the two humans to whom he is talking, then he is superior. He refers to "the self-evident proposition that no being can create another being superior to itself."<sup>21</sup> Boucher's robass also announces his own superior intelligence and comments, *in re* the Pope, that

*"No human being is infallible."*

*"Their imperfection," asked Thomas, suddenly feeling a little of the spirit of the aged Jesuit who had taught him philosophy, "has been able to create perfection?"*

*"Do not quibble," said the robass. "That is no more absurd than your own belief that God who is perfection created man who is imperfection."*

*Thomas wished his old teacher were here to answer that one.* [p. 259]



Of course, this need not be Boucher's improvement (or added twist) on Asimov's story; it is possible that the similarity of themes called forth these similar discussions.<sup>22</sup>

The third aspect involves not music—the space ballad—but food: at one point Thomas eats some sandwiches of Venusian swampfog: “it was smoked swampfog, one of his favorite meats” (p. 267). Abraham refuses the sandwiches as being not kosher. But the point is again a tie to a later story, in this case the fourth one, in which the delicacy reappears.

And this is enough to lead to that next story. After “The Quest for St. Aquin,” “Secret of the House” is probably disappointing. But the former appeared in an anthology of original stories, and Boucher said specifically in the book's introduction that his story could not have appeared in a science-fiction magazine at the time of its writing, presumably because of its religious subject (p. xiii). “Secret of the House” appeared in *Galaxy Science Fiction* in 1953, published two years after Thomas's quest. It is a parallel wife-tricks-husband-humorously and girl-gets-boy plot, both of the sort of simplicity which might have appeared in *Good Housekeeping* in the 1940s. When first preparing this paper, the present writer suspected this was deliberate: in 1953 Campbell's *Astounding* was thought of as the technical magazine of the science-fiction field; Boucher's *Fantasy and Science Fiction* as the literary or “little” magazine; and Horace Gold's *Galaxy* as the *Saturday Evening Post*.<sup>23</sup> Perhaps Boucher decided to disguise a commercial woman's story as science fiction and submit it to *Galaxy*;<sup>24</sup> probably this is the only time this has been done, although the resemblance of the old “space operas” to westerns has often been noted. This conjecture has been confirmed by Phyllis White, Anthony Boucher's widow, who wrote about this story: “It was written ‘straight’ [and finished] April 21, 1949; then re-written ‘sf’ [by] May 25, 1952, which expanded it from 2000 words to 2700” (letter of 18 March 1981).

Perhaps this story is being forced into this essay artificially, since the word *usuform* does not appear. But there is mention of a “robowaxer”: “the network's robowaxer... deposit[ed] a minutely over-sufficient flow upon the floor of the corridor in front of George's office” (p. 101). And thus the television commentator<sup>25</sup> slipped and broke a leg. Certainly a robowaxer by at least one other name is a usuform robot—or is it? Could a robowaxer be a humanoid robot produced by Robinc? There is no way to tell from this story, unfortunately.<sup>26</sup> There are other ties to the series which may be consid-

ered. In “Q.U.R.” there was a reference to “the Martoids and Veneroids that some ex-colonists fancied for servants” (p. 75). In “Secret of the House” two sisters converse about a guest that Kathy's husband is bringing home for dinner when her sister is also going to eat there:

*“These revolting Venus colonial diplomats,” said Linda. “He’ll have a swamp-beard and a paunch and a wife and six children at home. Kathy, why doesn’t George ever meet anybody newsworthy who’s—well, worthy?”*

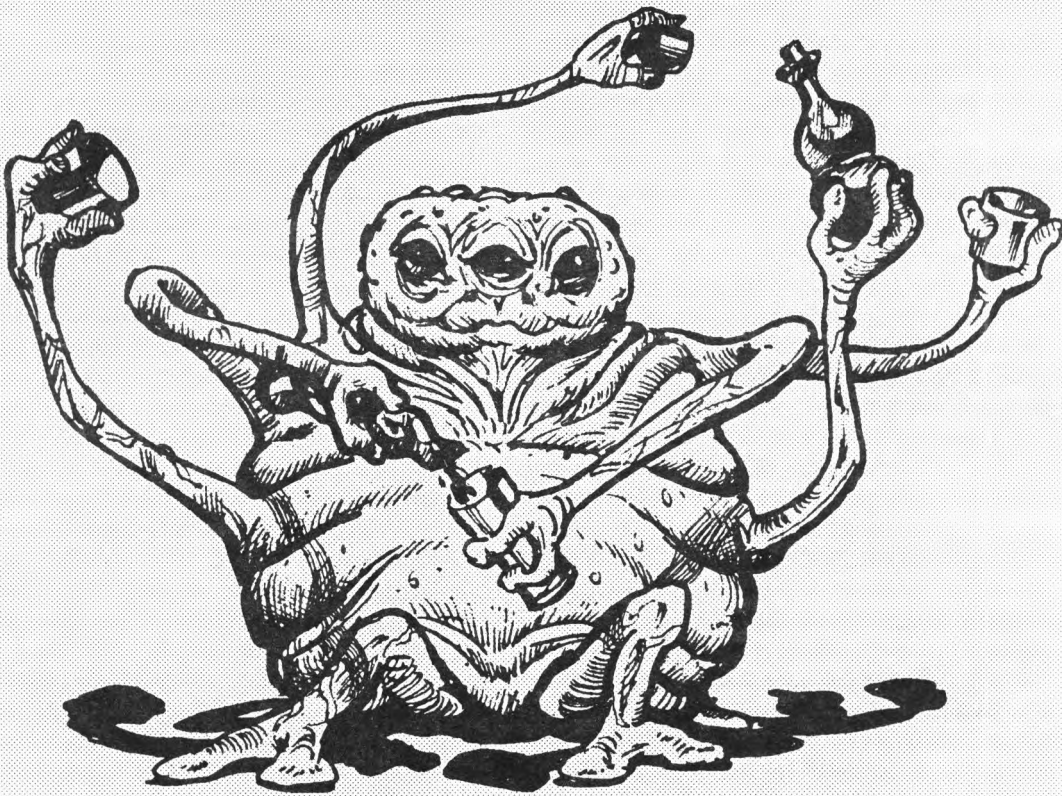
*“He’s a very fine young man, I hear,” Kathy muttered distractedly. “Guerilla leader against the dictatorship, wrote a fine book about its overthrow. What worries me is the paunch—and what I’m going to put into it.”* [p. 99]

This ties to the colonists' concept, as well as indicating a dictatorship at one time on Venus. Unfortunately, there are no details about the native Venusians, except an indication they exist in a reference to one of their cooking methods, “that wonderful native Venusian quick passing through live steam, which gave the startling effect of sizzling hot crisp rawness,” and to one of their foods, “*balj*, that strange native dish which was a little like a curry and a little like a bouillabaisse, but richer and more subtle than either” (p. 97). The reference which clearly ties back to the previous story is “*sokalj*, or Venusian swampfog, the most delicately delicious meat on three planets—not that anything Martian would ever be considered by the true gourmet...” (p. 97).

But these, and a few other Venusian words—*tinilj* (p. 99), *silj* (p. 101), and *pnulj* (p. 101)—are all the details which Boucher adds to his interplanetary history, except the general concept that trade in spices was the most profitable one between Venus and Earth (p. 97), which he supports with parallels from human history.

As indicated, it does not seem possible to place this story precisely in relation to the first two stories. It obviously belongs in the same culture, not too far from the same time. Even the references to earth cities—New Orleans, San Francisco, Paris, and Manhattan (p. 98)—do not necessarily indicate the story is laid before the Second War of Conquest, for a reader does not know for certain which cities were levelled by the Martians, except (by implication) Washington, D. C. Besides, if the Martians were using some non-radioactive device, or mainly some anti-personnel device, the cities could be rebuilt or re-inhabited. And there are no political references in “Secret of the House” which allow the reader to





decide whether or not there is an Empire ruled by a Council. Boucher is exploring just one side of his future society—that of cuisine—which was one of his own personal interests.<sup>27</sup>

If this story explores one of his interests, the final one, "Man's Reach," combines two—politics<sup>28</sup> and music. This fifth story appeared posthumously in *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction* in 1972.<sup>29</sup> The plot is intertwined, as the double theme suggests. Jon Arthur, the protagonist, is a music critic; in this capacity he helps select a singer to receive a musical scholarship to Mme. Storm's Resident Laboratory, which is located on Venus. Boucher uses the obvious German name of Venusberg for the spaceport and art colony on the second planet (pp. 63–76), echoing the name used in Wagner's *Tannhäuser* (1845);<sup>30</sup> it had already been mentioned in passing in "Secret of the House" (p. 98).<sup>31</sup> But Arthur is also a centrist in politics in a time when an election between two extreme parties was going to decide earth's future. One character describes the current earth government as a "world government, no phony league but an

honest Federation based on the individual as a unit" (p. 65). On one side of the current election is the Academy—evidently made up of scientists—which will run the earth like a laboratory, without further elections; on the other side are the Populists who are anti-intellectuals—book burners and lab smashers (p. 65). The way that the musical plot is intertwined with this is based on the woman who wins the singing competition having been trained by one of the scientists; she has great control and range but no warmth to her singing, because her training device has been a machine. Both the political and the artistic plots, after some complications, are resolved optimistically.

Besides the duplication of the name Venusberg, this story has the term *usuform*; while on the spaceship to Venus, Arthur says to another passenger: "Look over at the bar, Harden; you see that electronic mixer? ...It's a fine example of a usuform robot, made to do one thing superlatively well" (pp. 70–71). Jon Arthur goes on to describe "a *singing* robot" with a slightly larger than human uvula, used as a training device and called, after a human



teacher of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, a Marchesi (pp. 70–71). The point he is making in the story need not concern this essay; the reference is the essential point to establish the future history being studied.

But besides the port name and the “electronic mixer”—surely if it is really a robot, this has to refer to a usuform bartender of some sort—besides these, there are few references which duplicate previous details. Obviously, from the usuform reference, this has to be after the first two stories. The government has changed from an Empire run by a Council to a democratic Federation, although no history is offered to explain this.

About Mars in this story the reader learns three things: it has a type of music called a *Kumbus* which is waltz-like (p. 63), it has a type of defensive fighting called *Zozor* (p. 67), and it has, in its southern hemisphere, thorns which are “as long as your forearm and instant death once the blood-stream meets” one of them (p. 73). The visit to Venus does not mention any of the gilled inhabitants of the first story, but that may be due to Arthur staying in a port city. There is one comment which does not really bode well for them: “Venus had, in most respects, proved surprisingly Terra-like after the great project of the gyro-condensers had removed the vapor layer” (p. 74). It sounds like a drastic environmental change. (Boucher wrote before modern knowledge of the Venusian surface-temperature and atmospheric components, of course.)

One difference from the previous story is a linguistic one. In “Secret of the House,” Boucher was using distinctive dialogue to characterize the colonial diplomat, and he commented on “the usual clipped Venusian avoidance of pronouns and articles” (p. 99), and Kathy says to José Lermontov, the diplomat, at one point, “Sometimes I have to stop and reread you, like a telegram” (p. 103). But the two people Arthur talks to in the port city whose speeches are reported—mainly the director of the singing school, to be sure—do not show this dialect. Since the sample is small, and in an area influenced by visitors, this does not *prove* an inconsistency.<sup>32</sup>

Mentioned in the discussion of “The Quest for St. Aquin” was a reference to a ballad from a Heinlein story; in “Man’s Reach,” Boucher quotes two lines from “Rhysling’s *Jet Song*” (p. 63)—or, rather, he has a baritone sing that work when Arthur is judging the competition with which the story opens. But neither of these allusions are meant to make their stories part of Heinlein’s future history; they

are simply in-jokes, meant to acknowledge the indebtedness of most modern future-historians to Heinlein’s example, as well as indicating Boucher’s interest in science-fictional presentations of musical culture—if, in Heinlein’s case, popular culture.<sup>33</sup>

A different type of in-joke appears in a list of great singers, mentioned by a voice teacher: “Pasta, Mantelli, Schumann-Heink, Geyer, Supervia, Pharris, Krushelnitsa” (p. 73). Phyllis White wrote the present writer, “Did you spot the name Geyer in the list of legendary singers of ‘Man’s Reach’? [No.] All the others are real. Geyer is the heroine of *Of Lena Geyer* by Alma Gluck’s daughter, Marcia Davenport. Among the devoted followers of that book the reality of Geyer is as undisputed as that of Holmes among the Baker Street Irregulars” (letter of 18 March 1981).

Another allusion, but not of the same sort, appears in Jon Arthur’s reversal of Ferdinand’s speech over his sister, from John Webster’s *The Duchess of Malfi*, when Arthur says of another character, “Cover his face. He died old” (p. 76). One might recall a comment by a personage in Boucher’s *The Case of the Crumpled Knave*, “Any fool can quote Shakespeare; only the refined palate can savor the delights of his so-called lesser contemporaries.”<sup>34</sup> But in this story the allusion is part of the characterization, since Arthur is responding to two allusions made by the dying man, one of them the Browning passage which gives the story its title.<sup>35</sup>

Perhaps no single volume will ever collect these stories of Boucher’s future history, but a reader may at least create such a book in his imagination. The important point would be to put the stories in historical sequence. If one feels the robowaxer in “Secret of the House” is pre-usuform, he could start with that story. It would give the reason for the trade with Venus, and would indicate a separate Venusian government at that time. The next two stories would be “Q.U.R.” and “Robinc”: besides establishing the usuform robotics, they show a momentary empire uniting all three planets. They also give the only clear pictures of the natives of Venus and Mars. Fourth would be “Man’s Reach,” which indicates a breakdown in the empire and a political struggle between factions on earth. The use of Venus as an artist’s colony is interesting—surely, the fares for interplanetary travel are not as high as present readers, trained on the spectacle of huge governmental costs, would expect. The human engineering of the Venusian atmosphere, as has been said, suggests ill fortune for the native Venusians; Doug Quinby’s earlier prediction that one would someday be Head of the Empire’s Council does not seem



likely to have been fulfilled. Finally, far in the future (if one chooses to ignore some contradictory data) comes "The Quest for Saint Aquin." The Technarchy rules, again uniting the human populations on the three planets. But implicit in the evolutionary developments on Mars and Earth is a long period without space travel. Robots are again to the foreground in this story, but the early humanoid robots have been forgotten—which is not entirely surprising, given the period of time necessary for evolutionary changes in a species and the widespread atomic desolation.<sup>36</sup> Only one humanoid robot, created far later, still exists. And this imaginary book a reader is picturing would thus end with what is generally considered Boucher's best piece of science fiction.

It would be nice to close at this point, with one having imagined a handsome volume of Boucher's robotic stories. But things are not quite that simple. A critic is certain to question whether the five stories really add up to a future history. That the political history does not tie together is not significant. Human governments are not often stable and long lasting. The contrary is the usual rule, and no doubt that rule will continue in force in the future. After all, Boucher's is a Christian world view; he does not assume people are perfectible, let alone their governments.

But a critic may argue that Boucher works too much in terms of in-jokes and allusions: the references to Willy Ley, to Robert A. Heinlein, to Karel Capek, to Marcia Davenport, to Robert Browning, to John Webster, to C.S. Lewis (cf. footnote 19), perhaps to Isaac Asimov, and to others. What is to keep Boucher from alluding to his own works? Perhaps he invented usuform robots for the first two stories and made joking references to them in two later stories; perhaps his other cross references were also just tossed in casually as he wrote; perhaps he was not trying to create a consistent history. Indeed, this critic can cite a parallel case from Boucher's pamphlet on Ellery Queen: "The biography of Ellery Queen, Gentleman Detective, is amusingly impossible, his creators' interest has always been focused on the needs of the story at hand, not on creating an extraneous legend, like the saga of Lord Peter Wimsey or the Sacred Writings of Baker Street."<sup>37</sup>

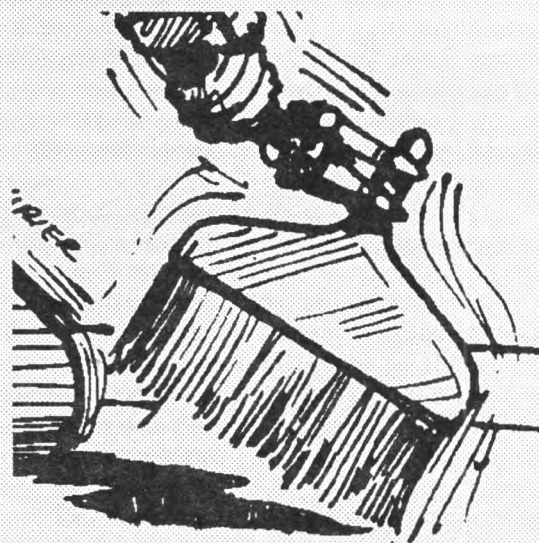
Phyllis White has written the present writer that her husband "didn't have charts tacked up on the workroom walls as Bob Heinlein did" (letter of 18 March 1981). But this is not perfectly indicative of intention. Isaac Asimov has described how he tried to make a chart, at John W. Campbell's suggestion,

for his Foundation series; but he found he could not work that way.<sup>38</sup>

No clear answer can be made to this. Each reader will have to decide for himself the consistency, or lack of it, in this history of the shape of robots to come. The present writer contents himself with a both/and answer, rather than an either/or. The stories, taken as a whole, do make up more than their individual parts; but Boucher's penchant for in-jokes and allusions undercuts a fully serious response to them as a series.

At any rate, there seems to be a type of unity to the story sequence which is not often found in science fiction: that is Boucher's concern with the amenities of life. As one looks through the volume he has imagined, he finds "Secret of the House" primarily concerned with cooking, as well as being a love story; "Q.U.R." involves the invention of a robot bartender, and "Robinc"—although this was not noted earlier—a robot cook (pp. 103–104); "Man's Reach" has a major part of its plot given over to the training of singers, while also containing (like the first story) an emphasis on romantic love; and "The Quest for Saint Aquin" spends some time on such simple creature comforts as a good bed (p. 255) and swamphog sandwiches. Indeed, of all these stories, only the last, with its major religious theme, strongly subordinates these artistic concerns of cuisine and song. Perhaps it is no wonder Boucher's future history is fragmentary: despite an emphasis on politics and business troubles in some of the stories, and references to robots in them all, essentially he is writing a cultural history.<sup>39</sup>

*See FOOTNOTES, Page 64*





# Some of Your Blood

DAVID M. SHEA

(WITH APOLOGIES TO T. STURGEON)

**T**he central Maryland area where I live has a population of more than two million people: approximately one percent of the population of the United States.

The blood needed for various medical procedures in this area averages around 400 or 500 units *per day*, day in and day out, weekends and holidays, Christmas, Passover, and Ramadan. In almost any urban area of the country the figures are of the same general order.

That blood has to come from somewhere.

In this area, a hard core of fewer than 10,000 steady donors are carrying the freight for the entire region. Occasionally an event mobilizes public opinion briefly. When there was a major train wreck in this area last spring with many injuries, dozens of ordinary people showed up unasked at the Red Cross headquarters to donate blood. That's fine, except that the vast majority of those people will never donate again unless, perhaps, there's another disaster.

What has all of this to do with the NIEKAS venue?

Blood drives had been Robert A. Heinlein's favorite charity and remain common at conventions. Mr. Heinlein has credited the "rare blood club" with saving his life and gave it extensive publicity in his novel *I Will Fear No Evil*. If you decide to donate at the next Heinlein Memorial Blood Drawing (or at your local Red Cross Chapter) here is what you can expect.

The process begins as most seem to, with paperwork. First, there's a pamphlet I'm supposed to read. Actually I've already done so. In fact, I've read several versions several

times each. It stresses boldly on the front, "Any man who has had sex with another man since 1977 should not donate blood." The version before that said "...in the last five years." The version before that didn't raise the subject at all.

Next there is a form to fill out. The first half of it is routine: name, address, date of birth, so forth. There is also a long list of medical questions. Some of them are pretty obvious. Marked conspicuously in yellow is a question about night sweats, unexplained weight loss or diarrhea, swollen glands in throat or groin: classic symptoms of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome. A separate question asks specifically if I have ever tested positive for the HTLV virus, the cause of AIDS. To date I have never had a nurse come out and ask me directly if I were gay...not quite.

Some of the other questions are less apparent. Chest pains, coughing, shortness of breath could mean tuberculosis. Had a blood transfusion, a tattoo, or been around anyone on a kidney machine within the last six months? These are classic vectors for hepatitis, whose incubation period is not more than six months. Epilepsy, fainting spells? There's absolutely no indication that epilepsy can be transmitted by blood donation. I guess they feel it's risky for the donor. Most epileptics are on medication, anyway.

It doesn't take long to answer all the questions since I know the form pretty well. It used to be you could just go down the line and check "no" to everything. They've discouraged that by sneaking in trick questions like, "Are you feeling well today?" Now one has to actually read the form; I suppose

that's a good thing.

As it happens I have beaten the early morning rush today and there's no one ahead of me. A nurse promptly calls me over to her station. She studies my form and donor card and asks me to repeat my name and date of birth. It's important to make sure every person has the right form and every form is correctly identified with the right donation.

My nurse then proceeds to ask me verbally all the same questions I had just answered in writing. "Ever been to Haiti, Zaire, or any place else in central Africa?" (AIDS is found in large numbers of people in both these areas in the straight as well as gay population.) I haven't been there.

Since I haven't been washed out on theoretical grounds we proceed to the physical testing. Checking blood pressure and pulse haven't changed much over the years. Taking one's temperature is now done with a computerized electronic thermometer, which reads out on a LCD. The old mercury thermometer has gone the way of the mustard plaster, I guess.

Finally the nurse takes a sterile pin, rather like the push-pin used to attach messages to a bulletin board, and puts a hole in my left earlobe. (Always the left. I've never known why. I've asked once or twice and the nurses don't know either. It seems to be traditional, that's all.) With much kneading of my ear she extracts a few drops of blood which are dropped into a test tube filled with a bright blue chemical. If the drops of blood fall to the bottom it means my hemoglobin, the iron content of my blood, is normal. If the drops don't fall, not to panic. This simple test is not





After I lie down—there's even a small pillow—she fastens a blood pressure cuff around my arm and hands me a hard rubber gadget to squeeze (a sawed-off broomstick will serve equally well) and strokes my arm from the wrist to the elbow. This process is known to doctors, nurses, and junkies the world over as "pumping up a vein." Having chosen an exact point of attack my nurse tells me to relax and scrubs my arm with surgical soap and iodine. While this is drying she sets up the container. The container hangs below the table on a simple balance scale. When enough blood has flowed in to tip the balance, we're through. The unit of blood is, by convention, called a pint or half liter. In actual fact it is a slightly variable quantity, depending upon body weight, of around 460 to 480 milliliters. A pint is 473 ml precisely. We're at last about to proceed to the nitty-gritty.

The nurse pumps up the pressure cuff again and instructs me to squeeze three times and hold it. There is a single sharp instant of discomfort as the needle, incredibly sharp, is punched straight through the skin and vein wall in one steady motion. The anti-coagulant chemical on the needle causes the faint burning or stinging sensation for the first minute or so, but after a while one hardly notices it. We are now rolling.

There is nothing much for me to do for the next eight minutes or so except lie comfortably on my table and squeeze the rubber gadget every fifteen seconds or so. Flexing the muscles puts pressure on the vein and keeps the blood flowing. There have been times when I've nearly dozed off on the table.

In due course we finish. My nurse tells me to stop squeezing and relax. Using a device something like a pair of needle-nosed pliers she crimps off the tubes and squeezes the blood in them into the containers. Finally she pulls the needle out and applies the gauze pad. Elevate the arm and apply pressure. The puncture will clot over in two or three minutes. (Handy tip: if you get a headache immediately before or after donating take acetaminophen [Tylenol] which doesn't slow blood clotting as aspirin does.)

My unit of blood is a deep maroon color, weighing complete with container about 580 grams or slightly over a pound, and is noticeably warm. This experience gives you a real perspective on the term, "blood temperature." The unit will be placed in a refrigerated case and this afternoon will be taken to one of several area hospitals. In all likelihood it will be fractionated, filtered down

See BLOOD, Page 66

100% foolproof. If worst comes to worst, simple iron deficiency anemia is easily treated by adding iron-rich foods or iron supplements to the diet.

This is not normally a problem for a regular donor since the Red Cross standard is that one that may not donate more often than every 56 days. Theoretically more than five donations in a calendar year is not encouraged but they're only really concerned about that 56 day factor. Blood donors with rare blood types who may be called upon to donate more often watch their diet carefully and have their hemoglobin count checked regularly by a more sophisticated test.

My nurse agrees that I'm in normal good health. She approves my form and sends me on to the container station. The container in question is a plastic bag a trifle larger than a sandwich bag though vastly more sophisticated. It is sterile, contains an anti-coagulant chemical, and is festooned with loops, tubes, hoses, and two test tubes. One has a green plastic cap, the other a purple one. In Red Cross parlance this bag is always a *container*, never a *bag*, just as in the army a rifle was a *rifle* and occasionally a *piece* but never a *gun*.

The person at this station is a volunteer, an elderly lady. She studies my form, asks me my name and birthday (standard donor's joke: if the Red Cross cares that much about my birthday how come they never send me a card?), and proceeds to festoon containers, forms, and test tubes with a formidable array of stickers bearing a barline code, exactly the same principle as the computer-operated fast scan at the supermarket checkout lane.

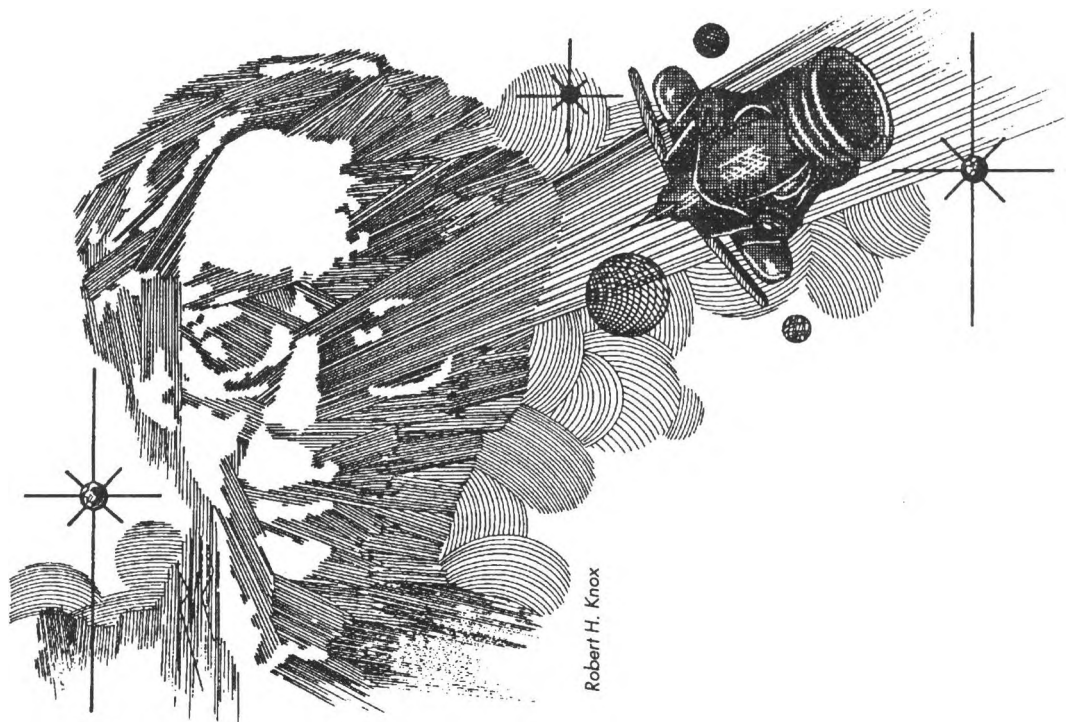
I'm then asked to go behind a partition

and fill out another form as to whether I believe my blood to be safe for transfusion. I'm not required to sign this but since the form has one of the stickers with my container's identification on it the difference is nominal. The theory behind this is that someone who may have been exposed to AIDS, i.e., a gay who is still in the closet, might be browbeaten by friends or peer pressure to give blood even if he knows it's not safe, because he doesn't wish to admit the reason why not.

After that I'm given yet another form with the same identifying sticker which tells me that if I change my mind about whether my blood should be used to call such and such a phone number and let them know. First I thought this overkill was paranoid. On further thought it seems to me that since I'm not a health care professional who risks being exposed to AIDS by the nature of their job perhaps it's not really fair of me to judge.

The whole process up to now sounds time consuming but actually it only takes 15 or 20 minutes. It can take longer, of course, if there's a crowd of people waiting to donate. I am still ahead of the crowd so without delay another nurse calls me over and invites me to have a seat on a padded table, checks my form and donor card, asks me my name and date of birth (see what I mean?), and studies my arm. Veins vary. Some people have small, deep veins. Some have large veins near the surface. It's just something you're born with. By some quirk of genetic fate I have large shallow veins. The matronly lady smiles. "Nice veins," she says. By the way, she's also checking for needle punctures.





# On the Brink of 2000

D O N A L D   A .   W O L L H E I M

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It has been said that coming events cast their shadows before them. To a certain extent, this has always been true, but to recognize those shadows when they are only formative requires a certain special trend of mind. Most people do not have such an ability, but it is claimed that science fiction writers and readers may have.

Perhaps.

Perhaps not.



Science fiction, whether named as such or not, has been with us since the dawn of history. Wise men have always been curious about the days to come. Often they attempt to predict what is to be. All too often such predictions gain them only public amusement and the suspicions of the average folks around them. The tendency to believe that things never change, the inertia of daily existence, is a staple of living. It has always been a delusion. Obviously the need to believe in the stability of existing institutions and of the established way of life is a necessity. How else can one plan for one's own future?

But change is a permanent part of the universe, of human existence. Can it be predicted? Is science fiction a good guide to such predictions?

I have in mind that this convocation of science fiction fans, writers and readers is taking place in 1988. That is only eleven and a half years away from the mystic date of the year 2000. While technically the year 2000 is not the first year of the 21st Century, it has the special mystical feeling of being the dawn of what is to come. It is the hundredth and final year of the century that is ours—it marks a calendar change that tells us that this is ended and a new era is beginning.

Is science fiction a good analysis of those shadows of things to come? Can we, in 1988, say with any credibility what the next century will hold? The answer, I believe, is surprising. The answer is no.

There is only one guide to what could happen. That guide is the history of the past. If we examine the science fiction of past centuries—or those writings predictive enough to pass as a sort of science fiction—we discover a remarkable factor. Namely that no writer of speculative fiction in 1888 predicted the actuality of the 20th Century. No writer of such fiction in 1788 predicted the events of the 19th Century—or could have. This has mainly been true of similar final decades of previous centuries. Those last ten years of each century have turned out again and again to contain unexpected and unpredictable discoveries and historical events that altered completely the decades that would follow the final year with the startling double-zero date.

Supposing that there was a writer of science fiction back in 1488, trying to write a logical novel about life in the next century, the 1500's, the sixteenth century according to the general calendar of Europe.

While most learned men had begun to suspect that the world was round, it was not

general knowledge. Nevertheless the belief was widespread enough to cause the legal and financial powers of the day to risk a curious, speculative—and by the standard of the times, very expensive—expedition. This expedition of three small sailing vessels commanded by the adventurer Christopher Columbus, set out in 1492, four years after 1488. And in that year a startling discovery was made that nobody, but absolutely nobody, had expected or could have predicted. It was believed, not unreasonably, that if the world was a sphere, then by sailing directly west from the coast of Spain a route could be found to the east coast of Asia, thereby making the import of profitable goods such as silk and spices a lot cheaper than by going the long way around Africa or by caravan across the landmass of Asia.

But what was never predicted was that between Western Europe and Eastern Asia were two tremendous continents, thousands of miles in width, and that beyond them lay an ocean even wider than the Atlantic. That discovery, confirmed during the rest of the 1490's, utterly changed the face and life of the century that came into being in 1500. Any science fiction that might have been written prior to that discovery would have been rendered absurd.

Can we find similar unpredictables in the final ten years of other centuries? We can.

In 1788, who could have predicted the realities of the 19th Century? For that century was the era of the steam engine. The theory and experimental devices driven by steam power had existed in 1788, but had not been applied because they had not been perfected. But by the first years of the 1800's, the steam-driven ship, the steam-powered train of cars, the steam-powered factories, came into their own. The life of every human was transformed beyond the speculations of fantasists. Railroads rapidly covered the lands—and altered entirely the commerce and living standards everywhere. Steamships made accessible what had never been very practical under wind-driven vessels. The old aristocratic order, based on land-ownership and ancient traditions, dissolved in the rise of the entrepreneurial class riding on the backs of common-born engineers and tinkers.

In 1888, it was much the same story. In workshops and laboratories a novel engine had been devised, called the internal combustion engine. In 1895, the first so-called horseless carriages, the automobiles, came onto the market. In the next few decades the automobile and its derivatives began to end

the era of the railroad. Cities had to be redesigned, new types of roads had to be constructed, and most surprising of all, the heavier-than-air flying machine was at last practical. It was no accident that 1903 saw the birth of the airplane.

There were many tales of flying machines published during the 1800's, but none knew how such machines were to be powered. Steam engines proved much too heavy to lift aircraft. Electricity required heavy batteries and presented the same problem. But the gasoline-burning engine was the answer.

Bear in mind that I am talking about the unpredicted wonders of the last ten years of a century. I am a collector of science fiction and I have been browsing through a delightful book written and published in Paris in 1884. It is by the writer and illustrator Robida and its title is simply *The Twentieth Century*. I gather that the book was very popular—I have seen several editions. How close did Robida come to the real history of the Twentieth Century?

Well, for one thing, he did predict women's lib. In that he was guessing correctly. Of course the details were—well—ludicrous. Women's demands for equality took the form of civil war à la the Paris Commune! Barricades in the streets, women's armed battalions, and so forth.

In other instances, he saw only the balloon and the airship as the main vehicle of travel. In fact, he did suspect that air travel might render steam trains obsolete. There is an amusing sketch of the last locomotive being placed in a museum! Robida saw transatlantic travel by means of compressed air tunnels. He did see that electricity was good for driving ships and submarines. He described the building of a sixth continent, an artificial platform world in the Pacific Ocean. He predicted that war would split the United States into a West under the control of a conquering Chinese Empire and an East under the German Empire. Close, but no cigar. It was the Japanese, not the Chinese that tried that—and neither power ever got close to landing a single soldier on North American soil.

In short, neither Robida nor Verne nor their many contemporaries had foreseen the meaning of the internal combustion engine in the transformation of the coming Twentieth Century.

Now, in 1988, can we foresee what astonishing change may pop up unexpectedly from the top secret R & D labs of the great corporations...or from the experimental

See BRINK, Page 67





The  
Space  
Crone



The  
Alligator  
Wrestler



The  
Grand  
Old Man

A N N E   B R A U D E

Robert H. Knox



**Dancing at the Edge of the World: Thoughts on Words, Women, Places**, Ursula K. Le

Guin. Grove Press, 1989, \$19.95. [\$8.95 tp], 306 pp. hc

**The Writing Life**, Annie Dillard. Harper & Row, 1989, \$15.95, 111 pp. hc

**Grumbles from the Grave**, Robert A. Heinlein, ed. Virginia Heinlein. Ballantine/Del Rey, 1989, \$19.95, 281 pp. hc

Here are three books by writers about writing published in the course of the last year. Heinlein and Le Guin need no introduction to this readership; the point of reviewing their books together is that they are practically polar opposites in everything except degree of success. Annie Dillard is not a fiction writer; she is best known for her Pulitzer Prize-winning *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*, a meditation on the natural world and its metaphysical significance that suggests a blend of Lewis Thomas and Madeleine L'Engle, though more sophisticated than either —perhaps Loren Eiseley would be a better comparison. I included *The Writing Life* because it is a genuinely interesting book on the same subject that I happened to read at the same time.

Although writing, and being a writer, may be the dominant theme sounded in these books, the approaches are quite different, as are the angles. *Grumbles* is a posthumous collection of Heinlein's correspondence, mostly with John W. Campbell, his first market; Lurton Blassingame, his longtime agent and friend; and Alice Dalgliesh, his detested editor at Scribner's; along with some replies and a few other brief essays and addresses. *Dancing at the Edge of the World* collects Le Guin's nonfiction since *The*

*Language of the Night* (extravagantly praised by me in these pages previously), including talks, essays, poems, and book reviews. It includes discussions of feminist and social issues and travel pieces as well as material on books and the literary imagination. *The Writing Life* is just what its title suggests: a description of, meditation upon, and circling around just what a writer *does* with her time (mostly, everything she can possibly think of to avoid actually writing). To canvass the three on just that point: Dillard says it takes between two and ten years to write a book. Faulkner's claim to have written *As I Lay Dying* in six weeks in his spare time she regards as a freak of nature, like being an albino or a dwarf:

Out of a human population on earth of four and a half billion, perhaps twenty people can write a book in a year....The long poem, John Berryman said, takes between five and ten years. Thomas Mann was a prodigy of production. Working full time, he wrote a page a day. That is 365 pages a year, for he did write every day—a good-sized book a year. At a page a day he was one of the most prolific writers who ever lived....My guess is that full-time writers average a book every five years: seventy-three usable pages a year, or a usable fifth of a page a day.

In one of the most interesting essays of the book, "The Fisherwoman's Daughter," Le Guin talks about the unnecessarily vexed question of whether a woman can both write books and have babies, and about the different solutions various women writers have found: What does she absolutely have to have? What can she make do without?

The one thing a writer has to have is not balls. Nor is it a child-free space. Nor is it even, speaking strictly on the evidence, a room of her own, though that is an amazing help, as is the goodwill and cooperation of the opposite sex, or at least the local, in-house representative of it. But she doesn't have to have that. The one thing a writer has to have is a pencil and some paper. That's enough, so long as she knows that she and she alone is in charge of that pencil, and responsible, she and she alone, for what it writes on the paper. In other words, that she's free. Not wholly free. Never wholly free. Maybe very partially. Maybe only in this one act, this sitting for a snatched moment being a woman writing, fishing the mind's lake. But in this,

responsible; in this, autonomous; in this, free.

Dillard again: "How fondly I recall thinking, in the old days, that to write you needed paper, pen, and a lap. How appalled I was to discover that, in order to write so much as a sonnet, you need a warehouse. You can easily get so confused writing a thirty-page chapter that in order to make an outline for the second draft, you have to rent a hall."

And then there is Heinlein, in a letter to Blassingame: "The new novel ([*Farnham's Freehold*] working title *Grand Slam*) I did in 25 intense days, 503 pages."

Obviously these people are not "being writers" in the same sense. Dillard has written eight estimable books of non-fiction, of which one is a volume of poetry and at least two run less than 125 pages. She must have other sources of financial support. Le Guin writes because it is something she has to do, but in the years before she became a major figure in the sf field she wrote in the interstices of raising a family and was presumably supported financially by her husband; she points out that she originally wrote children's books and sf because these were "safe" fields for a woman writer, nonthreatening to (because not taken seriously by) the male-dominated Literary Establishment for whom a woman with a family could not be A Real Writer. Heinlein took up writing solely and simply to make money after being pensioned off by the Navy because of his health problems. He was very proud of earning the highest rates paid by ASTOUNDING and of selling everything he submitted. A handful of his first stories, rejected (deservedly) by Campbell, he gleefully offered elsewhere:

I have a phony name [Lyle Monroe] and a phony address, fully divorced from the RAH persona, under which and from which I am trying to peddle the three remaining stinkeroos which are left over from my earliest writing. For such purposes I prefer editors whom I do not like. It would tickle me to sell off the shoddy in that fashion. I don't think it is dishonest—they examine what they buy and get what they pay for—but I'm damned if I'll let my own name even appear on one of their checks.

This displays a certain sense of honor but hardly what one would call artistic integrity. Heinlein in fact intended to stop writing entirely, once the financial need had been remedied, the first time he got a rejection slip (much to the dismay of Campbell, who



didn't take him seriously—until he did in fact send him a rejection slip). Whether he would have stuck to it is moot, as the war took him away from writing for five years, and after it he turned to conquering new worlds—the slick magazines like SATURDAY EVENING POST and hardcover juveniles. Heinlein himself doesn't use terms like "artistic" for his work; he seems to have regarded himself (accurately) as a hard-working and highly competent craftsman:

I would like to have been a synthesist, but I am acutely aware that many of my characteristics are second-rate. I haven't quite got the memory, nor the integrating ability, nor the physical strength, nor the strength of character to do the job. I am not depressed about it, but I know my own shortcomings. I am sufficiently brilliant and sufficiently imaginative to realize acutely just how superficial my acquaintance with the world is and to know that I have not the health, ambition, nor years remaining to me to accomplish what I would like to accomplish. Don't discount this as false modesty...[ellipsis in original]

I have just sufficient touch of genius to know that I am not a proper genius—and I am not much interested in second prize. In the meantime, I expect to have quite a lot of fun and do somewhat less constructive work than I might, if I tried as hard as I could.

In other letters, he speaks with pride of his ability to earn the highest rates, his readiness to comply with editorial requests for cutting and alteration, and his unbroken record of meeting publishers' deadlines. If he was a craftsman, it was in the sense of a medieval stonemason, a creator in his own right with all a creator's pride, not a mere executor of others' orders—an artist/artisan like Kipling's Hal o' the Draft, (a comparison I think RAH would relish). In later letters, he takes himself and his work more seriously than at the outset of his career, when coming in first in whatever he tried seemed most important to him. He always took pride in the painstaking research that made the science in his stories as accurate as possible; and while professing readiness to comply with editorial strictures, he objected strongly when he felt they were unnecessary, foolish, or just plain wrong. His professional pride, I believe, sprang not from conceit or notions of artistic integrity but from the code of honor inculcated in him by Annapolis and the Navy, which also explains his outrage

when publishers did not live up to signed contracts and his refusal to consider ever again submitting to Scribner's after the rejection of *Starship Troopers*, even after the editor he hated had been replaced:

Lurton, it seems to me that, with any other successful writer on their list, Scribner's would have published that book—perhaps with revisions and perhaps not as a juvenile—but they would have published it. But if Mr. Scribner felt that he simply could *not* publish it, I think the circumstances called for a note, a letter, a measure of polite discussion, from the boss to me...a minimum of formal politeness.

I did not receive that minimum. I think Mr. Scribner treated me with extreme rudeness...so I don't want to work for him....If the action had been taken by Miss Dalglish alone—But it was *not*; when I got tossed out, Mr. Scribner in person had me by the scruff of the neck and took part in the tossing, without even a formal word of regret. [first two ellipses in original]

Heinlein's attitude toward his writing changed over the years, from the "comparatively mild—and rather fun" work (as he called it in a never-realized proposal for a writers' manual to be entitled *Writing for a Living [and How to Live Through It]—Being the Ungarnished Facts about the Writing Racket for People Too Lazy to Dig Ditches*) of creating pragmatic stories about practical characters ("My notion of a story is an interesting situation in which a human being has to cope with a problem, does so, and thereby changes his personality, character, or evaluations in some measure because the coping has forced him to revise his thinking." [1947]) to ambitions to write better as well as to sell more advantageously. Heinlein to Blassingame in 1947, still wholly market-place-oriented:

I may turn out quite a number of second-rate stories before I recover completely from the effects of my domestic breakup. For the past several months I have been able to continue writing only by the exercise of grim self-discipline. It occurs to me that you might find it desirable to sell or attempt to sell stories written during this period to secondary markets under a pen name. What do you think? Would it be good business to protect my reputation, such as it is, by keeping my own name off material which in your opinion is not as

good as my best?...

And to the same fifteen months later, analyzing "a long string of failures":

...I've been doing hack work, writing what some one else wanted me to write rather than what I wanted to write. In any case, the next year can't be any worse if I write what I *want* to write and have some fun out of it. It might even be better; acceptances might start coming in instead of rejections. So—I plan to write *my* stories instead of editor's stories. I don't intend to do any more juveniles unless I happen to have a juvenile story that I want to write. I am not going to promise Scribner's, nor anybody else, one book a year. I am not going to work against deadlines. I am not going to slant stories for slick—nor for pulp—I am going to write *my* stories, the very best stories I can, and then let them sell (or not sell) to whatever market fits them. I can't do any worse than I have been doing; I might do better. And I think you will see a lot more copy out of me. I'm a fast producer when I'm happy at it.

And to Blassingame in 1960:

I am aware of the commercial difficulties in this ms., those which you pointed out—but, if it *does* get published, it might sell lots of copies. (It certainly has no more strikes against its success than did *Ulysses*, *Lady Chatterly's Lover*, *Elmer Gantry*, or *Tropic of Cancer*—each at the time it was published.

*The Man from Mars* is an attempt on my part to break loose from a straitjacket, one of my own devising. I am tired of being known as a "leading writer of children's books" and nothing else. True, those juveniles have paid well—car, house, and chattels all free and clear, much travel, money in the bank and a fairish amount in stocks, plus prospect of future royalties—I certainly shouldn't kick and I am not kicking...but, like the too-successful whore: "Them stairs is killing me!" [ellipsis in original]

I first became aware of just how thoroughly I had boxed myself in when editors of my soi disant adult books started asking me to trim them down to suit my juvenile market. At that time I had to comply. But now I would like to find out if I can write about adult matters *for* adults, and get such writing published. However, I have no desire to write "mainstream" stories, such



as *The Catcher in the Rye*, *By Love Possessed*, *Peyton Place*, *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit*, *Darkness at Noon*, or *On the Road*...I want to do my own stuff, my own way.

Perhaps I will flop at it. I don't know. But such success as I have had has come from being original, not from writing "safe" stuff—in pulps, in movies, in slicks, in juveniles. In pulp SF I moved at once to the top of the field by writing about sociology, sex, politics, and religion at a time (1939) when those subjects were all taboo. Later I cracked the slicks with science fiction when it was taken for granted that SF was pulp and nothing but pulp. You will recall that my first juvenile was considered an experiment by the publisher—and a rather risky one.

I have never written "what was being written"—nor do I want to do so now. Oh, I suppose that, if it became financially necessary, I could imitate my own earlier work and do it well enough to sell. But I don't want to. I hope this new and different book sells. But, whether it does or not, I want my next book to be still different—neither an imitation of *The Man from Mars*, nor a careful "mixture as before" in imitation of my juveniles and my quasi-juveniles published as soi-disant adult SF books. I've got a lot of things I'd like to write about; none of them fits this pattern.

*The Man from Mars* is of course better known by its final title—*Stranger in a Strange Land*.

In a long letter to a fan—apparently a member of a group that made a cult of *Stranger*—written in January, 1972, Heinlein stated his writer's credo in more or less final form. The relevant passage may be found on pp. 244-47 of *Grumbles from the Grave*. Having stated that he wrote for three reasons—to make a living, to entertain, and "if possible, to cause my readers to think"—he expands on the third point as follows:

Well, what was I trying to say in it [*Stranger*]?

I was asking questions.

I was *not* giving answers. I was trying to shake the reader loose from some preconceptions and induce him to think for himself, along new and fresh lines....

If I managed to shake him loose from some prejudice, preconception, or unexamined assumption, that was all I intended to do. A rational human being does not need answers, spoon-fed to him on "faith"; he needs questions to worry

over—serious ones. The quality of the answers then depends on *him*...and he may revise those answers several times in the course of a long life, (hopefully) getting a little closer to the truth each time. But I would never undertake to be a "Prophet," handing out neatly packaged answers to lazy minds....

But anyone who takes that book as *answers* is cheating himself. It is an invitation to think—not to believe....Certainly "Do as thou wilt is the whole of the Law" is correct when looked at properly—in fact, it is a law of nature, not an injunction, nor a permission. But it is necessary to remember that it applies to everyone—including lynch mobs. The Universe is what it is, and it never forgives mistakes—not even ignorant ones....

Not the credo of one who is "anxious for to shine in the high aesthetic line"—but the credo of an honest craftsman and a brave and honorable man.

Each of these writers identifies a different adversary to struggle against. For Heinlein, it was editors. His early mutual admiration society and friendship with Campbell was narrowly professional; it survived Campbell's habit of telegraphing the point of a story in blurbs and captions but not his criticism of the Navy establishment at the time of Pearl Harbor. In a January, 1942, screed, Heinlein stopped just short of accusing Campbell of treason and referred to him in terms that would have put paid to a far stronger relationship than existed between them at the time:

For a long time I have from time to time felt exasperated with you that you should be so able so completely to insulate your thinking in nonscientific fields from your excellent command of the scientific method in science fields. So far as I have observed you, you would no more think of going off half-cocked, with insufficient and unverified data, with respect to a matter of science than you would stroll down Broadway in your underwear. But when it comes to matters outside your specialties you are consistently and brilliantly stupid. You come out with some of the goddamndest flat-footed opinions with respect to matters which you haven't studied and have had no experience, basing your opinions on casual gossip, newspaper stories, unrelated individual data out of matrix, armchair extrapolation, and plain misinformation—unsuspected be-

cause you haven't attempted to verify it.

He also went a few rounds with H.L. Gold for "improving" his style in the GALAXY serialization of *The Puppet Masters*, winning an apology and a promise that his copy in future would be untouched. But his real *bête noire* was Alice Dalgliesh, the juvenile editor at Scribner's. I must confess that when I started this book, knowing only what I had heard about the controversy, I rather wondered if Heinlein might have been so resentful partly because he objected to having a woman judging his work, but I soon realized that whatever his degree of chauvinism, it wasn't applicable here: I too would have soon found myself wanting to kick Miss Dalgliesh into the middle of next week. She was not only the sort of parlor Freudian who could see sexual connotations in the most unlikely places, she was often just plain silly, as when she objected to a character being called "Old Charlie" because Mr. Scribner's first name was Charles! His response to the psychoanalytic drivel was a sly Freudian reading of one of the girls' books Dalgliesh had written. The two things that made him angriest were her complete alteration of his anti-gun control argument in *Red Planet* into a pro-control stance (he thought she ought to put her name on the book as co-author if she insisted on making that radical a change) and her refusal to stand up to a threat by the LIBRARY JOURNAL to demand recall of *The Star Beast* because of its reference to children "divorcing" their parents. In addition to his indignation at the refusal of Scribner's, and his editor in particular, to stand behind a book the form of which they had approved before publication, Heinlein was disgusted that they didn't seem to know that the process was in fact an actual part of extant American legal procedure, although not known as "divorce." The final break over the rejection of *Starship Troopers*, in a manner which confirmed his worst opinion of Scribner's and of Dalgliesh, came as a great relief to him.

For Dillard, on the other hand, the greatest struggle is that between the writer and the work-in-progress itself, which she sees as akin to alligator-wrestling (especially when the alligator wins):

Fiction writers who toss up their arms helplessly because their characters "take  
See *SPACE CRONE*, Page 67



I didn't receive a copy of NIEKAS 39 with David Palter's column about me, but David sent me a copy of the article so that I can respond.

David and I have markedly different personalities, yet have quite a bit in common. We enjoyed one another's company when that was geographically practical, and came to know one another rather well. And since he took the liberty of squealing on his old friend, so to speak, I'll exercise a similar liberty. As many of you know him rather well, at least through the medium of NIEKAS, my sketch of him will be brief: half a paragraph. David Palter is an extremely intelligent person who communicates very well—hardly a rarity in the SF community. Also he concealeth not his opinions on matters sundry and, yea, controversial. Emotionally he is unusually stable. He is also very rational, very ethical, and quite tolerant of views which differ from his own. His sense of humor is not the garden variety; some people don't recognize it at all, and some are confused by it. Actually it is quite enjoyable.

As something of an extrovert, I tend to be very self-analytical, so I found his analysis of myself and my novels very interesting and even enlightening. I would like to comment on certain features of it, and disagree to some extent.

I am indeed influenced by J.R.R. Tolkien's conspicuous excellences, though I have never tried to emulate his literary style.

As for the Scandinavian influence in my stories: I've always enjoyed various ethnic flavors, and I've had the good fortune to be exposed more or less intimately to several, notably Swedish, Finnish, and Norwegian. My connection with Swedish has been less casual than David realized. As an infant, my mother was adopted by Swedish immigrants, and for years assumed she was their born child. She grew up in strongly Scandinavian communities. At the turn of the century she lived in Two Harbors, Minnesota, where much of the weekly newspaper was in Swedish, and it was the language of her home. As recently as the 1940's, she subscribed to the Swedish-language edition of *The Reader's Digest*.

As for the influence of James H. Schmitz—for quite a long time, my SF reading was primarily of *Astounding/Analog*, and during that period my favorite authors were James Schmitz and Poul Anderson. (Ah, those days of Telzey Amberdon and Nicolas Van Rijn! Wonderful!) So it's hardly surprising that my style resembles Schmitz's. More than it does Poul's. But I'd have to say that John W.

## Who I Am and Why David Palter Wrote Those Things About Me



JOHN  
DALMAS

Campbell had more influence on my writing than Jim Schmitz did. I suppose my admiration for Campbell never really came out in my conversations with David. It was Campbell who urged me to use a pen name, when he bought my first novel. I chose John Dalmás, a name, incidentally, by which I am now generally known in my present mundane community. SF has gobbled me up.

David has made much more of the influence of L. Ron Hubbard on my writing than is actually there. This, no doubt, reflects our mutual experiences with Hubbardism. I knew nothing of Hubbard's philosophy till the mid-70's, well after publication of *The Yngling* and after completing three drafts of *Homecoming*, both of which have certain ideas similar to Hubbard's but also Campbell's. By then I'd been reading John W. Campbell's *Astounding/Analog*, including, of course, his famous editorial essays, for years, and I'd been considerably influenced by Campbell's interests in, among other things, metaphysics and parapsychology. Also before running into Scientology and reading Hubbard, I'd "been into" General Semantics, yoga, and zen. I had also run regression therapy on myself, with instruction by a clinical psychologist I used to cross-country ski with. (I don't recommend doing regression therapy solo. The immediate results were hairy.)

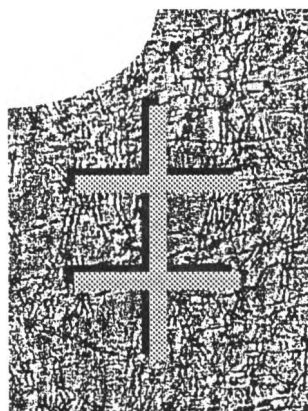
All of which I'd found very interesting but not particularly compelling. Thus when I started reading Hubbard's work, what I found was a codification and development in detail of ideas I was already familiar with, and to a degree had already integrated into my own conceptual universe. His organization of the material, however, made the ideas much more manageable.

More interesting, I found in Hubbardism a ready-made and explicit system of practices—something you don't expect to find in such an area. Thus, as David did, I edged into Scientology, which was quite an experience. And, again like David, after a bit I edged back out of it, wiser and, of course, financially poorer. But not resentful of the experience.

Departing Hubbardism, I took with me my experiences there, as I had earlier taken with me my experiences in the army, logging camps, merchant marine, college, graduate school, selling timber and administering logging operations for the U.S. Forest Service, 17 years as a research ecologist (again mostly with the Forest Service), and decades of miscellaneous reading. All of these strongly influence my writing.

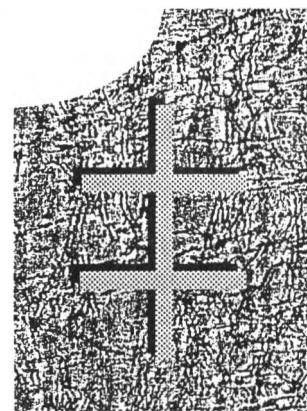
See DALMAS, Page 69





# Science Fiction in Lithuania

G E D I M I N A S  
B E R E S N E V I C I U S



In the course of one year, Lithuania has changed greatly. Political activity is very high. Historical and cultural monuments destroyed during Soviet occupation are being restored again. Lithuanian has become the state language. Churches once turned into warehouses are returned to believers. About 150 informal papers and magazines are published today. Mass media allow different views and opinions; meetings and rallies draw up to 100,000–250,000 participants. Parties and organizations resume their activities which were stopped in 1940. The Lithuanian Reconstruction Movement Sajudis has definitely won the elections to the U.S.S.R. Supreme Soviet.

These are the first steps to independence and self-determination of the Lithuanian nation, which had its state in the 13th century, and in the period between the two world wars.

Old Soviet myths, such as the fact of so-called voluntary entry of Lithuania to the Soviet Union, are being criticized. On the whole, the attitude towards the past has greatly changed. Historians today can tell the truth about the events in 1940 when Lithuania was occupied and annexed by the Soviet Union.

Conditions for Lithuanian science fiction have improved, too. Books which were kept in special stocks today are available for the reader.

Justas Piliponis (1907-1947) can be treated as the father of Lithuanian SF. He wrote mainly adventure novels. His best-known novel *The Second Flood* was published in 1930 (Part II in 1934). The action of the novel takes place in the 37th century AD. The author depicts world wars, global cli-

## InfoSFera

(InfoSphere), the bulletin of the Vilnius science fiction club *Dorado* and Kaunas club *Phoenix*.

The dynamic Twentieth Century makes us ask these questions: Where are we going? What is in store for us? Sometimes science fiction literature gives answers to them. The Lithuanian SF writers are taking part in all the changes too.

The aim of this bulletin is to inform SF fans all over the world about Lithuania, Lithuanian SF, and fandom. The Vilnius SF club *Dorado* publishes monthly bulletins in Lithuanian. They give information about SF literature, introduces science fiction writers and their books, and publishes short SF stories. There are professional SF writers among us, e.g.: G. Aleksonis from Kaunas who wrote a paper on ties of modern SF with mythology.

We are interested in SF, fantasy, SF art, cinema, theoretical works on SF, SF fan clubs. We are interested in everything connected with SF, unusual natural phenomena, mysterious events in human history, achievements of science, and UFO...

We would like to know about SF fans' lives in other countries. So if you would like to contact us, write to this address: Gediminas Beresnevicius, Antakalnio 65-33, Vilnius, 232040, Lithuania, U.S.S.R.

matic cataclysms, giant technical projects, etc. One of the best episodes is the journey of two heroes, one of them a Lithuanian, into the hollow depths of the Earth.

The Brothers Tomdikas in 1934 published their SF novel *Damned Souls in Love*. The hero, Doctor Velzhas, with the help of a certain device, mortifies his flesh and goes to Hell—a vast planet full of wild animals and dead people; members of Hitler Youth ride on horses; Lenin torments himself in a remote town...

The book *Siegfried Immerselbe Rejuvenates* by Ignas Seinius, published in the same year, attracted readers' attention. The novel is a political pamphlet on racial ideology of German fascism. The fantastical transformations of a Faustus of the 20th century and the hero's love story help the author to reveal the political intrigues of Europe of those days.

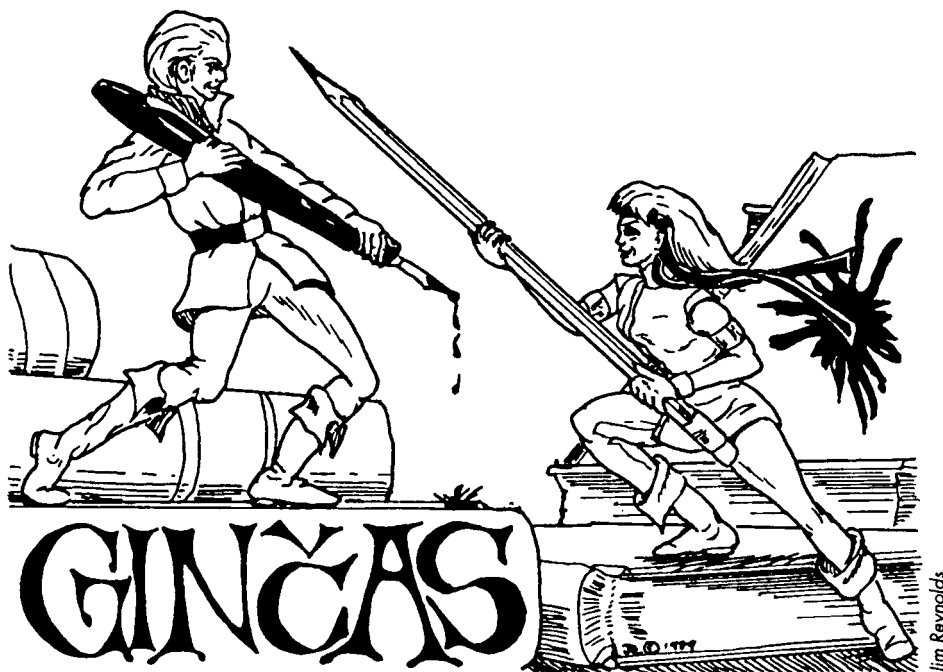
Besides the above-mentioned SF books in the time of the Lithuanian Republic, several other authors published novels, short stories with elements of SF, for example, the symbolic mysteries of Vydunas, criminal novels based on SF by M. Mateika, stories by J. Visakis and others.

Historical cataclysms (mass arrests and deportations to Siberia and the Far North in 1941, the struggle against deportations, armed resistance till 1954) were a big blow and brought heavy losses to Lithuanian culture, and SF in particular.

The first book of this genre after the war appeared only in 1964. It was a collection of short stories, *Ready for Star Flights*, by V. Minius. A long pause in Lithuanian SF can be explained by censorship in Moscow: each

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## OBSSESSED WITH BRADBURY

### Ray Bradbury

Much thanks for this incredible *Illustrated Bradbury* which flabbergasts me with its insights to my work. I have never had quite this same critical experience before and am somewhat stunned by it. I think it should take me a few days, or weeks, to swallow this Great Whale whole, digest it, and decide what to think about it. In any event, I am very grateful....

### David Palter

*Obsessions* is a nice piece of work, well written and well illustrated (although the jokes in the illustration on page 22 are a distraction from the poem on page 23 which is being illustrated and may not have been a good idea).

*The Illustrated Bradbury* is overly academic for my taste, although I would have to agree that it is accurate in its assessment of Bradbury. I would also point out that far from being unusual in mixing elements of both fantasy and horror in with his science fiction, Bradbury has done what almost all writers of what is generally known as "science fiction" have done and continue to do.

Science fiction as a perfectly pure form, in which there are no speculative elements which fail to remain within the strict confines of scientific plausibility and thus have taken on some of the character of fantasy, is rare and constitutes a very small fraction of

the SF genre. It is also futile to argue about exactly where the boundary lies between SF and fantasy since this will always be ambiguous and debatable due to the fact that science itself is an incomplete and ever-changing body of knowledge.

Therefore, I accept Bradbury and all the innumerable other writers who mix science and fantasy as writers of SF simply because that's what the genre truly is—a rather loosely defined school of writing in which at least some effort is made to incorporate genuine scientific extrapolation into a fictional mix that usually includes some elements that are not strictly scientific, and may be wildly fantastic. If this offends any purist I am willing to dispense with the term "science fiction" and call it all "SF," meaning "speculative fiction" as Judith Merrill proposed many years ago. Bradbury is unquestionably a writer of "SF" even if, perhaps, not of "science fiction."

### Mike Ashley

I haven't got my eyes around *The Illustrated Bradbury* or *Obsessions* yet as most of my spare time is taken up trying to complete my book on Hugo Gernsback. 60,000 words down and about another 40,000 to go in the first draft. By the time I get to bed I read about a page or two of Dean Koontz's *The Bad Place* which I'm currently into and I'm right off to sleep.

I'm not sure I like the format of these "thin" booklets as they aren't easy to hold open and read. I prefer the 8-1/2 inch size to be honest. But it's the quality of content that

matters and in a skim-through it looks well worth reading, so I shall look forward to that.

### David M. Shea

I found them both rather interesting in diverse ways. Recently at a local convention I did a panel on criticism and review and I used *The Illustrated Bradbury* as a visual aid. The fact is, however, that I rather trashed it as an example of what's wrong with academic criticism. In the event that Mr. Anderson should care to get his revenge he is free to contact me. I am setting up some programming for a small convention in the Baltimore area in August and I would not be averse to doing another criticism and review panel.

While it would be presumptuous to say that I understood everything in *Obsessions* I did find much of the imagery darkly attractive.

### Buck Coulson

[...a review] for *Comics Buyer's Guide*—I didn't review *The Illustrated Bradbury* because I have little knowledge (and less interest) of academic criticism.

*Obsessions*, by Anthony S. Magistrale and Robert H. Knox, Niekas Publications, \$3.95.

This is an odd-sized publication, the size of a sheet of typing paper folded lengthwise. It includes poems by Magistrale and illustrations by Knox. All of the poems are fantastic, but not all are fantasy. I found some interesting and some not; I don't guarantee that readers will agree with my choices. I thought that "A Melville Home Is Damaged" was the best of the lot, with "Bird Droppings on I-79" close behind; both gave me a chuckle. "For Sam, Who Would Understand This," is a portrait of a person most of us should know, and "To Edgar Poe on Father's Day" is probably all too true for city dwellers, though not at all a recent phenomenon; it was probably familiar, in a way, to Poe, too. The booklet contains 13 poems—no other number would be suitable—plus an introduction by Robert Bloch and an afterword describing Magistrale and Knox's credentials.

### Ben P. Indick

...there are good and bad things to say about them [*Obsessions* & *The Illustrated Bradbury*], the nasty old critic that I am, I would find some things to disagree with.

It's a very interesting format that Mike has adopted here; this tall, slim book, cleanly printed, rather interesting to look at.

Bob Knox's work [in *Obsessions*] is just



excellent—it seems to me he is progressing nicely. The thing I like about his work: he owes nothing to anyone.

*Obsessions* was pleasant reading (call it poetry if you like, no reason not to). It's not exactly the thing that Keats wrote, nor is it the sort of thing that Walt Whitman wrote, but it *is* the sort of thing that Magistrale writes. They're more like little vignettes, little stories...on fire it's not going to set the world, but it's pleasant, easy reading.

I especially got a kick out of the poem about Melville's whale in the basement. It works well with your putting out a book about Bradbury because Bradbury would probably give, if not his right arm, at least an autographed copy of one of his books, to have a whale in the basement because, as you know, he has a tremendous fixation on Melville.

The title, first of all, *The Illustrated Bradbury*, set me right off. I opened the book with the anticipation of finding many fine illustrations of Ray Bradbury. Naturally there are only four illustrations within the book. (Larry Dickson tends to do several panels, he does know how to draw...somewhat abstract.) And then I realized, when I saw that it was entirely about *The Illustrated Man*, that the title was a play on that. I think it's not a good title—I think it's misleading, it *does* look like you're going to get an illustrated book. You don't. I think you could have done a little better than that.

Of course, later on, I realized that [Dickson had drawn] this hand with a tattooing needle on the front cover and on each of the illustrations as well and of course it does go with the theme.

Why have one page that's headed *Abstract* then across the staples of the center of the book have an *Introduction*? The introduction is practically the abstract word-for-word. Seems rather a pointless repetition and I think a little editing might have cut this thing out entirely. The abstract belongs better in an advertisement for the whole book rather than to just have it there twice.

...And that embarrassingly weak pun. Whenever he uses the word *illustrate*, he puts in parentheses that he is sorry to use this pun. If the comedians had to depend on puns like that we would have a smileless world. He needn't be shy about it, the word *illustrated* can be used easily.

On page 10 he writes "*The Illustrated Man* has sold millions of copies in an age when few people read." I can only say that Bradbury, Stephen King, Danielle Steele, James Michener, Dean Koontz, Tom Clancy have

sold hundreds of millions of books. Either somebody out there is hoarding all the copies or, by golly, there are some people reading. I think it's time this cliché was tossed out the window.

He also writes on that same page "most short stories do not begin at the beginning." He means that they start later on and have flashbacks. It's true. Many short stories do not start at the beginning—some do, some don't. I suspect I can find dozens that do begin at the beginning; and I think, given a little time, I could find hundreds of these. I had a college professor fifty years ago who told us to watch out for glittering generalities and I think this is something the author can well do: watch out!

Anderson makes a big thing about *The Illustrated Man* being a true novel. I can't agree with this. Bradbury tied together many disparate stories with a running thread; this does not a novel create (or *doth* not a novel create, if you prefer). The novel here is the *thread*, not the stories. The stories came out at many times. Bradbury very cleverly made them into a book. He did the same thing, of course, with *The Martian Chronicles*, where many of the stories are really in very different styles. However, if either of them were to have the claim to any degree of being a novel, obviously *The Martian Chronicles*, it seems to me, would be the one. Because Mars is a very strong unifying theme, it's a majestic theme. Tattoos on a body is not exactly as majestic a theme. If Anderson wants to call it a novel, it's fine; if he wants to wear the captain's hat, it doesn't necessarily make him a captain.

When Anderson talks about imagination, there's a very popular, and it seems to me, a patronizing notion that children are the most imaginative people of all. Adults lose their imagination, the theory goes. Personally, I do believe this is patronizing. Children, as far as I can see (and I can't pretend to total expertise, I've only had a couple of 'em; my wife is a teacher, she would know better than I), children are very concrete in their imagery. They are not imagining. They see what they think they see; they're not imagining it. If they think they see, for example, a snake that has swallowed an elephant and you think that it's a hat, that's your privilege. (You know the literary source I'm referring to.)

Children at the same time are very unimaginative about what others see. If I show this child, for example, a Jackson Pollock painting and ask him, "what do you see in this," the kid'll tell me he sees a lot of scribbles—even though he scribbles himself

and doesn't see it as such. So I would really like to put to rest the cliché of the super-imaginative child.

It seems to me that imagination is seeing images which we construct from within through our own sensory and intellectual knowledge and insight and also images that we get from without, that is to say, responses to stimuli. This is something that develops as we grow. We can convey a sense of those images only as we reach maturity so that others can be persuaded of the truth of our fantasy and therefore I don't believe children have a sole lien on imagination.

I would also disagree strongly with the author about what he calls Bradbury's "cinematic sense." He bases this on what he feels Bradbury does with quick-takes, cuts, shocks in his stories that seem to give them a cinematic, graphic flow. He feels this has made Bradbury's work successful. I do not agree whatsoever. It is not this sort of thing which the author feels that he sees. The success of Bradbury is a result of his poetic prose, his appealing nostalgia, and also his imagination, his great sense of imagery which his prose can pull out and can convey to us. These are the qualities that I think are most familiar (and, incidentally, most frequently parodied) and *they* are the reasons for his success.

On the other hand, the reason for his *failure* in most of his cinematic and stage attempts is precisely the reason for his success in writing. Those qualities, that poetic prose which sometimes sounds ridiculous when it is spoken aloud, at least in our own day and age, are the things that doom his prose.

I'm sending you a copy of my revision, just published by Borgo [Press, P.O. Box 2845, San Bernardino, CA 92406.] of my *Ray Bradbury: Dramatist*. (A title which is not misleading, by the way. It is simply that: Ray Bradbury as dramatist, except that it includes movies, radio, and television as well as the stage.) I try to explain in there what makes his plays work well and why sometimes they don't. I can tell you in advance that he is having a good deal of trouble with the stage production of a musical version of *Fahrenheit 451*. And the reason is simple: he simply will *not* accept a true stage-worthy ending; he insists on the ending in the book. It is a *fine* ending: everybody walking around with a little book that they have memorized of the great authors so that they can save them for posterity. On stage this consists of a bunch of people walking around, talking. It was a failure in the movie by Truffaut and it's holding down the play. And I can tell you this



because I have spoken with the lyricist and the composer as well. Bradbury won't give in on it and so the play has stayed where it was.

(Although, incidentally, there is a one-act opera based on a Bradbury short story which is about to open in Chicago at the Lehr Theater. Bradbury wrote the libretto for it but the libretto had to be adapted by someone else.)

He does not have, really, that cinematic style which is what the author, Anderson, sees within him. I would like it to be within him and sometimes it *is* within him, but not enough.

I must also take exception to *academese*. There's lots of *academese* in this essay. Anderson has this slavish devotion to his academic sources and they remind me of a story my old friend David Keller (forgotten by today's science fiction fans, but a nice writer in his own era) used to tell about the scientists who were so amazed by the beauty of the canary's song that they dissected the canary to find out what made it sing. In the end, they had neither canary nor song. Pedants like that, to me, are similar to the men who categorize and classify each word of a story. They lose the beauty of the story in their anxiety to demonstrate their own brilliant, analytical minds. I find that Anderson shows too much loyalty to this sort of thing. The results finally become almost preposterous, it seems to me; undecipherable at times. For example he has one splendid sentence which begins, "this technique works with prolepses, analepses, and Barthes' hermeneutic code..." If you like such things, fine.

Unfortunately, I prefer a more direct and straighter prose. I *will* say that towards the end of his essay he drops some of that stuff and just describes his own feelings about the stories of this book which clearly impressed him so much.

I must also say, at one point where he chooses to find words describing fantastic stories, he comes up with the poles; the polarities being the word "uncanny" and the word "marvelous." *Uncanny* he describes as basically being an explicable-seeming fantasy; *marvelous* is sheer fantasy. In the middle he uses the word "fantastic" and he describes *The Turn of the Screw* as being, therefore, fantastic in this sense. In a sense he's right about it because *The Turn of the Screw*, for nearly a century, has caused debate as to whether or not there are ghosts in it—whether or not it is truly fantastic. But I think most people would have no debate as to the meaning of the word *fantastic*. *Fan-*

*tastic* means just what it says: it is something fantastic; it's no middle ground, it *is* fantastic. The old expression is that if it smells like a pig, and walks like a pig, and says "oink," it *is* a pig. (Some people said that about ducks but I like to use pigs.)

I hope that my own essay does not fall into some of those traps. For one thing, at least, reading my essay you don't have to be a mathematician. There are no equations, I promise you—not one single equation in the whole book. Nor are there a set of ABCs; simply an essay that tries to tell it as I see it. I could be wrong, I don't pretend to omniscience. But I based it on many, many years of love-of-theater and the dramatic form as well as experience in writing for the theater. Bradbury himself did approve of my essay.

*[Ben originally did not want us to publish his comments for fear of coming off like some sort of curmudgeon. What he brings to the discussion of The Illustrated Bradbury, in particular, was just too good not to see the light of general publication. I am grateful for his insights. mb]*

#### James Anderson

...I appreciate the comments of Ben Indick and others concerning *The Illustrated Bradbury*. I will soon be working on a Ph.D. dissertation on H.P. Lovecraft and can use any feedback I can get. I found Mr. Indick's comments interesting and useful and I would like to respond to several points.

First, my analysis does not say that *The Illustrated Man* is a novel, as Mr. Indick infers; my personal definition of a novel is a bit more classical. I do state that it is "a complete work in itself," "a unified work, in which each story contributes to the meaning of the collection as a whole," and "a *bildungsroman* of sorts."

My argument is that the stories are related in overall theme, not just as a group of stories about tattoos. This may very well have been a clever marketing strategy on Bradbury's part, yet the selection of stories for the collection (either on a conscious or unconscious level) has, as a consequence, created a very effective work that is more than the sum of its parts.

Second, my analysis exposes themes of childhood and adulthood which Mr. Indick finds objectionable. I'm not saying that all adults are uncreative (and I don't think that Bradbury is either). But children, in general, are much more *willing* to imagine than adults are—just watch them at play if you don't believe me.

Those of us in the science fiction and

fantasy fields are also quite adept at "pretending" and imagining. I wonder how many "mainstream" adults are able or willing to do this with any regularity, however, except with the assistance of a writer, director, or other creative middleman.

I totally agree with Mr. Indick that Bradbury's poetic prose, style and sense of nostalgia are a major reason for his success. Since I know little or nothing of the film business, I accept his evaluation of Bradbury's cinematic sense in the films. The cinematic quality of his short stories, however, helps to keep his prose lean and tight without losing its inherent poetry.

Finally, I confess that *The Illustrated Bradbury* is written in an academic and scholarly style, sometimes at the expense of clarity. The piece was originally written as the thesis requirement for my M.A. program (and don't think it was easy getting a piece on Bradbury to slide past the graduate committee) and was intended for an academic audience.

I offered it to Niekas Publications for two reasons.

First, I think that *The Illustrated Man* has been overlooked by critics and has much more depth and substance than many readers realize. I hoped that my work would inspire re-reading of the book and would provide some insights into it.

Second, I hoped that my work would introduce readers to a different kind of criticism than what is generally available in the science fiction field. Although the tone is, admittedly, dry and scholarly, *NIEKAS* readers are sophisticated enough to understand the work and appreciate it even if they might not agree with the methodology.

In defense of academia, I do believe that critics need to have and use explicit, well-defined terms. Otherwise, criticism breaks down into book reviewing. While the reviewer's job is to recommend or "trash" books, the critic's function is quite different. Criticism should expose the different levels of meaning available within a work, thus enhancing the perception of the text by showing its value as serious literature. This is, I believe, especially important in science fiction, where even writers of the caliber of Bradbury and Lovecraft are still looked down upon in certain academic circles.

As a result of my work with *The Illustrated Man*, I firmly believe that Ray Bradbury is one of the finest writers of our time—and not just in the science fiction genre. And I'm grateful to *NIEKAS* for allowing me to share my ideas with its readers.



## THE GOOD WITCH OF THE SOUTH

### Andre Norton

It is very interesting to read of one's work as evaluated by others. I am most proud that *Niekas* has seen fit to devote most of an issue to what I have been doing. I do appreciate your thoughtfulness in all respects.

[letter to *ajb*]:...I was very much thrilled by the copy of *Niekas*—mostly it left me feeling—can this be me so written about? You might be interested in knowing that the WW books are being translated both in Poland and Russia now. My Russian translator writes that until the walls came falling down fantasy books were forbidden there entirely. Unfortunately one can not collect from the returns—the money has to be banked and is not sent out of the country—but that may change also in the future—who knows?

[Maybe writers and/or publishers in your position could work out a deal similar to those which McDonald's and Pepsi have: they buy such things as Russian vodka with their unexportable rubles and import them here to sell for dollars. Unfortunately, all the Russian writers that I can think of who sell well here are either dead or exiles living in the West. Perhaps you could claim in exchange the royalties on Gorbachev's Perestroika? Or a cut of the profits from a possible future PERESTROIKA: THE MOTION PICTURE?]

[It's ironic that fantasy has been forbidden in the nation that gave us *The Love of Three Oranges*, *Peter and the Wolf*, and *The Firebird*, thanks to the artistic canons of Socialist Realism, as hostile to fantasy as Freudian psychology if not more so. It's not at all odd that one of the first fruits of liberation should be a demand for it in literature. As Tolkien pointed out in "On Fairy-Stories":

...I do not accept the tone of scorn or pity with which 'Escape' is now so often used: a tone for which the uses of the word outside literary criticism give no warrant at all. In what the misusers are fond of calling *Real Life*, *Escape* is evidently as a rule very practical, and may even be heroic. In real life it is difficult to blame it, unless it fails; in criticism it would seem to be the worse the better it succeeds. Evidently we are faced by a misuse of words, and also by a confusion of thought. Why should a man be scorned, if, finding himself in prison, he tries to get out and

go home? Or if, when he cannot do so, he thinks and talks about other topics than jailers and prison-walls?... In using *Escape* in this way the critics have chosen the wrong word, and, what is more, they are confusing, not always by sincere error, the *Escape of the Prisoner with the Flight of the Deserter*. Just so a Party-spokesman might have labelled departure from the misery of the Fuhrer's or any other Reich and even criticism of it as treachery. [Tree and Leaf, p. 54]

And C. S. Lewis adds, in defending fairy tales (and by implication fantasy) from the charge of escapism by contrasting them with wish-fulfillment fantasies such as school stories (a genre rare in this country, but comparable to the *Nancy Drew/Hardy Boys* tales) in his essay, "On Three Ways of Writing for Children":

In a sense a child does not long for fairy land as a boy longs to be the hero of the first eleven [varsity cricket team]. Does anyone suppose that he really and prosaically longs for all the dangers and discomforts of a fairy tale?—really wants dragons in contemporary England? It is not so. It would be much truer to say that fairy land arouses a longing for he knows not what. It stirs and troubles him (to his life-long enrichment) with the dim sense of something beyond his reach and, far from dulling or emptying the actual world, gives it a new dimension of depth. He does not despise real woods because he has read of enchanted woods; the reading makes all woods a little enchanted. [Of Other Worlds, pp. 29-30]

One might add that it makes him grow up to be someone a little less likely to acquiesce in the State-ordered wholesale destruction of ancient forests in order to build factories in the name of Socialist Progress. Or Capitalist Progress, for that matter. There is something inherently subversive—and liberating—about fantasy; dictatorships know what they are doing when they ban it. And it kind of makes you wonder about the principles of those even in fandom who react to the genre itself, not just bad fantasy fiction, with fear and loathing....*ajb*]

### Robert Bloch

It's such a pleasure to see this lady get a bit of the attention and acclaim she so richly deserves. A great job of editing and a joy to read.

### Ruth Berman

Over the years I've read and much enjoyed a great many of her books but the memory of them doesn't seem to stick with me with the exception of some of her children's books, especially *Dragon Magic* with its contrasting dragons from different cultures.

### Buck Coulson

Wilanne Belden's comment about Norton is not only correct, it's also a commentary on the greatest change to date in the science fiction and fantasy field, the change from magazines to paperbacks. Women readers of magazines could have authors like Marion Zimmer Bradley, Leigh Brackett, or C.L. Moore as role models but they weren't producing books and Norton was. In fact she was producing books almost exclusively. Only a few of her stories were in the magazines. Of course Marion has produced plenty of books by now but she started much later than Norton in the pb field.

Maybe the next change will be the one from paperbacks to cassette tapes.

My own introduction to science fiction was via Heinlein but some years before he began writing juveniles. Perhaps I don't have the same reaction to Norton that a lot of fans do because I was an adult before I read anything by her. I like her writing but it came too late to influence my life. I'd already been hooked by Heinlein and Leigh Brackett and L. Sprague de Camp.

I remember the brunch with Norton that Ed mentions. Juanita and I were there. We had an article about Norton in *Yandro* some time previously. Of course when I looked for it I couldn't find it to give it a date, and I'd been reviewing her books favorably for several years. This was the only time we've seen her though we've corresponded off and on for some years. It's down to an exchange of Christmas cards these days.

I don't have many comments because I agree with most of what was said and it was so complete that I can't find anything to add. I might mention that *Witch World* was up against exceptionally strong competition in the 1964 Hugos. Vonnegut's *Cat's Cradle*, Herbert's *Dune*, Heinlein's *Glory Road*, and Simak's *Here Gather the Stars*, which rather surprisingly won.

### Joseph T. Major

Looking at the Andre Norton special issue of *Niekas* reminds me of something. Consider barbed wire. There are such things as barbed wire fanzines. People publish them and in their pages explain the important distinc-



tions to be found in barbed wire. Crucial issues of material, shape, frequency, and condition are analyzed and discussed in particular and precise detail. All it is to me is something I have no desire to get tangled up in.

#### David Palter

This was a very good study of Andre Norton. Although it is difficult to compare them I must compare this to the special *Lan's Lantern* issue. I think I would give *Niekas* the edge as the better study though if someone were truly obsessed with Andre Norton that person would wish to read both of these magazines.

*[We strove not to duplicate material in Lan's Lantern so that the Norton fan should have both. erm]*

#### Thomas M. Egan

I enjoyed [Norton] in the very late 50's and early 60's. I always felt she never received the kind of recognition for her writing quality and the scope of her plots that she deserved. I'm not like Anne Braude, searching for Jungian plots in the *Witch World* and *Crystal Gryphon* series, but I enjoyed the rich and decent characters she depicts. They link up to the reader by a sense of loneliness, of vulnerability, as they search for their quest and seek their own versions of the Holy Grail.

Am I being Jungian here? Her female characters are never super-scientists but lonely folks seeking to do the right thing in their lives. Logic is always respected in the plot and the importance of loyalty and friendship. In short, good reading and the sense that the story will go on after you finish reading the book.

#### Margaret Ballif Simon

It was fascinating to refresh my memory on Andre Norton's works. The first of her works that I read was *Starman's Son/Daybreak: 2250 A.D.* and, like Mike Bastraw, it led me right on into the wondrous realm of genre reading at a young age. I found it in the public library which in those days only had a few SF/F/H books. Anne Braude's articles, as typical of her excellence, were most informative.

It seems to me that most all of the SF/F books on the market have a strong semblance to Norton's earlier stories. I'd venture to say that most of our writers, knowingly or not, incorporate some facet of her plots, her philosophy.

## CENSORSHIP VS. SALMAN'S RUSH TO DIE

#### Martin Morse Wooster

Salman Rushdie nearly became a science fiction writer. Rushdie's first novel, *Grimus*, was written for and submitted to a "first SF novel" contest sponsored by Victor Gollancz. They rejected the book which was published by a competitor as a non-SF title. I suspect that if Rushdie had won the prize *Satanic Verses* would have been published as a "mad-cap fantasy adventure" and the Ayatollah would never have bothered to prepare his execution order.

#### Buck Coulson

I wasn't one of the critics who called *Grimus* engrossing. I couldn't finish it. I didn't get a copy of *Satanic Verses* and wouldn't have read it if I had. Nor would I read it now that it's garnered all its publicity.

Of course offering a reward for the author's death is a bit extreme. It can't be *that* bad!

Incidentally, I am told by Russell Miller that only a few copies of *Barefaced Messiah* were distributed in this country before the Scientologists' lawsuits stopped distribution, but when the court case is settled he hopes to get it back in circulation. I didn't get a copy of it, either, but I was able to read one and promptly sent Miller a fan letter. At least legal steps are a bit higher class than death threats though from the events related in the book it seems that Scientologists follow the law only when it suits them. Well, so do drivers.

So maybe it's universal?

#### Joseph T. Major

Anne Braude's comments are immensely funny. In *Mathoms* (pp. 4-5, 50-51) she avidly opposes the banning of literary works which certain political groups oppose. In *Gincas* (pp. 45, 55) she avidly proposes the banning of literary works which certain political groups oppose. It must be a very different thing to consider when it is your very own political interest group that is involved. *[What I suggested in Gincas was a formula for publishing even demonstrably false statements—the media which quote them should supply a disclaimer for falsified or erroneous statements of fact (i.e., claiming the Holocaust never happened). If this is merely a political position, God help us all! I don't know how you managed to read book-banning (or avidity, for that matter) into my remarks. ajb.]*

## GENRE/ GENDER

#### Martin Morse Wooster

Jane Yolen is certainly right to note that books written by women with female protagonists should not *uncritically* be considered "women's novels" unworthy of consideration by men, but there are fantasy novels written by women that I didn't enjoy in part because they were not addressed to my gender or attacked it: M.Z.B.'s *Shattered Chain* and *Thendara House* come to mind, as well as some novels of Sheri Tepper. Similarly I find it difficult to imagine women enjoying the bloodthirsty military aspects of Jerry Pournelle or his disciples. Some fantasy novels written by women *are* meant for women only. Some (such as the works of Judith Tarr and Barbara Hambly) I have enjoyed greatly. The key, of course, is to treat a novelist on his or her own merits, not as part of a class.

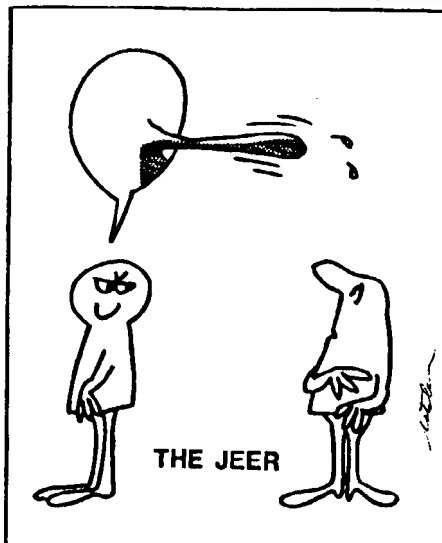
#### Susan Shwartz

...Jane Yolen's comments on W. Ritchie Benedict's "ambivalent review" of Jane's *Sister Light, Sister Dark*. Jane, you want to start an argument about his contention "that this book (or any book) has a 'feel' of a woman's book?" And you've called me in on it. Just what I needed. An invitation to a word war.

However, as a matter of fact, I've been chewing on precisely this topic for a couple of months now.

Jane asks a couple of interesting questions that aren't quite simply rhetorical. Let me

## BALLOONS ROTSLER



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use some space to cite them because they're material to what I'm going to say:

Does he [Ritchie] mean that because the author and protagonist are women, only women would be interested? Should I then never have been interested in a story in which the author and hero (and the hero's buddies) are male?

In the first place, I don't know if Ritchie "means" anything by what he may or may not have implied; what seems to be under consideration here is the subtext (of Ritchie's review, Jane's book, and the context in which it is read)—and probably cultural biases, including my own.

"Women's books" (whether they're romances, SF, or fantasy, or Sweet Valley High, heaven help us all) are packaged in a particular way, and have been for as long as I've been reading anything at all. And, for about that long, too, I've noted that while it's considered progressive and assertive and, God help us, "cute" for little girls to read "boys' books," God and a good psychiatrist help the little boy who reads "girls' books."

In other words and in grown-up terms, it's OK for me to read about Chuck Yeager; it's not OK (as the world seems to see it, and as, I must say, occurs in the SF community too) for a man to read about Jacqueline Cochran—though we'll make an exception for Sally Ride. Just so long as we remember that she's an exception, rather than the rule.

Why do I think this is? You're not going to like the answer. To put it bluntly, because I think that in this culture, men are regarded as people, as the normative way of being that male and female alike should relate to, while women are more specialized, their works of interest, really, only to a crowd of lesser significance, i.e., other women.

(And "it's not so because I don't want it to be" is solipsism, not a response. Keep that in mind, people, before the screams-and-leaps begin.)

The foregoing is the same argument that I use to attack "natural gender." If you consistently refer to anyone who does, acts, feels, is, believes, creates, or whatever as "he," people who live all their lives that way are going to think that "he" is the only valid type of entity who can do, act, feel, believe, or create. Which tends to produce egotism on the part of little "he's" and demoralization on the part of little "she's"—which is probably just fine, since they're not regarded by virtue of the meaning implicit in this same "natural" gender as first-class people in any

case. Can't be: first-class people are "he."

It's always fascinating to be told how "this isn't true." (Either in magisterial tones by "he's," or in any one of a variety of ways, usually highly charged, by "she's" who have tried to identify as successfully as possible with the ruling crowd. I rather think I'll hear a good deal of this in subsequent letters.) But judging from the vehemence and the assiduousness with which people assure me that "this isn't true," I'm inclined—unfortunately—to believe I'm right. I wish I weren't, too, but that doesn't make it wrong.

That's my first response-formulation: the possibility that women's issues are specialized, restricted to women in importance; men's issues are humane, in that they are held to refer to the set of all human beings and to have, therefore, universal applicability.

Both Ursula Le Guin in her new collection of essays *Dancing at the Edge of the World* (also in the January 22, 1989, issue of *The New York Times* and in Denise DuPont's book on the women in SF—from St. Martin's Press) and James Tiptree (also in DuPont) talk about women's language, women's stories, women's concerns.

Le Guin points out "the carrier bag school of literature" is a lot different from mammoth-hunting sagas. But because one is told chiefly by people who create carrier bags (women) and the other by mammoth hunters (*not* Jean Auel), guess which receives more value?

When Le Guin's essay in the *Times* came out, it was funny to note the responses that were printed (including mine). The men who wrote in tried to explain that this wasn't a "women's issue"; it was their issue too. They wanted equal time; more than that, they wanted to take it away from the people who'd started it. I guess it had gotten too important to be restricted to "she's."

Tiptree, in her DuPont essay, noted that after her identity was divulged, she lost some correspondents, who either couldn't deal with her or who dealt with her thereafter in a way that she found offensive. She also received no more Nebulas as Tiptree, she adds.

Somehow, this all has to answer and/or support Jane Yolen and advance her argument in terms of the questions she asked. "Does he mean that because the author and protagonist are women, only women would be interested?" It shouldn't be that way; it frequently is, however, regardless of whatever politically correct contortions some readers attempt. It's not just males, either; some

women have an ego-investment in only dealing with male-oriented concepts and in deflating the pretensions of women who might try to do something else—or anything at all. And Queen Bees are Queen Bees, whether they're dolled up in a corporate suit or wearing jeans and taking martial arts courses. None of that frilly stuff about "girls" for them; they do the "hard stuff."

Sure. To adapt Tiptree's "The Women Men Don't See," they're still oposomes.

In our society, women *gain* caste from male-dominant activities; men *lose* caste from female-dominant activities. It isn't nice, but it appears to be so.

Now, however, writers like Jane Yolen, Ursula Le Guin, MZB, Diana Paxson, and a growing host of others (I'm trying, I'm trying!) are writing stories that, we hope, validate the "women's story." To paraphrase Le Guin, we tend, however, to think of our work as novels, short stories, etc., rather than "women's fiction" restricted to women alone. As much as consensus is possible on such issues, I do think I can say that much.

What I notice is intriguing is this: just as we're doing this, and as the number of women writing in the field has grown way past the "critical mass" (around 15%) established for backlash reactions by a Center for Women's Studies at Wellesley College, I've noted a growing backlash against fantasy, coupled with an increasingly prevalent sneer about "just another female fantasy author."

In other words, it's quite possible that the split is widening within our genre: men write the *hard* stuff (emphasis mine)—all that good, hardcore SF about rockets and war and weapons...neat stuff like that; while women write that flaccid, comfy, fantasy stuff, which is backward looking, full of wish-fulfillment, and sentiment. (Note: I have culled all of those adjectives from recent denunciations of fantasy that I have read in the prozines and the fanzines.)

Then, of course, there are the women who, as they say, don't write that (ugh) fantasy either, or who indulge in elaborate contortions in which they claim that *their* fantasy isn't *really* fantasy. I think they're mostly unaware of what they're implying, that they want to ally themselves with what they consider to be a higher-status genre. Once again and right now before the howls of outrage start: you may say that I'm wrong. You may say that I'm imagining this. Nevertheless, I will insist that I have drawn all of the foregoing from my own experiences, as a writer and editor of fantasy and SF, as a critic, and as a listener to other women and



to men.

Several of us—Lillian Stewart Carl, Kit Kerr, Judith Tarr, and I—published an article in *Amazing* on a related topic, the ongoing squabble between fantasy and SF writers. My own feeling is that somewhere deep in its subtext, that issue is gender related and quite deeply buried. And one of the things that it's deeply buried in is denial.

The implications for the men (as in "Well, I'm a man, and I write fantasy too!") are rather alarming. Because if fantasy becomes feminized, what happens to them? Maybe they'll establish a subgenre—high-paid fantasy, as opposed to that for-free or formidlist stuff; I've heard rumblings of that, too.

You've probably heard rumblings about all of this, too. As distasteful as all this is, keep it in mind before the knee-jerk denials start.

Now, as Hamlet says, mischief, thou art afoot. And I've dared to say a lot of things I've thought for a long time.

Jane, you instigator, is this enough argument to get into for one letter?

#### Anne Braude

Jane Yolen didn't ask *me* to put my oar in on the subject of men's vs. women's fiction, but I've been discussing the subject in these pages for quite a while now, and it's going to take *force majeure* to stop me. I had not read *Sister Light, Sister Dark* (nobody ever sends me no review copies, not nohow), but I have pointed out that at least in juvenile fiction, books for boys tend to stress action and adventure while girls' stories deal more with emotional growth and relationships. Dorothy L. Sayers pointed out that each person can be regarded as both *homo* (from the Latin *homo, hominis* from which we get "human," not related to the Greek *homo-*, "same," from which we get "homosexual" and "homonym"), referring to what makes us human, and *vir* or *femina*, referring to what makes us male (virile) or feminine; and men persist in regarding themselves as both *homo* and *vir* and women as exclusively *femina*. She cites a newspaper's statement "that the seats on the near side of a bus are always filled before those on the off side, because 'men find them more comfortable on account of the camber of the road, and women find they get a better view of the shop windows.' As though the camber of the road did not affect male and female bodies equally."

*Vir* fiction is, I suppose, typified by those series on the shelves labeled "Men's Adventure," featuring heroes usually called

something like The Enforcer, The Terminator, The Avenger, The Annihilator, The Escalator, whatever; while *femina* fiction would be the mushy romance novel, either the short and relatively mild category romance like Harlequin or the longer and more lurid bodice-ripper historical. The latter, I am given to understand by friends who read them, may often, if you choose the right authors, be pretty good and well researched. (Research is the oat bran of romance fiction.) And since I sometimes see men looking at these shelves in the bookstore, and they can't all be trying to find something for their poor old mothers, this may be more generally true than I have allowed. But on the whole these categories try to appeal to only one sex—and they are notoriously the sludge of popular fiction.

Other genres appeal to the *homo* in the reader—a sense of wonder, a liking for puzzles, an interest in alternate worlds, either imaginary or of a different time or place—as, of course, do serious literature and even well-crafted popular fiction. Not only does Jane Austen have her male fans, so does Georgette Heyer. And women read both Dickens and Dick Francis. Jane asks facetiously if she should never have been interested in a story in which the principal characters are male, according to the implications of Benedict's review.

I am reminded of the adamant common sense of Samuel Johnson's comment on the neoclassical insistence on unity of place in drama—the idea that if Act I took place in Athens, you couldn't set Act II in Thebes, because the audience would know the characters couldn't have traveled that far during the entr'acte and the play would therefore lose all credibility. Johnson said that if a bunch of people sitting in a London theatre could imagine themselves to be in Athens in the first place, why should they boggle at imagining themselves in Thebes in the second place? Likewise, one can enjoy and identify with a character who is admirable, or whose thoughts and feelings resemble one's own, no matter what that character's sex or even species.

I, for example, have in my time loved, identified with, and eagerly followed the fortunes of not only Anne of Green Gables and Jo March but also Huck Finn, David Balfour, Rikki-Tikki-Tavi, Mole (of course), Albert Payson Terhune's noble collies, and even The Little Engine That Could. I am attracted to any character who is basically decent to others, intelligent, capable, and possessed of a sense of humor and high

principles. I dislike characters who are cruel, unprincipled or hypocritical, so selfish that they ignore the needs and rights of others, and ready to victimize others in the name of a cause, or who are weak and irresponsible.

My favorite literary friends include Elinor Dashwood in *Sense and Sensibility*, Cyrano de Bergerac, Miss Jane Marple, Akela in the *Jungle Books*, Lord Peter Wimsey, Frodo Baggins, Antigone, and Peter Stanhope in Charles Williams' *Descent into Hell*. Characters I love to hate are as varied: the Rev. Theobald Pontifex in *The Way of All Flesh*, Shelob, the Grand Inquisitor in the parable in *The Brothers Karamazov*, Rune in *Duncton Wood*, the wicked governess in *Mistress Masham's Repose*, the hero of Mackenzie's *The Man of Feeling* (literature's ultimate wimp), Shere Khan, the General in *Watership Down*, and Morgause in *The Once and Future King*. And Lazarus Long, of course.

We may also find, as we grow and develop, that our attitudes toward characters change as we change, but this has more to do with the maturing process in general than with gender. (Except in the case of an adolescent romantic crush. The officially authorized objects for the teenage crush, among literary heroes, are Rhett Butler, Mr. Darcy, Heathcliff [not the feline one], and Whatsisname in *Rebecca*. I can't do anything right; I had crushes on John Ridd in *Lorna Doone*, Alan Fairford in *Redgauntlet*, and Sherlock Holmes.) Some characters one grows right out of, like those in the really childish children's books, for example the Mother West Wind animal stories and Nancy Drew mysteries. Sometimes one learns to appreciate characters one had little use for at first, like Jo's sisters in *Little Women*. And sometimes one's perspective on a book changes. I imagine the very young child reading (or having read to her) *The Wind in the Willows* identifies with Mr. Toad, a perfect Trickster figure who does whatever he pleases, causes the most awful trouble, and more or less gets away with everything. As the child matures, she begins to see that Toad is essentially helpless, immature, and dependent on those around him for all success; she then would transfer her identification to the adventurous and imaginative Rat, the kindly, naive, but perceptive Mole, or even the gruff, unsocial, parental Badger.

To return specifically to *sf/fantasy* and the books Jane Yolen mentioned, I should think that anyone who has read *The Left Hand of Darkness* would be compelled to give up any notion of sexual stereotyping of readers in



our field. It's true that there tend to be more female fantasy writers and more male sf writers; but I think that's a function of yet-uneradicated bias in our culture, in which girls are discouraged at an early age from taking math and science courses; persevering takes so much energy that those who do turn out scientifically trained will include a minimum with interest in writing sf as well as pursuing their main scientific career. In the Earthsea trilogy, my least favorite book is the middle one, the only one with a female protagonist. And Anne McCaffrey has lost some of her fans in the sf community because she has been putting into her books increasing amounts of *femina* romantic elements—I even saw her cited as a model in one of those books on how to write and sell a romance. Andre Norton's fans of both sexes read her sf and fantasy with sublime indifference as to the sex (or species) of the protagonist.

[See "The Space Crone, the Alligator Wrestler, and the Grand Old Man" for not-totally-unrelated-material. mb]

## STILL RIDING

### Martin Morse Wooster

It was a quite enjoyable book [*The Once and Future Arthur*, *Niekas* #38. mb], once I made it past the cover blurb. (Sorry, but "juicy gobbets" to me sound like dripping fat.)

There were a few errors. For example: I suspect the person who wrote *The Search for King Arthur* was Christopher Hibbert, not Hibbard. Joseph Major is also probably wrong when he refers to *Jurgen* as having appeared when T.H. White was evolving *The Once and Future King* since *Jurgen* was published in 1919 when T.H. White was 13. I know White was a precocious author, but he wasn't that precocious.

Jon Douglas Singer's article on the whereabouts of Avalon was interesting although I wish he did not have the irritating habit of constantly referring to his own unpublished work. (If these articles were so wonderful why weren't they published?) While I am impressed by Singer's knowledge (I had no idea that Fridtjof Nansen was a diplomat, explorer, and a philologist) I am surprised that he didn't dissect Katherine Maltwood's theories further. I would certainly like to see Maltwood's data because I doubt that she could calculate angles with a planisphere to "prove" that ancient Britons built their temples to represent calculations. After all,

many experts now believe that the "evidence" that Stonehenge was an observatory is simply not there; I suspect a sophisticated computer analysis could dissolve Maltwood's theories using similar techniques.

*The Once and Future Arthur* is an amazing feast of criticism. I particularly liked Esther Friesner's piece comparing Arthur to El Cid. Friesner is a very learned and witty writer, and I wish she would do more humorous critical pieces. I was also impressed by the pieces by Anne Braude, Marion Zimmer Bradley, and Phyllis Ann Karr.

One addition to Anne Braude's piece: since your book was published, a third non-fantasy novel about Arthur has been published, Robinson Davies' *The Lyre of Orpheus* in which various academics at a Canadian university attempt to reconstruct an E.T.A. Hoffmann opera about Arthur. A very pleasant entertainment, although it is not up to such Davies' novels as *What's Bred in the Bone* or *World of Wonders*.

### Buck Coulson

Ben Indick's article on variant Arthurs [*"Arthur, Arthur," Niekas* #39. mb] omits Henry Treece's *The Great Captains* where a drunken Celtic hooligan named Artos the Bear takes the sword of command from Ambrosius, the last Count of Britain, drives it into a log, and dares anyone to take it back out. Eventually he removes it himself, becomes the Count of Britain in jest—and later in reality taking the Roman name Artorius. The story vaguely follows the original Malory with the characters having Roman or Celtic forms of their names and provides excellent descriptions of the filth and gore prevalent in the Fifth Century. Copyright is 1959. David Drake's version is the closest modern equivalent but Treece's work exhibits even more brutality along the way. It may be the only Arthurian book without a hero in the modern sense though Artos becomes a hero for the time. I don't think it's been reprinted for a long time. It's not the sort of noble fantasy that is popular. I, of course, liked it a lot. It provides a powerful image. I see I mentioned the book in my previous letter but didn't describe it. Original publisher was Random House. I have a Crest pb reprint. [Published by Bodley Head (London, 1956). *The sequel, involving Arthur with Beowulf and Amleth (Hamlet) is The Green Man (Putnam, 1966). His juvenile The Eagles Have Flown (London: Allen & Unwin, 1954) also deals with Arthur. ajb*]

### Robert F. Baker

Especially interesting to me were "The Last Temptation of Arthur" by Phyllis Ann Karr and "White Phantom" by Alexei Kondratiev. Good scholarship!

John Boardman, however, shows more intellectual *hauteur* than research in his citations. While I share his fascination with Malory's story, if he has truly researched *The Mabinogion*, how can he deny the actual historic *fact* of Arthur's life? Anne Braude also makes some historically inaccurate statements (example: "Before Arthur's coming, Britain was a wasteland of brutality."). [*I was describing Tennyson's allegorical metaphor, not actual history. ajb*]

The question remains: are we ready even now—to regard and write about Arthur as anything more than allegory, metaphor, a figure of "fancy" to develop some *theme* that is dear to us? *True* incidents of Arthur's life would probably prove more startling and adventurous than all the fiction that has been cascading upon us for centuries. Long held names of places near Edinburgh and Stirling, called "Arthur's Seat," "Arthur's Knot," and "Arthur's Oven" indicate that folk for many centuries already *knew* where Arthur's realm had been—not "somewhere down in southern England," where the Saxon's *already* had driven out the Britons!

Intellectual integrity, it seems to me, would dictate scholars' "sifting" through the available accounts for the more probable—historically *likely*—events of Arthur's life. Then we could have some *worthy* account for us to enjoy—we readers who sense "more than myth" in Arthur. Some are at least *trying* as are Geoffrey Ashe and Norma Lorre Goodrich.

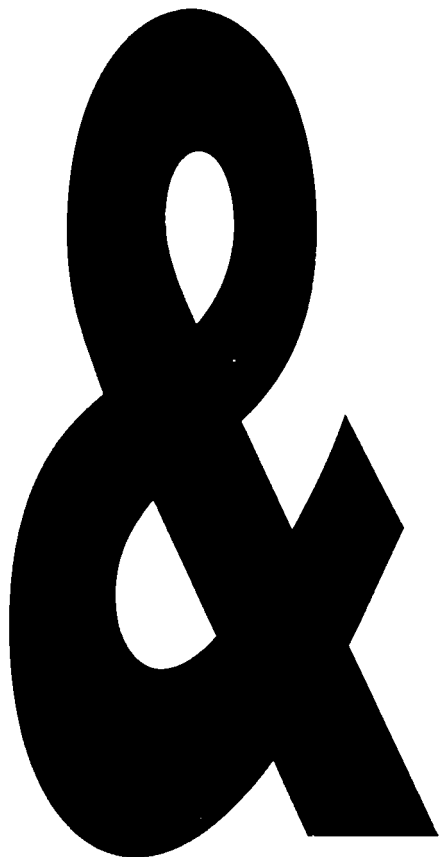
As we were cautioned in "Semantics I," "be cautious of symbolism; it *begins* on too high a level of abstraction." And I might add, it keeps us from "coming back to earth!"

### Susan Shwartz

The Arthurian material is interesting as Arthuriana always is. What I don't see (didn't contribute to, *mea maxima culpa*, though I had a paper read by Sandra Miesel at the Medieval Conference at Kalamazoo) is explanations of why it speaks so eloquently to the twentieth century and what contributions—aside from bibliographical lists—our century can make to it. I agree with Jane Yolen about the value of going back over the old stories; after a time, it isn't what happens, but *how* it happens this time and what the author has put into it of his or her own personality or *Zeitgeist* that fascinates me.

See GINCAS, Page 70





**Tehanu: The Last Book of Earthsea**, Ursula K. Le Guin. Atheneum, 1990, \$15.95, 226 pp. hc

I suppose it is inevitable that this book will be referred to as the fourth volume in the Earthsea Trilogy; after all, *So Long, and Thanks for All the Fish* was actually marketed as the fourth book in the Hitchhiker Trilogy. It is something of a surprise not only because of gap of years between it and the previous volume, but because that book, *The Farthest Shore*, seemed to complete a whole. This book is not so much a coda to the cycle as an open-ended new beginning; the only thing disappointing about it is its subtitle: *The Last Book*. In view of the fact that *A Wizard of Earthsea* won the Horn Book Award, *The Tombs of Atuan* the Newberry, and *The Farthest Shore* the National Book Award, my immediate response as I started this one was that all other competitors this year might as well fold their tents and silently steal away; but halfway through the book I changed my mind. Not that I think *Tehanu* doesn't deserve to win everything in sight; it is just that Le Guin writes of the truth of women's lives in a way that is bound to make even the least chauvinistic male uncomfortable, and most members of awards committees are male.

I think that the Earthsea Trilogy stands head and shoulders above the juvenile fantasy of our century in the same way that *The Lord of the Rings* overshadows adult fantasy; and incidentally it proves the fundamental irrelevance of such distinctions. Surely any young person able to comprehend the theme of *The Farthest Shore*, which is nothing less than coming to terms with the inevitability of one's own death, would not find anything in Tolkien's masterpiece too "adult" for her. (Ironical, isn't it, that "adult" usually translates as "too much sex for the immature," but we have no qualms in letting them deal with death, either in the vulgar falsity of slice-and-dice movies or in the poetic truth of books like Le Guin's.) It's true that they probably won't get all his literary, linguistic, and mythological allusions and borrowings, but those are the academic cherries on top of the cake, not part of the batter. It's like assuming that kids won't enjoy a Star Wars film because they aren't sophisticated enough to understand the technology involved in the special effects. In fact, one of the things that bothered me when I started the book was a fear that after *The Farthest Shore* there was no place to go thematically but down: what could she possibly deal with now

that wouldn't seem a mere afterthought, trivial in comparison?

Well, on page two she provides a more than adequate theme: a child beaten, raped, and thrown into a campfire to burn alive—by her family. Later on, a particularly vicious misogynist approves of this cruelty, regretting only that they didn't finish the job and that the girl was rescued. She is adopted by Tenar, the protagonist of *The Tombs of Atuan*, whom Ged had put in the care of the mage Ogion but who chose to marry a farmer and raise a family rather than pursue a life of wizardly study. As the book begins, she is a middle-aged widow, her children grown and gone, running her farm and wondering occasionally if she chose the right life, and just who she really is: Goha (the use-name her husband gave her), the wife and mother; Arha, the Eaten One, the priestess of the nameless dark powers of earth who learned to know and not to fear them when she lived in the silence and darkness of the tombs of Atuan; or Tenar (her truename), whom she has never really gotten to know. She does nothing high or heroic in this story, which deals with the heroism of women, consisting in knowing that even when the Equilibrium is tottering on its foundations the goats must be milked, the apples must be picked, food must be put on the table, and the children must be protected and taught—knowing this and quietly, without fanfare, getting it done.

Against this background, she worries about what will become of the child Therru, barred forever from the normal woman's destiny of marriage and family by her terrible disfigurement, yet filled with the promise of awesome and incomprehensible power, and finds a late-blooming love with Ged, his power exhausted by the events in *The Farthest Shore*, now no longer a mage but merely a man.

Le Guin is a writer of great range and power, able in this one book to give us both the best and most believable dragon this side of *Beowulf*—even better than Smaug—and the depiction of the ordinary realities of women's lives that are so uncomfortable for men to acknowledge. The key theme is powerlessness. A woman and a child, going along an ordinary road on lawful business in the middle of the day, encounter a group of ruffians and are frightened.

This is *normal*. It is perfectly normal in many places in our civilized country for a woman out alone, especially in a dark or isolated area, to be afraid of attack, because our civilized country has a hell of a lot of



people who think that being a victim is what a woman is *for*. (The uncle who participated in the abuse of Therru keeps trying to get his hands on her again. Tenar promises fiercely that he will never touch her again. She is unable to keep this promise: the two of them are kept safe only by the intervention of a good man.) People keep looking at Therru with horror and revulsion and inquiring what she did to cause this to happen; the victim is the guilty one (remember the news item a few years ago about the judge who released a rapist because his fifteen-year-old victim was really to blame: she was wearing tight jeans); perhaps her crime is merely being female; that is enough. Women have no property rights: Tenar worked side by side with her husband and has run the farm since his death; her sailor son comes home one day (not even aware that his father has been dead for over three years), walks in, and simply takes over, because he is the heir, the master. Men do not listen to what women say. It is the custom in Earthsea for a mage to reveal his truename on his deathbed so that he can be remembered by it by those who love him and in tales of his deeds. Only Tenar is with Ogion when he dies; the two wizards who show up later to argue the where and how of his burial are so involved in pursuing their claims that they don't even *notice* when she tells them his truename. (Her own son has never told her his. The only ones who really listen to women in this book are Lebannen the King, Ged once the greatest wizard of Earthsea, and Kalessin the dragon.)

Ged is different, because he has learned, in his new powerlessness and vulnerability, what a woman's life is like. When we first see him, he is a shell of his former self, not the successful quester returning to a Rivendell-like retirement but a frightened, aging man who takes to his old life as a mountain goat herder in order to hide from friends and enemies alike, to adjust to day-to-day living without the safety he has always been assured of by his wizardry; where once he feared only dragons, dark wizards, and his own Shadow self, he must now hide from a handful of hoodlums.

Since celibacy is a necessary condition of wizardry, he has had little to do with women for decades, which at least gives him no normal Earthsea chauvinism to unlearn. When he looks at Therru, he sees only a wrong done, not a victim who somehow deserved it or a monster. (Also—and this is no little matter—having lived a bachelor existence, doing for himself, for most of his

life, he sees nothing degrading about washing dishes and other “women's work”: the only male in the book that we see doing such things.)

In the end, though Ged is the protagonist of the series as a whole, and Tenar here, the central question of *Tehanu* is the future of Therru. She is not healed. There are no miraculous solutions in this book (at least not if you really understand about dragons). But she is empowered. Paralleling the theme of women's powerlessness is that of men's fear of women's power. There is a wonderful old crone called Aunt Moss, the paradigm of the fairy-tale witch except that, though sometimes malicious, she is not malevolent, who puts it very well:

I go back into the dark! Before the moon I was. No one knows, no one knows, no one can say what I am, what a woman is, a woman of power, a woman's power, deeper than the roots of trees, deeper than the roots of islands, older than the Making, older than the moon. Who dares ask questions of the dark? Who'll ask the dark its name?

Even the witch of Tenar's home village fears Therru and refuses when Tenar asks her to take the child as apprentice:

I mean I don't know what she is. I mean when she looks at me with that one eye seeing and one eye blind I don't know what she sees... What power she is, I don't know, I don't say. But it's beyond my teaching, I know that...—or any witch or wizard I ever knew. I'll give you my advice, mistress, free and feeless. It's this: Beware. Beware her, the day she finds her strength! That's all.

Ged offers the viewpoint of traditional wizardry:

The Mages of Roke are men—their power is the power of men, their knowledge is the knowledge of men. Both manhood and magery are built on one rock: power belongs to men. If women had power, what would men be but women who can't bear children? And what would women be but men who can?

When he wonders what freedom the maimed child would have, suggesting that it is our freedom that makes us what we are, Tenar's answer sums up the dilemma of women's life:

“You seemed, in your power, as free as man can be. But at what cost? What made you free? And I... I was made, molded like clay, by the will of the women serving the Old Powers, or serving the men who made all services and ways and places, I no longer know which. Then I went free, with you, for a moment, and with Ogion. But it was not my freedom. Only it gave me choice; and I chose. I chose to mold myself like clay to the use of a farm and a farmer and our children. I made myself a vessel. I know its shape. But not the clay. Life danced me. I know the dances. But I don't know who the dancer is.”

“And she,” Ged said after a long silence, “if she should ever dance—”

“They will fear her,” Tenar whispered.

This is very far from being a mere coda or afterthought to what has long been known as a trilogy. It seems there is something after all to the Jungian 3 + 1 archetype—“the pattern thing,” as our beloved Prez might put it. The underlying pattern of the Earthsea series, as in so much of Le Guin's work, is the yin/yang balance, the acceptance of the Shadow, equilibrium. The fourth book perfects the pattern: there are two books with a female protagonist, set on land, and two with a male protagonist, set mostly at sea. Ged acts: Tenar chooses. And they are together at the end, with a child uniquely theirs though unrelated by blood to either. (But his quests are for finding and healing, and her choices empower her. Such simple little kiddies' books, eh?) And their acts don't follow the typical fantasy pattern of heroics, either: the hero waits twenty years to fall in love with the heroine, who has been happily married to another man most of the time. She is neither princess nor Wise Woman, only a woman, and wise. She never does do anything spectacular. And the hero keeps having to get rescued by dragons.

For Ursula Le Guin, fiction is a way of telling us uncomfortable truths by making up a lot of preposterous lies. She is offering the right questions, not the easy answers. This seems to have a great appeal for young people, as well as for sf and fantasy fans of all ages (marginal types, who don't really count, after all). Maybe one of these days the grownups will get in on it—you know, the Literary Establishment types. But that would mean that they were taking women's writing—and women's lives—seriously. So don't hold your breath.

anne janet braude



**Boxen: *The Imaginary World of the Young C.S. Lewis***, ed. Walter Hooper. Collins/Fount, 1985, U.K. £4.95, 206 pp., tp [purchased remaindered at \$5.95]

I daresay it is not uncommon for children who play together to invent imaginary worlds populated by living avatars of their toys, and to develop them in elaborate detail; but I imagine it is uncommon for the children to write histories of them. When the children who do grow up to be famous writers, and their juvenilia survive and are published, these private worlds, for good or ill, become to a degree public property.

Boxen, the united states of Animal Land and India, populated by "dressed animals," humans, and animate chess pieces, was the joint collaboration of "Jack" Lewis, who began it by writing pseudo-medieval tales of chivalrous mice and rabbits riding forth to slay evil cats, and his elder brother Warren, who insisted on a more up-to-date country with railways and steamships. One is naturally inspired to compare it with two more famous fantasy lands: Lewis's own Narnia, the creation of his adult imagination, and Gondal and Angria, the realms cooperatively invented by the four young Brontës as a milieu for the adventures of a set of wooden soldiers their father brought them in 1826. (A modern juvenile fantasy novel, *The Return of the Twelves* by Pauline Clarke, deals with the adventures of these same soldiers, endowed with life by the power of the creative imaginations focused on them, trying to get home to Haworth Parsonage through the perils of contemporary Yorkshire.) Boxen does not measure up well to either. Unlike Narnia, it is far too adult a world, an imperial Victorian Never-Never Land whose inhabitants occupy themselves with politics, commercial cartels, wars dictated by economic policy, and goings-on in high life, including social climbing and dining out with actresses. (Young Jack's notions of what constituted adult behavior were drawn from overheard long, incomprehensible conversations among his father's friends and from the theatrical interests of one of the masters at his prep school. The mature Lewis made an excessive preoccupation with "adult" interests and a consequent disdain for what was loved in childhood a moral flaw, which in *The Last Battle* has caused Susan, the eldest Pevensie girl, to forfeit her place as Queen of Narnia; she no longer believes in its reality.) In Ursula Le Guin's splendid analogy, there is far more of Schenectady than of Elfland about Boxen. While Charlotte Brontë's dra-

matic and passionate tales of Angria are foreshadowings of the themes of her mature works, and Emily's Gondal poems, published long before the discovery of the Gondal notebooks made known the existence of her imaginary kingdom, were so powerful and psychologically valid that they were long interpreted as autobiographical (critics and biographers *were* surprised when the events referred to proved to have taken place not in Emily's life but in the lives of various Queens of Gondal), Lewis's Narnia owes little to Boxen, unless perhaps in those early tales of questing mice, which do not survive. The political, economic and social preoccupations of the Boxonians are in the mature creation replaced by more universal concerns such as moral choice, the nature of courage and loyalty, and the questions of religious faith. The best part of the Boxonian tales, which does survive in the adult writings, though more in the Deep Space trilogy than in the Narnian adventures, is a surprisingly advanced talent for humor, especially satire. When one comes across something like this:

Suddenly it happened!

It always does happen suddenly, whether it is the murder of the heroine, or the opening of an overture at the opera, or one's bow tie slipping.

one is astonished to find the mind of a schoolboy capable of such a sophisticated objectivity towards a cliché of thriller narrative. Also to be found in these tales, as Lewis himself pointed out in *Surprised by Joy*, is his lifelong love of cataloguing and systematizing; he remarks somewhere that one of the greatest advantages for him of the fairytale form was that it checked the "expository demon" in him, and in another place that his favorite going-to-sleep reverie was to imagine a long river from source to mouth, with all the details of geography and activity along its banks. (I'll bet he loved Chinese scroll painting.) Although not enjoyable in themselves to the adult reader, the Boxen tales are quite interesting for the insight they provide into the workings and the development of CSL's creative imagination. (He wrote his first autobiography at the age of nine, thus being one of the few writers able to compete with Shirley MacLaine in the number of autobiographies produced, if not necessarily in the number of lives lived.) The cataloguing mind of the young Lewis is also visible in the illustrations, which are poor art (though the architectural drawings are much better

than the figures), but fascinating in the choice of subjects and the details provided, especially the maps and plans, including a plan of the town of Tousandpot, showing among other features the "Perminant [sic] Way of Piscian State Ry. Coy." and such useful information as "Population: 300, Returning 2 Members, Votes: 123"; and a cross section of the cruiser H.M.S. *Greyhound* ("4321 tons...Triple Expansion Twin Screw").

The one item of real interest in itself is the *Encyclopedia Boxoniana*, compiled by Lewis in his thirtieth year when the attics of the family home were turned out after his father's death and the old Boxen notebooks surfaced, which is an attempt to systematize and catalogue the totality of Boxonian material. Though incomplete and damaged, it is a delightful *jeu d'esprit* of not Lewis the fantasist but Lewis the brilliant scholar-critic of *The Allegory of Love* and other distinguished works on medieval and Renaissance literature.

He applies to his own youthful efforts the same methodology and critical skill that he brought to those books, treating them as if they were genuine historical relics—and displaying yet another trait surviving from the Boxonian era, poor spelling (Lewis may have been able to read Classical Greek as fluently as you or I read English, but he apparently never mastered the rule of "i before e except after c"):

Evidence exists in favour of the B-chronology. We know that the defeat of the Cats occurred in the reign of King Mouse the Good who succeeded Benjamin I (NH 15-17). We also know that King Mouse was 'old' and 'worn out with anxiety' when he died 'soon after' the conclusion of the Feline War (*ibid.*, 18). We may therefore assume that he had a long reign. If we accept 1340 for the death of Benjamin I, and forty years for the reign of King Mouse, we shall have 1380 for King Mouse's death and 1375-79 for the defeat of the Cats. So much for the B-chronology.

If we now turn to LB 13 we shall find it stated that the defeat of the Cats took place 'over five hundred years before' the [Feline] Emancipation Bill of 1897; which would bring it, say, to 1390. Thus LB and the B-chronology agree within fifteen years in their date for the Feline War....

The whole thing is worthy of publication in a learned journal; it is rather like having a work of historical and textual criticism of the Bible written by God Himself. A profes-



sor of mine once remarked that Lewis was a man with an essentially Platonic (i.e., mythopoeic) mind, who found himself compelled to be Aristotelian (i.e., a scholarly expounder and Christian apologist); in *Boxen*, we see the roots of both sides of his nature.

anne janet braude

**Still River**, Hal Clement. Ballantine/Del Rey Books, N.Y. \$16.95 hardcover, 280 pp.; Ballantine/Del Rey paperback: N.Y., Feb. 1989, \$3.95, 272 pp.

The time is the far distant future. The place is among the farthest reaches of "our" galaxy where the astronauts of today would be as children playing with toys. The plot? Alas, the perennial one of students facing the final exams—but with a difference, for only one is human, a quite mature female only too aware of her (our?) situation:

The orders were not repeated, giving Molly for the first time in some days a sharp awareness that she was not among human beings. This was reinforced by the absence of chatter among the students in the conning room. A few quick, short sentences from senior team members...and a cloud of weirdly shaped forms had pushed away from their stools, chairs, wrapping posts, couches, and other stations and were floating rapidly toward the room's dozen exits. In the dusky, rubrous light of the place, the Human student was reminded of a picture she had once seen of a stream of bats, entering a cave on the home world she had never visited.

In the coming era of space-travel testing the abilities and character of the new breed of star explorers will become all-important. What better way to probe the possibilities here than through science fiction, and Hal Clement is certainly qualified to give us some fine writing on the topic. The response of potential readers though will depend on *how* they react to the sub-genre of "hard" science fiction, for such is the forte of our author.

Born in 1922, Harry Clement Stubbs lived his life on two levels. Native-born New Englander, he has always kept to his home-state of Massachusetts for his prosaic life career of raising a family and earning his daily bread as a teacher of the sciences at a local academy. His adventurous side or "level" blossomed forth in the 50's with his classic

SF novel, *Mission of Gravity*. So far, he has given the public some seven novels in his specialty (all Ballantine reprints, the best of which are *Iceworld* and *Star Light*). They all, including this work, show a faithful devotion to scientific detail and the physical laws of Nature as currently understood—or at least speculated on by reputable thinkers.

The above is the key to the success or failure of "hard" science fiction for the ordinary reader. The central thesis of books like Hal Clement's lock around solving mysteries of speculative science. They are set in the far future and/or distant worlds when anything is possible—and the human imagination can work its magic to set our natural skepticism aside. To work its power to fascinate our minds, hard science fiction must adhere rigidly to logic and the many different facets of the problem or problems to be probed. That, and not character development or exciting action scenes will be the basis of reader interest. Hal Clement is undoubtedly a master of this.

His love for science dates from early childhood and certainly shows on every level in *Still River*. Clement's expertise in teaching chemistry and astronomy is reflected in the classroom atmosphere of his student protagonists as they struggle to understand an alien planet. There are no apocalyptic conflicts or "war of the worlds" here. The reader gets no Bug-Eyed Monsters threatening innocent humans. He *does* get some weird aliens operating side-by-side with the human protagonist, Molly.

On a galactic super-university centuries from now five doctoral students get their last examination for their degree: to form a team to examine the strange planet of Enigma and discover its secrets. Why does it have an atmosphere? Why and how can it sustain life?

The five characters involved in the exploration team are deliberately chosen by Clement to emphasize how radically different physical natures can yet cooperate for a rational end. So we get two spheroid beings, "Joe" and "Charly" (Molly has to understand other beings' names based on human language needs) who have no need to breathe due to body chemistry; a fur-covered humanoid the size of a doll ("Carol"); and finally, "Jenny", a gigantic centipede with the intellect of an Einstein and some eighteen pairs of limbs so useful in team exploration. Clement seems to have a fascination with ammonia since all his non-human actors have body systems based on it, and the endless underground rivers of Enigma are

ammonia in content. Molly as the sole human around is more independent in nature than the others, a young wife with a baby son far away—touches of the feminist in her reactions, but even more, of subtle hints of a deeper "soul" than the story-line will allow.

The latter is logically developed, the situations and planet character gradually unfolded and then enmeshed into the different attitudes of the five students. The scientific obsession with discovery carries the story well, but it has its price in isolating individuals from the deeper questions of existence:

Well as the two knew each other, Molly realized that their attitudes toward death were still hidden. She knew nothing whatever of the customs or religious beliefs of a single one of the School species, not even the Nethneen. It occurred to her that in an institution of several tens of thousands of beings, most of them as far as she had heard with life spans comparable to the Human one, there must have been numerous deaths since she and Rovor had arrived; but she had not been aware of a single one of them.

*Still River* carries itself well as an SF novel, honing our minds to the endless possibilities of truly alien environments, testing our sense of reason on comprehensible problems. But those not "into" its genre will wish its hints of a more profound side to life had been carried further.

thomas m. egan

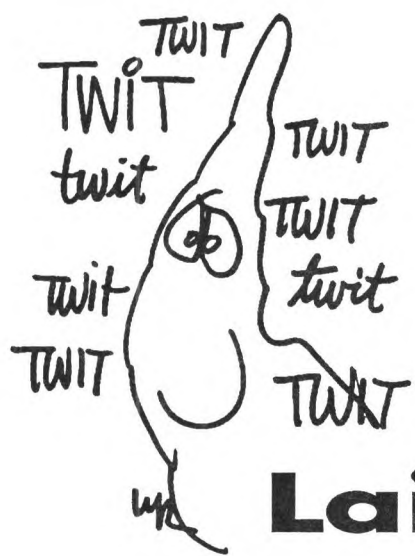
**Ash Ock** (The Paratwa Saga—Book Two), Christopher Hinz, St. Martin's Press, New York, N.Y. 1989, 308 pp., \$18.95.

You seldom see examples of the sub-genre of SF known as "space-opera" any more. Even the movie saga of Star Wars is largely moribund—it is now seven years since the last picture RETURN OF THE JEDI. The Star Trek films do not really fall into this category—opera by its very composition meaning flamboyant and epic in scope. Literary works these days tend to be sober-sided extrapolations of political and scientific trends—a far cry from the lurid pulps of the 20's and 30's where science-fiction had its origins.

I have not read the first book of this set (dare one say trilogy?), but a glance at just the opening paragraphs of *Ash Ock* immediately told me this book is in the grand

See REVIEW, Page 71





William Rotler

## Laiskai

Addresses are listed unless otherwise dictated by the correspondent.

### Martin Morse Wooster

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Sam Moskowitz is a bit misleading about the merits of Robert Weinberg's *A Biographical Dictionary of Science Fiction and Fantasy Artists*. Certainly there is a need for this book, and if it came out in a trade paperback, I would purchase it. But the chief flaw of the book is that the entries on living artists were largely written by the artists themselves. While this makes sense from a financial standpoint (Greenwood is not known for paying large advances) the results are dozens of entries which are largely self-puffery. The entries on dead science fiction and fantasy authors, on the other hand, are quite good. The chapter on the whereabouts of SF art of the 30's and 40's is a very good piece of scholarship. The *Biographical Dictionary* is flawed, but I am glad Weinberg produced it. I'm sure future editions will be better.

I missed the great debate on *FanCyclopedia III* but I hope this book when published sells better than *FanCyclopedia II*. Jack Chalker told me, recently, that his edition of *FanCyclopedia II* sold 179 copies, fewer than the first edition. So anyone who owns the Mirage Press edition of *FanCyclopedia II* possesses a rare collectable.

Perhaps the oddest information I gleaned from any of your correspondents was the knowledge that Buck Coulson acquired a ten-room house in order to accumulate materials he has salvaged over the years. This is supply-side collecting with a vengeance! It's too bad Buck has retired; I was looking forward to reading an article by him about the warehouse he just acquired to store surplus multifold paper....

[from an earlier letter:] It's nice to see Don D'Amassa write criticism longer than one paragraph (I miss *Mythologies*). But the line between horror and sf is less precise than D'Amassa makes it out to be. I define horror fiction as fiction that frightens by extrapolation from current events; thus *The Puppet Masters* is both horror and sf. Horror critics, like fantasy fiction critics in the early 1980's, are redefining and claiming for their own works that were originally marketed as sf. For example, according to critic Douglas Winter, four J.G. Ballard novels (including *Crash* and *Concrete Island*) are among the finest horror novels of the first 30 years. Books can be, and have been, both horror and sf; the two genres are not mutually exclusive.

### Taras Wolansky

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If I'd seen that note about special book publications before I wrote the check I might

not have subscribed. Also you have too much fantasy emphasis. [If any reader does not care for a special publication he/she/it can return it for credit towards extending the sub. This issue is predominantly SF oriented—it evens out in the long run; it just depends how long you run. erm]

### Vladimir Borisov

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The Soviet club *Alkor* in Omsk conducted a poll of fans in the USSR to rate the best SF published in 1988.

In order of popularity, these are the winners and runners-up. In the lead are works by the brothers Strugatsky and by Robert Sheckley, as well as a story by Andrei Stolyarov and by Stephen King.

### Foreign Novel and Novella

*The Status Civilization*, Robert Sheckley  
*A Peace on the Earth*, Stanislav Lem  
*Damnation Alley*, Roger Zelazny  
*The Mist*, Stephen King  
*Animal Farm*, George Orwell  
*The Sirens of Titan*, Kurt Vonnegut  
*The Star Kings*, Edmond Hamilton  
*Brave New World*, Aldous Huxley  
*Childhood's End*, Arthur Clarke  
*Professor A. Donda*, Stanislav Lem  
*The Ballad of the Flexible Bullet*, Stephen King  
*The Castle*, Franz Kafka  
*Memo*, Andre Ruellan

### Foreign Novelettes and Short Stories

"The Jaunt," Stephen King  
"The Grotto of the Dancing Deer," Clifford Simak  
"Space Rats of the C.C.C.," Harry Harrison  
"Sexplosion," Stanislav Lem  
"The Overlord's Thumb," Robert Silverberg  
"The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas," Ursula Le Guin  
"Beyond Lies the Wub," Philip K. Dick  
"I Am Crying All Inside," Clifford Simak  
"Nightmare World," Robert Sheckley  
"User Friendly," Alice Laurance  
"Neutron Star," Larry Niven  
"Fermi and Frost," Frederick Pohl  
"The Night He Cried," Fritz Leiber

### Soviet Novels and Novellas

*The Snail on the Slope*, Arkady and Boris Strugatsky  
*Burdened With Evil, or Forty Years Later*, Arkady and Boris Strugatsky  
*Star-In-Forehead*, Olga Larionova  
*The Settlement*, Kir Bulychhev



*Expedition to the Nether World*, S.

Yaroslavtsev

*We*, Yevgeny Zamyatin

*The Thieves of Essences*, Vladimir Savchenko

*The Third Babel*, Andrei Stolyarov

*The Whole Word in the Barn*, Boris Zelenski

*Overlords*, Vasili Golovachev

*A Subject of Brizania*, Aleksander Zhitinski

*Imprisonment in Eden*, Boris Rudenko

*The Fifth Dimension*, Vladimir Savchenko

*The Sanitorium*, Vladimir Khlumov

*Chemist*, Vladimir Orlov

*Right Life*, or *Life According to All the Rules*,

Natalya Nikitaiskaya

*Week-days of Modest Pavlovich*, Anatoly

Glants

Soviet Novelettes and Short Stories

"A Banishment of Demon," Andrei Stolyarov

"An Invitation to Night Hunting," Vladimir

Mikhailov

"The Guard of the Pass," Svyatoslav Loginov

"Hans the Rat Catcher," Svyatoslav Loginov

"Testimonies of Olya," Kir Bulychev

"People Met," Vyacheslav Rybakov

"The Next One," Andrei Izmailov

"Fly-Swatter," Igor Pidorenko

"Stop Machine," Vitaly Babenko

"An Engineer at Home," Lubov Lukina and

Yevgeny Lukin

"The Wind and the Emptiness," Vyacheslav

Rybakov

"Virtual Hero" or "The Law of World Pres-

sure," Gennady Prashkevich

"Time Keeper" or "Bitter Drink of the Fu-

ture," A. Potupa

[I am surprised by the wide availability of such anti-Communist satire as *Animal Farm* and *We*. erm]

**Ruth Berman**

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Anne Braude's discussion of excellent TV, especially British on PBS, prompts me to remark that in addition to the literature-based and historical TV shows she mentioned there have been two excellent British SF series showing up on PBS. I think at this point "Dr. Who" has appeared on enough stations all over to be generally familiar. Our local station only recently started showing "Blake's 7," however, and it doesn't seem to be as widely available.

Unlike "Dr. Who" which is ostensibly for children although equally interesting or maybe more interesting for adults, and comic in tone, "Blake's 7" is intended for adults and is serious, in the end tragic, in tone. From mentions of it in articles about "Dr. Who" I

had the vague impression that "Blake's 7" was a shallow series of derring-do adventures, perhaps a sort of futuristic Robin Hood. The impression wasn't entirely wrong but Blake's objections to his society are more seriously based than Robin Hood's. He's trying to overthrow a corrupt government and is not sure what will be available to replace it. There's no "Good King Richard" to promise a happy ending provided the legendary Robin although the historical King Richard does not much resemble his legendary counterpart.

The tragic ending has provoked a good deal of outcry and debate among the fans of the shows. I'm inclined to think it was an unfortunate way to end the series, myself, although the individual episode is engrossing on its own terms, both dramatically and thematically, as a debate on whether it is more dangerous to be willing or unwilling to trust. Of course I don't suppose it would have been possible to end the series with the kind of ending that I find I keep visualizing, either. I have this scene in my head of the rebels cheering and revelling inside the presidential palace while Blake sits silently looking glum. "What are you upset about?" they ask him. "We won! We overthrew the tyrants and took control. "Yes," he says, "Now comes the hard part."

**Robert "Buck" Coulson**

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"Connections" is Juanita's all-time favorite TV series; probably mine too if I had a favorite, though Bill Moyers' "The Twentieth Century" comes close to equaling it in my estimation.

**Joseph T. Major**

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It was very nice of you in Bumbejimas to tell the story of the filk industry and spare them the pain of having the ugly on-going Off Centaur/Firebird/Thor feud recounted in its unlovely glory. Such a shame that the people responsible for all those songs could not carry their harmony beyond the music.

In some ways, though, that is emblematic of the space program itself. The builders of this vision could not convey it to the people who paid for it, and as a result the vision remained forever chimerical, forever beyond the limits of realization. There ought to be a lesson there somewhere. What news Don D'Amassa has in *The Haunted Library* is not reassuring. Science fiction and fantasy

have been badly damaged as genres by the proliferation of series, trilogies, and "shared universes" (as well as continuations of one writer's work by another, something that Don mercifully spared us the noting thereof). Are we now to see yet another class of works massacred by these marketing considerations?

While David Palter's *Tape From Toronto* goes into John Dalmás' work in no little detail about a writer whom more people *should* take notice of, there is one little point which I thought was odd that the NIEKAS editorial staff missed. What struck me the most about *The Playmasters* was how much it was influenced by the Macintosh Operating System. (A critique of the problems of the book—of which I found a few—is not appropriate in this context.)

In the book, Dalmás and Martin make frequent references to icons. This is a distinct feature of the Macintosh Operating System, which is borrowed from the never-released Altos-Xerox™ (a trademark of the Xerox Company which had invented the personal computer and did not bother to sell it). An icon represents something more powerful than the mere surface appearance, something not apparent to the casual observer. Yet there is a connection between the icon and the real nature of what is represented by the icon.

This is not to say that there are not problems in Dalmás' work. Considering *The General's President*. Arne Haugen, the protagonist, puts forth a series of radical changes in the American legal, economic, and political system. These proposals bear negatively upon the interests of many established political interest groups. (The novel takes such a didactic tone that I presume that many of the ideas presented are serious, if not Dalmás' own.)

Yet the only resistance mentioned comes from a secret conspiracy to take over the world. I have trouble crediting that this is the *only* resistance. Yet, apparently, this is the only opposition that Dalmás thought worth mentioning—or perhaps the only opposition that fit in with his plot.

There is some good reason for taking the latter interpretation. One of the themes of *The General's President* is the messianic—a kinder, gentler Paul Muad'dib. The nature of the messiah is that it is impossible to be neutral about him, indifferent, or mixed. If you are neither hot nor cold, but lukewarm, therefore he will spew you out of his mouth.

However, in the less-than-messianic world, some people will find that some of the



messiah's policies are useful and others are obstructive; some will have overriding theological obstacles to accepting parts of the messiah's testimony; some will have interests which are damaged by unintentional consequences of the messiah's actions. Thus opposition can arise without reference to the Conspiracy to Take Over the World.

To go from the abstract to the concrete: one of the proposals Dalmás puts forth in the novel is that "white collar" criminals should make restitution and perform hard labor. There is merit to this idea. Yet I can imagine some contemporary political institutions which have no indication of being part of a Conspiracy to Take Over the World which would raise serious and vociferous objections.

Consider that we live in a nation where convicted gangsters have the right to obtain "freedom of information" requests on their own convictions, with (presumably) the intent of unearthing the identities of the informers who provided inside information. Where convicts have a *right* to air-conditioning in their cells. Where the incarcerating agency has a *duty* to provide its incarcerated with a separate secure area in which they peruse writings or pictures of a sexually stimulating nature.

These acts are defended by organizations which are not part of any conspiracy to take over the world; which do so out of their own patterns of belief, in reaction to the life experiences of those who make up their memberships. The prime example of all this is the American Civil Liberties Union, but there are specific prisoners'-rights groups, not to mention the NAACP and other civil rights organizations which have interests in the matter.

One cannot (or at least, *I* cannot) imagine such people passively accepting such radical restructuring of the prison system. Their reasoning would presumably include the plausible (and indeed, not to be dismissed lightly) concerns: "What may happen next to those accused of other crimes? Will chain-gangs be next? And what then—mandatory and instant death penalties for certain crimes?"

Yet, at the same time, the theme of the work militates against such actions. Then too, listing *every* disagreement would undermine the plot flow; it is not required that every least action of the protagonist be detailed, much less that of supporting characters. (Indeed, when a "trivial" action is detailed, it can be assumed that the author is imputing a special meaning to it. Once, in F.M. Busby's *Rissa Kerguelen*, the repeated

references to hair care stem from the protagonist's desire to express her freedom, shaven heads being the norm in her previous condition of life, which makes Busby's casual treatment of Rissa's cutting her hair in one of the later works inexplicable—he had a potentially powerful image in that and he threw it away.)

This seems to be a fundamental problem of such works, conflict between theme and the necessities of novelistic plot. One can perhaps see why Frank Herbert set *his* messianic novel in a world pretty much of his own creation, where the power and pressure groups could be closely defined.

Betty J. Bruther, in the article on Tolkien's military, shows what I can best define as a "modern" approach to the subject. She discusses hierarchies of command, grand strategies, principles of war, and the like. One expects to run across John Keegan arguing about Sauron's detachment from the immediate struggle, or S.L.A. Marshall proving that only one out of every four bowmen fired any arrows, or Gene laRoque arguing that the offensive to the gates of Mordor (1) would not work, (2) would work too well, (3) both of them.

An analysis derived from the principles of medieval technology and patterns of thought more appropriate to the book, which get a passing reference in the beginning and are then eluded, might be of interest. For example, discussion of the Host of the Rohirrim might be useful. They have the sort of army which evolved on the steppes of eastern Europe (which is now the Ukraine), from the Scythians through the Sarmatians and the Goths to the Avars. How did this evolve and change over the years? How was it useful against the middle-eastern style armies of Sauron's henchmen and the Orkish hordes?

Mark Sunlin's article, "The Haunted Woods," is fascinating. There needs to be a guide to "traditional" medieval lore, as there is so much interest in it these days. If he cannot recommend a book, perhaps he should write one.

Since Terry Jeeves wrote his letter, "Pogo" has been brought back. The persons responsible are fanatic follow-every-last-little-habit fans of Walt Kelly; their deep concern to follow each jot and tittle of the Kelly style leaves being actually funny of tertiary importance.

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In my letter on page 41 of *Niekas* #39 your

typesetter has made me guilty of a historical error. It was George III (as I wrote) not George I, who called himself a "Briton." George I spoke no English, unless he picked up a few words during his reign (1714-27). Since his ministers spoke no German, his attendance at cabinet meetings was unproductive.

Braude, page 39: Robin Hood is the hero of English (and French) folk tales. They became popular in the 15th and 16th centuries, long after Richard I, in whose reign he is supposed to have flourished. Hence the tales are a riot of anachronisms. Robin is a longbow expert a century before the longbow came into use; he was Earl of Huntington when the title was held by David of Scotland, brother of King William the Lion; he championed the Saxons against their Norman overlords, although his name and those of most of his followers were Norman-French; etc. Perhaps he was a euhemerized Celtic godlet. For a discussion, see Lord Raglan: *The Hero* (Methuen, 1936), Chapter IV.

#### **Mark Blackman**

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Re: fanspeak (*Niekas* #36), I wonder how many thought the extra "a" in "faanish" was a typo. Some terms do indeed survive as new fans are encountering and asking for definitions of them.

In last year's Hugu Awards, Nehemiah Scudder took it for having the best pseudonym, namely Pat Robertson. Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* is at times terrifying, but at others, why? The irony of having an anti-feminist getting the world she wants, a world which treats her as second class. The idea of the handmaid comes, as Atwood clearly states, from the Old Testament story of Rachael and her handmaid, Bilpa.

Speaking of irony, I note that some of the people most strongly defending Boskone's overly draconian measures are endorsing policies that, had they been in force 20 years ago, would have kept *them* out of conventions and maybe even out of fandom. I am thinking of those whose first con was NYCon III which they attended as 14-year-olds, unescorted. Diana L. Paxson mentioned pros who've forgotten their fannish roots. How about fans who have forgotten theirs? [Now that attendance fell to under 1000 at the 1990 Boskone the NESFen are contemplating removing some of the restrictions. erm]

To Anne J. Braude's article I'll simply add that while the Holocaust is of course a lesson



that people should learn from so that it is not repeated it is also a clear instance of people repeating the past. It was not, alas, an aberration of history, but the Crusader massacres, the Spanish Inquisition, the Tsarist pogroms made more efficient.

#### Susan Schwartz

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After too long an absence from *Niekas*, the first thing I noticed was what a splendid-looking zine it is. And it reads as good as it looks.

Your "Bumbejimas" is appropriate today: I woke up thinking of "Hope Eyrie" and hoping that George Bush is going to agree to send us back to the Moon and make the push out toward Mars. After all, there is only one way to go from here...Thataway!

Now, there are two items I wanted specifically to get in on. First off, Pat Mathews' discussion of *Armageddon Rag* and *Bug Jack Barron*. I'd love to see that book reprinted; I think it's been drastically underestimated. My own feeling is that Pat's seriously underestimating *Armageddon Rag*'s ability both to evoke the 1960s and to anticipate trends in the 1980s. That book really spoke to me: I knew people—the burnout, the dropout, the Earth mother, and the people like Sandy and his ad-man friend/rival—like the ones Martin describes.

Yuppies, I'd call them. In the sixties, they were off to Crete for the summer or bumming across the country on someone's credit card. (So many of us were safe and subsidized in those days.) Now, in the eighties, they're wondering if they're not really in bad faith. Sure, they haven't sold out for anything as basic as "rice and beans." But they are a very definite urban type; and I'm afraid I must identify with them—the subsidized hippies who, twenty years later, wonder just how badly they've sold out. Granted, we've all gotten older; and there's the problem of earning a living in a world that, at times, makes us feel like strangers in a very strange—and not particularly interested—land. We've found a lot of solutions, but no real Answers. Then again, as Pat points out, the Revolution always was a kind of amorphous thing.

Some of those solutions, though... Consider Jerry Rubin becoming a stockbroker, cocooning with his too-trendy-for-words nuclear family, and running a "networking" service—he's one of these people. Then contrast him with Abbie Hoffman, who never consented. Rubin's alive; Hoffman's dead;

and *Niekas* shut down discussion on the Kent State debacle, now far surpassed in awfulness and betrayal by the disaster at Tiananmen Square in Beijing.

To a great extent, the convulsions and evolution (if you can attribute such things to us) of this particular segment of the 1960s population show up well in Wendy Wasserstein's *The Heidi Chronicles*, which I just saw last night.

I remember. I was going to be a booklegger and memorizer to help keep literature alive when Nixon shut down the universities. Or I was going to be medieval, and just too funky for words, in a stone house in the Orkneys. How I was going to pay the mortgage on that house, I don't know. Didn't plan that far. The dream was everything.

So, in a fine frenzy of apocalyptic fervor (nice alliteration, worthy of Spiro Agnew), I decided to go to grad school. Ten years later, Ph.D. in hand, teaching job abandoned, I was looking for jobs in business.

And here I am, reasonably comfortable, and more conventional than I'd ever have approved of being in 1969. Sometimes I feel guilty; and yet, for the life of me—quite literally, for the life of me, what else could I have done? It all was quite logical, and yet there are times that I wonder...

Because of all that, I found *Armageddon Rag* both poignant and terrifying. Perhaps one reason it didn't enjoy more success was that it did succeed in capturing the terrible apocalypticism of the 1960s and its terrible manifestations like Altamont. Another reason could have been the really horrifying mixed message of a rock band called Nazgul. On one hand, we're supposed to hope that the band succeeds in at least one sense. Besides that, it's been victimized. On the other hand, it's being used as a tool—and the idea of "good guys" called Nazgul, of all things, is pretty hard to take.

*Armageddon Rag* is the first murder mystery in which I ever guessed the murderer from evidence in the book that was integral to its mood. (Spoiler Alert: If you haven't read this and don't want to know the ending, skip this paragraph.) The "pretty girl" in whom Sandy got interested was, quite literally, a dead giveaway. Given how radical she professed to be, by the time the book took place, she wouldn't have remained a sexy chick; she'd probably have been into Lesbian separatism the way that many women who'd broken away from SDS and the Weathermen were. No way, she'd still have been strutting and flaunting in a miniskirt. It would have been politically incorrect.

#### Anne Braude

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Don D'Amassa lists among the standard menaces of horror fiction "...even borrows from SF." Is that where Tolkien got his evil Borrow-wights that nearly did in the hobbits? As for the rehabilitation of the vampire, didn't it get its start with the old DARK SHADOWS Gothic soap opera on TV? I never became a fan of the series, since the repetitiousness of the soap format drives me batty, but I believe that there were two romantically attractive vampires who turned on the female audience; whether or not they were entirely benign I don't know. The series spawned a lot of novelizations, most of which seem to refer to the vampires. Of course the sexual implications of vampirism, always more or less latent (Why do you think they called Theda Bara a "vamp"? And her first name is an anagram of "death."), have become very overt in contemporary film treatments: the erotic version of DRACULA starring gorgeous Frank Langella, the comedy LOVE AT FIRST BITE in which Dracula (George Hamilton) was sexy, romantic, and funny—and got the girl, while van Helsing was a wimpy psychiatrist. The mere existence of the concept of the funny vampire, as in this film and THE FEARLESS VAMPIRE KILLERS OR PARDON ME, BUT YOUR TEETH ARE IN MY NECK, indicates a radical mind-shift. It may partly be due to the fact that we no longer seriously think there are vampires lurking out there in the darkness, partly because our contemporary openness about sexuality has defused or re-integrated some of the libido energizing the vampire figure, and even to the traditional Anglo-Saxon tendency to root for the underdog (and the more specifically American glorification of the outlaw hero). And don't forget that the original, authentic Vlad Dracula is still a national hero in Transylvania, a leader of Christian resistance to the invading Turks. I haven't read the various novels Don cites; but I am surprised at his omission of the one I have read: Tanith Lee's *Sabella*, or *the Blood Stone*. In addition to the sympathetic vampire protagonist he mentions, and the erotic atmosphere I have referred to, there is even an sf explanatory twist at the end.

This brings up two questions: [1] Is a horror story that invokes a sf explanation still a horror story? Is there an essential difference between the story of Frankenstein's monster and the tale of a clone who runs amok? Between pursuit by undead zombies freed from a graveyard by



voodoo rituals and pursuit by corpses prematurely liberated from a cryogenic facility by a power failure? We recognize a distinction between the horror story in which the supernatural element is treated as real and that in which it is explained away as hoax or error; is this situation analogous? [2] Is a story about a good, or at least sympathetic, supernatural creature still a *horror* story in any meaningful sense of the word? I don't just mean Casper the Friendly Ghost; I mean the Incredible Hulk, or Wolf Wolf, Anthony Boucher's compleat werewolf who used his shapechanging ability to rescue lost children and capture Nazi spies. To the best of my knowledge both of these characters, who were never treated as horrifying in any supernatural way (though one would have to have a clear conscience to want to meet either of them in the proverbial dark alley), fit into the standard category of Supernatural Monster. Perhaps Don could define a little more clearly what he means by "Dark Fantasy."

There is an interesting treatment of vampirism in John M. Ford's alternate-history fantasy *The Dragon Waiting*, where it is a communicable, progressive disease (somewhat comparable to leprosy) which can be controlled to some extent. One of the heroes is a vampire who refuses to give in to the urge to take human blood, confining himself to that of animals; resisting the craving is rather like an addict's trying to resist his chosen substance of abuse, except that vampirism is irreversible and the strength of the craving never does diminish. Perhaps the good-monster "horror" story's ambiguous presence in the genre is similar to that of the originally sf story the premise of which reality has overtaken, like a tale written in 1919 featuring a supersonic airplane.

I am puzzled by Don's mention of the Wandering Jew in his list. This character has had mixed sympathetic/unsympathetic treatment in literature and history, but to the best of my knowledge he has never figured as a frightening monster. In fact, since the whole point of his supernaturally prolonged life span is to give him a chance to do penance, he is more likely to do good than otherwise. This reminds me of a short story I read a long time ago, the author and title of which Don or someone else might be able to tell me. It involved an archaeological discovery of Roman ruins in England, in which was found a treasure—not a very impressive one, but two laborers who had been lifelong friends killed each other over it. After a few

more deaths, if I remember correctly, we are told what the treasure consists of: a small leather bag containing thirty silver Roman coins....

Don also speculates on the possibility that slasher films will spawn a genre of slice-and-dice prose fiction. I dunno; do the sort of people who go to see *THE TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE* actually *read*? I myself, while resistant to the genre as a whole, am much more resistant to—because more likely to be upset by—visual rather than print versions of tales of terror. I finally did read *The Exorcist* but have no desire to see the movie. I read, and eventually broke down and saw, *Jaws*; does it count as horror fiction? It sure horrified the hell out of me. Two final comments on the slasher films: they fit the definition of what Tom Wolfe called "porno-violence," meaning violence presented in such a way as to titillate, and always from the point of view of the inflicter (as opposed to, say, violence in the novels of Dick Francis or, to a lesser extent, Ian Fleming, whose PoV character may be the one getting hurt); and they are specifically sadistic and demeaning to women, especially independent or "uppity" females. Do these strictures also hold true for the written fiction of the genre?

As for Lovecraft, the best thing about his universe is the conclusion of the parody of it in Mark Rogers's *The Adventures of Samurai Cat*: "The shoes [left behind by the evil being disguised as a human] were normal enough, regulation wingtips, real roach-spikers. *But the socks were of no human shape!!!*"

Don notes that horror fiction mostly deals with standard menaces. Where are the new supernatural horrors coming from? Can we invent them still? If they are, as some suppose, symbols and archetypes generated by the collective unconscious, can new supernatural horrors with universal impact be made up even today; or would they remain only local or private villains? Didn't Sturgeon once write a story in which a teddy bear turned into a terrifying monster? And I know that some Skinnerite psychologist devised an experiment in which infants were conditioned to fear soft, fuzzy animal toys by being given electric shocks when they tried to cuddle them. (This guy obviously needed therapy himself.) But I cannot imagine literature ever reaching a point where fear was the primary association with teddy bears simply as a result of writers making monsters of them. The most terrifying dream I ever had in my life, when I was about twelve, always provokes hilarity whenever I tell

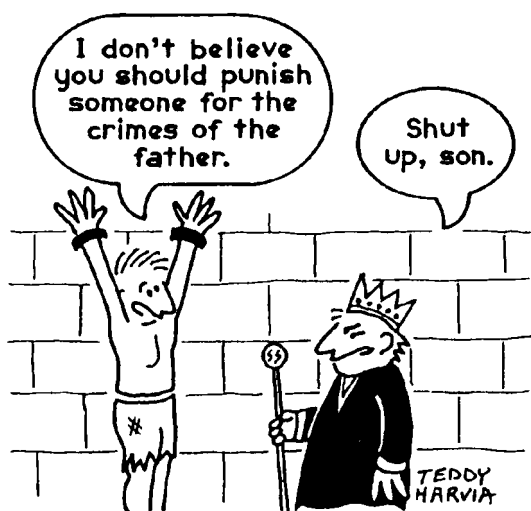
anyone about it: I dreamed I was being chased through Switzerland by the ghost of a badger. I cannot now remember any details of the dream, only how much it frightened me; and I don't know why fear should be attached to Switzerland, a country I liked very much, or to badgers, with which, thanks to *The Wind in the Willows*, I had only positive associations. I seem to remember there was also a Studebaker in the dream, which only makes it odder. I have other fears that I can identify more readily as to their source, some fairly private (an isolated dead tree), some more widely shared (spiders). These have been used before as symbols in literature and art. A symbol has to be widely shared to be archetypal; but not all archetypes will affect everyone emotionally.

The traditional figures of horror fiction are very ancient and very potent; most of them are bound up with our most primitive and overwhelming fears: of death and the dead, and of loss of humanity (i.e., shapechangers. And why does no one ever, in making lists of best horror fiction, ever remember Rudyard Kipling's superb "The Mark of the Beast"?). When it comes to inventing horrors, perhaps, in the words of the Pogo, "We has met the enemy, and he is us." We're scarier than anything this side of Cthulhu, what with genetic tampering, toxic waste, chemical and biological warfare, political torture, ecological devastation, terrorism, and potential nuclear meltdown. Imagine DRACULA AND THE WOLFMAN MEET MUAMMAR QADDAFI AND SADAM HUSSEIN—my money would be on the latter (and crucifixes wouldn't work on them either). It seems that horror fiction is in a truly Procrustean situation: either it sticks with the dear old menaces we all know and love, and gets blamed for its lack of inventiveness, or it uses the sort of horrors I've just listed, and becomes merely a subset of science fiction.

Speaking of lists, a book catalogue I got recently offers *Horror: 100 Best Books*, ed. Stephen Jones and Kim Newman, followed by a selection of books from the list that the bookseller stocks: *Frankenstein* and *Dracula* (obviously enough), *The House on the Borderland* (usually included in such lists, though not by Don), Bram Stoker's *Jewel of Seven Stars* (which I had thought was pretty peripheral), and, of all things, Chesterton's *Man Who Was Thursday*—which isn't horror at all, but mythopoeic fiction in the guise of a thriller about anarchists.

Linkages was also interesting, though  
See LAISKAI, Page 71





As Lord Mountarat in the same play said, "As Wellington thrashed Bonaparte, as every child can tell, the House of Peers throughout the war did nothing in particular, and did it very well."

I understand that it was the operettas of Gilbert and Sullivan that helped to get British Parliament reformed, taking away many of the powers and privileges of the House of Lords. [I think the First World War had just a little more to do with it. Anyway, Georgette Heyer is going to get you for this. ajb] Gilbert's contempt for the nobility must

have had a wide following for Darrell tells of Dunsany running into prejudice against his work because of his birth. Critics would not take his plays seriously because they felt that nothing worthwhile could come from a lord. My first reaction was to think, "Good! Nobility deserves contempt!" But on reflection my sympathy went out to him. All prejudice hurts its victims and its perpetrators. While it is wrong to be proud of your ancestors for you did not cause them, it is also wrong to be punished because of them.

I wish to thank Steven Johnsrud of the Volunteers of Vacaville for putting this book onto tape for me.

### LOST READERS

We received from England an order for NIEKAS 36 accompanied by \$6 in cash. The letter was postmarked in Swansea on the 6th of March, 1990, but neither the letter nor the envelope had a name or address. Can anyone help us find the reader?\*

### MATHOMS, continued from Page 9

dissenters' passion is reserved mostly for the flag, the majority's mostly for the Constitution. The dissenters venerate the symbol; the majority venerates the thing symbolized. Both have emotion on their sides, but the majority has logic, too.....

If flying the flag is symbolic speech, so is burning one; and speech, in this country, is supposed to be free.

Burning a flag, immersing a crucifix in urine, and similar unpalatable symbolic gestures are acts of defiance of the majority view, acts which we are not required to love

but are required, in the name of free speech and the protection of dissent, to tolerate. The alternative is to allow the majority—or rather the people in power—not only to impose its will unrestrainedly on dissenters, as happened in Tiananmen Square, but to go on from there to what is happening in China right now: rewriting history to deny what actually happened; and if anyone doubts that such a Big Lie could succeed, let him look up the Katyn Forest massacre in a fairly recent history book. But of course, Stalin didn't have videotapes of the actual events to contend with.

I say we should leave the alternate versions of history in the hands of the science fiction writers, where they belong. By the way, can anybody let me have a People's Republic of China flag? And a match?\*

### PATTERNS, continued from Page 11

Teaching writing is endlessly stimulating. The English language is such a frustrating, flexible, fascinating tool! People groan when they think of "bonehead" English, but I would much rather learn something I don't know from a student than suffer through yet another half-baked reprise of a "serious" literary work that would bore me too. I let the students choose their topics, and get thoughtful discussions of the risks of abortion and steroids; descriptions of how to get out of a country which is being overrun by the Russians; sports stories that I can actually understand; recipes for exotic dishes; and some surprisingly successful attempts at fiction. When the students don't succeed, it is interesting to try to find ways to help them express what they want to say.

The only thing I don't like about it is having to assign grades. But even the drudgery has one advantage. After I've been grading papers for awhile, getting back to my own writing is like taking a holiday.\*

### TAPE, continued from Page 14

inventions will ever be developed we could be wrong and there may yet be some scientific breakthrough lurking around the corner, unsuspected by everyone, which will lead to some totally new form of technology that will suddenly cause things to become possible which we had always believed to be impossible. Nobody can really predict the future completely. We can always guess as to what kind of future we expect but the future can always surprise us. In fact the future always does surprise us. Therefore we should

### BUMBEJIMAS, continued from Page 5

outline of his life but concentrates on his writing career. Dunsany (1878–1957) wrote many novels and plays, innumerable short stories, and many essays and poems. He wrote many fantasies of almost painful beauty and wonder but, unfortunately, many of his stories lacked content. The introductory material in the Dover Books omnibus collection laments that he was too good a writer. He could sell anything he wrote and he wrote so much that much of it was weak, carried only by his style. But still many of his stories are very well worth reading and Owlswick and Darrell Schweitzer are to be congratulated for this survey of his work and for bringing back several collections of his short fiction. Darrell is working on a complete bibliography of his writings.

While many books and articles have been published about Dunsany, this is the first complete survey of his work and career, going into all aspects of it. I am no expert and cannot comment on its accuracy but can only say that Darrell has told a very interesting tale and I am very glad to have read it. If literary biography interests you and you want to know more about the man who influenced, among others, H.P. Lovecraft, Fritz Leiber, Clark Ashton Smith, L. Sprague de Camp, Jack Vance, and Ursula K. Le Guin, by all means do read this book!

I share W.S. Gilbert's contempt for British (and all other) nobility, and I add royalty to that. I am annoyed by American besottedness with the Royal Family. They serve no useful function and are honored only because their ancestors murdered and schemed to achieve their positions. Like Strephon in *Iolanthe* I would propose that a "duke's exalted station be attainable by competitive examination."



not be *too* certain as to what may or may not ever be invented.

I think that the trend in contemporary science fiction is, oddly enough, increasingly toward greater plausibility. The whole genre of cyberpunk is exciting precisely because it is so interestingly plausible—the technological extrapolations are very believable even though they lead to very bizarre results; and the political and economic and social extrapolations are also very ingeniously done and very believable, so that science fiction in the field of cyberpunk often seems to be very close to what is now being described as futurology. It is in other words an almost prescient vision of what our future is in the process of becoming. Although as I've noted before, the future always surprises us, so cyberpunk could prove to be entirely wrong in its extrapolations, which are, nonetheless, remarkably believable. One of the Hugo nominees this year is a novel called *Islands in the Net* by Bruce Sterling, a powerfully plausible prophetic vision of the future rather than some sort of bizarre hare-brained off-the-wall speculation as a lot of other science fiction novels seem to be. As a result the novel has a special fascination beyond that of merely an imaginative science fiction story.

Nonetheless my personal choice for the Hugo this year is not *Islands in the Net* but *Falling Free* by Lois McMaster Bujold, especially for the fascinating ironies that the author has constructed. She does not put together the kind of technological and sociological detail that Bruce Sterling does, but in her treatment of interpersonal interactions she creates truly astonishing and poignant ironies which are unlike those of any other author I have read, and I'm immensely impressed. The emotional power of Lois McMaster Bujold's writing is most remarkable and rarely equalled by any other writer. Orson Scott Card comes to mind as another writer who can create similarly profound emotional effects; but I am most impressed with Lois McMaster Bujold and I would like to see her win a Hugo this year. However, every novel nominated for the Hugo this year strikes me as being excellent; and I will not be disappointed no matter who wins.✱

#### **LIBRARY**, continued from Page 17

frequent reader within the field could nominate several prime contenders, but unless the author makes it to the bestseller list, the odds against being considered are astronomical regardless of the merit of the book.

This becomes even more significant if it's a paperback original.

Does that mean we're going to be subjected to an unending stream of gory, virtually plotless films? Well, the answer is probably yes and no. There definitely is a market for such things, although it appears to be that an ever-growing percentage of these is released directly to videotape and bypasses theatres entirely. That's probably an indication that there remains some measure of good taste at large. But horror films, even big-budget horror films, are still viewed with a jaundiced eye. They're fringe films, not meant to be taken seriously, pure entertainment—which seems to have become a synonym for "unimportant" in some quarters. Apologists for the state of the horror film industry can turn out article after article explaining the socio-cultural significance of *THE HILLS ARE LIARS II* or the deep symbolism inherent in the gore flicks of Herschell Gordon Lewis, but the fact remains that these are mindless slasher bits pandering to the American public's fascination with and apparent confusion of sex and violence. There's not necessarily anything wrong with such pandering, mind you, but let's stop bullshitting each other.

A final note on horror films. As much as I have been disparaging of full screen horror, I'd like to point out an interesting variation. The *FRIDAY THE 13TH* series has been mindless from the outset, *HALLOWEEN* ever since John Carpenter disengaged himself. Other ongoing series such as *SLEEPAWAY CAMP*, *SLUMBER PARTY MASSACRE*, and so on promise to be lower budget renditions of the same smash and slash. But there has been an interesting evolution in the *NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET* series.

The first film stood out from the pack primarily because of the effectiveness of Freddy as an image, but also because of unusually well done special effects and an original plot. Although this early promise declined during the second film, it started to reappear with the third. The fourth and fifth films, which are actually two halves of a single story, are an order of magnitude greater. Sex and graphic violence have been de-emphasized; there is less blood and nudity in the most recent than in many mainstream movies. Considerable effort has been diverted to developing the plot and characters, avoiding clichés, enhancing the film's visual image with good set design and special effects, and creating a consistent, pseudo-rationality for all of the weird goings on. Craig Skipp and John Spector, who have

written a number of first rate horror novels and stories, contributed to the screenplay. Of course, none of their original work has been brought to the screen. All of my carping and complaining notwithstanding, here's an exception you might want to catch.

That's all I have time for this time folks. I'm off to work on my cross genre novel about a deathless, bloodsucking vampire from outer space who uses a time machine to journey to the Old West in time to help Miss Kitty solve a locked room murder, discovering true, torrid love as he does so.✱

#### **HUMANUM**, continued from Page 18 dess Lakshmi.

Two angels cannot be turned loose on a modern city without serious effects. Gibreel falls into the bed of a retired Everest-climber with the unlikely name of Alleluia Cone, the daughter of Jewish refugees from Poland. Saladin with his horns and hooves is taken in by his ex-wife and her present lover, in a "Paki" district of London. There he gets involved in the tensions that exist between immigrants and bigots in London.

The Jahilia sequences are the ones that really seem to bother Muslims. Rushdie clearly believes that Muhammad (for whom "Mahound" was a snide distortion of the name by medieval Europeans) was a 7th-century edition of the same sort of religious frauds which we have to put up with in this century—tyrannizing over his followers, changing his revelations to suit the needs of the moment, taking 12 wives while his followers are limited to four, and hunting down in his old age those who poked fun at him in his youth. The very name "Satanic verses" comes from an old Muslim tradition, that once Satan tried to sneak into the Quran a chapter elevating three goddesses to a status nearly that of Allah, and that Muhammad recognized this forgery and cast it out. A chapter purporting to be this forgery is included in *The Satanic Verses* by Rushdie. In reality it is quite possible that Muhammad might have thrown out an early composition that contradicted the uncompromising monotheism of his later message, but modern Muslims will not have it this way. For them, Muhammad was just a floppy disk in Allah's word processor, not an author.

In the end, all three major plots are settled, as is a minor one which *seems* to be the triumphant return of Khomeini to Iran. The follies of Titlipur are swallowed up in water, and those of Ellowen Deeowen in fire. Gibreel's angelic attempts to proclaim him-



self and pass miracles in London come to a tragic end. But Saladin returns to India, finally makes peace with his estranged father upon the latter's deathbed, and is also reconciled with his Indian roots after abandoning the attempt to process himself into an Englishman.

So, while the Gabriel-character dies in a strange city, the Satan-character returns to inherit the home from which he was expelled. And the book is an anti-Muslim satire, with some left over for other religions, and what of it? If people will profess belief in ridiculous things, the can expect to be ridiculed. This is why such devout Christians as Jimmy Carter, John O'Connor, and Pat Buchanan have attacked Rushdie; their own beliefs are susceptible to the same treatment as Rushdie gave Islam.✱

#### *LINKAGES, continued from Page 19*

veals' that the ruins were deserted because the peasants, workers, etc. simply walked off the job and disappeared into the jungle to set up on their own.

The question that comes to my mind is that, if they could, why didn't they do so earlier? That sort of solution will always occur to someone whose back is to the wall—if it's possible. The answer Shiner gives is not that the Mayan Empire became oppressive, but that it also became weak, tired, routine-bound. The realism shines through the magic here with a vivid light. Eddie gets to see His Majesty, lounging in a hot tub being ministered to by a girl in precisely the style of whoever in California would have that sort of wealth, power, and vulgar tastes. A good enough King for when things are going well; not the man to rise to an emergency.

Nobody tries to carry the parable over into the modern world, except for the suggestion that the oppressed of the world vote with their feet. But they are, and those who guard the physical border down around El Paso are screaming loudly enough about the situation to wake the dead—or be heard in Washington.

*Deserted Cities of the Heart* is a political parable, an adventure in which three good guys go in to rescue somebody's brother out of the clutches of the bad guys, an excellent picture of contemporary Central America (as far as an untraveled *gringa* can determine), and many other things. *The Healer's War* is a brutal, bloody, gut-wrenching war memoir in which there is nothing glamorous or heroic about war, and any decency is

in spite of, not because of, the war. Both novels are very definitely literature.

But are they science fiction? If not, why are they labeled as such? Could it be there is more room in the ghetto? That it is more profitable to be inside the walls than outside? In that case, it might be well to explore just which genre is ghetto and which is the big city?

Or to mix metaphors, perhaps our little branch is now the mainstream. And, perhaps, that which was once the central channel down which all traffic flowed, is now starting to become a backwater.✱

#### *PAST, continued from Page 21*

Adelbert Kline, an author who had a temporary flare of popularity by lavishly imitating Burroughs, he makes the points: "Next to Kline, Burroughs is positively leisurely, and next to Burroughs, Kline is something else: a reactionary."

Because of his wide reading Pierce constantly uncovers and links up influences upon authors generally thought to be creatively original. Such linkages are not obvious to one with circumscribed reading habits. John Norman, whose created world series of Gor, with its strong emphasis on female bondage, likes to deny any important influence from Edgar Rice Burroughs, pointing to the Victorian homage which Burroughs frequently paid women, yet creating in *Cave Girl* and *Dejah Thoris*, the queen of Mars, images of completely liberated women. The latter, a native of the planet Mars, lays eggs in giving birth. Pierce correctly points out that Norman gives away the source of his action mode when he states: "My princesses are human; they don't lay eggs." No need to pontificate for thousands of words, the example tells it all.

The value of Pierce's far-ranging familiarity with science fiction becomes particularly obvious in the second volume dealing with the evolution of various themes. This book is especially valuable as a jumping-off place for those academics who produce entire volumes on a single theme. Indeed we find that each subject, whether it be robots, world disaster, supermen or future war can only be compressed with difficulty into a single chapter. The less one knows the easier it becomes to write compact appraisals.

Lester del Rey in his preface to the third volume in Pierce's series) makes a particularly valid point: "He gives us a way to relate what we may have read to what we have not." In other words, compared to Pierce, the

average reader is reading *out of context*, simply because his reading range may not be wide enough to properly focus his thoughts. Pierce assists him in restoring his perspective. *When World Views Collide* implicitly challenges the assumption that merely writing a well-constructed and entertaining story is a justifiable end in itself, that while there are Wellsians there are also anti-Wellsians, i.e., Aldous Huxley and E.M. Forster. They are all telling wonderful stories, but the vitality of their stories rests in the fact that they have a viewpoint. Employing this thesis he presents the best summary of Brian Aldiss anyone has yet done, better than that done by Aldiss himself.

In the chapter "Men of Feeling" Pierce explores the true meaning and attitudes of authors as distinguished as Clifford D. Simak and Theodore Sturgeon. In other chapters he moves on to Robert A. Heinlein, Raymond Z. Gallun, Henry Kuttner, and a limited coverage of Algis Budrys and Lester del Rey. The world outlook of New Wave writers is perceptively presented, including Thomas Disch and J.G. Ballard. There is a long chapter on Samuel Delaney, another on Ursula Le Guin and too many others to be even touched upon here. It is enough to say that the coverage brings the reader right up to cyberpunk. It is not surprising to find Pierce dealing interpretively but sympathetically with Cordwainer Smith, on whose work he is one of the best qualified authorities.

Without seeming to express a strong bias—even where some are known to exist, simply by presenting the *philosophy* behind the plots of major works, Pierce is frequently very revealing. One does not think of John Brunner as a "liberal" writer, nor has he been regarded as a New Wave writer, but in outlining the themes of several of his stories, finally concluding: "For Brunner, as for intellectuals of the Red Decade, the Soviet Union is a beacon of hope for the world, and Afghanistan means no more than the purges or gulags," Pierce shakes us a bit. Plots of several of Brunner's novels underscore capitalism as the villain of the planet, yet in this political zeal, the real villain to Brunner's career has not been capitalism or its vestments but high blood pressure whose treatment made it difficult for him to write at all. Selfishly his attention should have been directed at the hereditary, nutritional and lifestyle pressures that contributed to this condition and not to dogma.

In writing style, which was most of what New Wave writers were about, Brunner has not been counted among their numbers, yet



in quite effectively adopting the technique of John Dos Passos for his premier novel *Stand on Zanzibar* (1968) he has been more effective than almost any of them in bringing style to the fore as a means of most effectively making a point. The only difference is that his employment of Dos Passos was a *deliberate choice* which he felt could most artistically convey his conclusions—and he was right, whereas in the case of most New Wave writers they were *ignorant* of the intelligence that they were rediscovering the wheel and bemoaned the fact that the science fiction world did not recognize that writing fiction in the style of a diary, in a series of memos and telegrams or in blank verse, was a revolutionary device as far as they knew, never employed by a writer on this planet previously.

Appraisal of Brunner enables Pierce to give us new perspectives on Fred Pohl, who half a century past was a flaming liberal. Pohl, disillusioned by Stalin's pact with Hitler, gradually moved towards a more centralized position, and has been in the avant garde in finding new real scientific and projected social outrages but has been sane and stable and even optimistic in their presentation and possible or actual resolution.

It is not practical to touch on all the points of interest or new perspectives that Pierce brings to bear—in a large measure because he has actually *read* most of the works he discusses—and therefore knows what the author really said and meant, because three packed volumes are involved here trying to cover history, themes, plot and philosophy. It is possible to say that with considerable coherency Pierce has supplied the subject matter for scores of thoughtful essays and articles and that his books are not only worth owning, but well worth reading.\*

#### FOOTNOTES, continued from Page 33

<sup>1</sup>The best discussion of Wells' future history (so far as this writer is aware) is in Mark R. Hillegas, *The Future As Nightmare: H. G. Wells and the Anti-Utopians* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), 24–34, 40–50. A number of brief discussions of other future histories can be found in *Bulletin of the Science Fiction Writers of America*, 14:3/71 (Fall 1979), "Science-Fiction Future Histories: A Special Issue."

<sup>2</sup>Cf. the creatures of the other planets in the solar system, who appear only in "—We also Walk Dogs" (*Astounding Science-Fiction*, July 1941; collected in *The Green Hills of Earth* [1951] and *The Past through To-*

*morrow* [1967]). A discussion of inconsistencies in the later part of Heinlein's series is Grant Conan McCormick's "A Dissertation Upon Emerson: The Future Histories of Robert A. Heinlein," *Fosfax* [a fanzine], No. 117 (July 1987), 9.

<sup>3</sup>In March and September respectively. Both are reprinted in Boucher's *"The Complete Werewolf" and Other Stories of Fantasy and Science Fiction* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1969). For these two stories, and "Secret of the House," Boucher originally used his alternate pseudonym for fiction, H.H. Holmes. For the other story published in his lifetime, he used his primary pseudonym, Anthony Boucher. (His actual name was William Anthony Parker White.) This material has not been introduced into the above discussion since it has little to do with the content of the future history; probably it does indicate that Boucher thought of the series as somewhat separate from his stories about Fergus O'Brien (on which he used the name Anthony Boucher) which were also appearing in *Unknown* and *Astounding* about the same time as the first two stories. But see footnote 11.

<sup>4</sup>*The Complete Werewolf*, pp. 75, 76. Other page references to the first two stories are given in the text in parenthesis.

<sup>5</sup>The best biographical sketch of Boucher is probably "A Boucher Portrait: Anthony Boucher as Seen by His Friends and Colleagues," ed. Lenore Glen Offord, *The Armchair Detective*, 2:2 (January 1969), 69–76. It was reprinted with an annotated checklist of Boucher's writings, compiled by Joe R. Christopher, Dean Dickinsheet, and Bob Briney, "A. Boucher Bibliography," under the joint title (White Bear Lake, Minnesota: Allen J. Hubin, n.d. [1969]). The pagination of the reprint is the same as the earlier publications in *The Armchair Detective*. A more recent biographical sketch (which, however, emphasizes Boucher's mystery interests) is Francis M. Nevins, Jr., "Introduction: The World of Anthony Boucher," *Exeunt Murderers: The Best Mystery Stories of Anthony Boucher*, ed. Francis M. Nevins, Jr., and Martin H. Greensberg (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1983), vii–xvi.

<sup>6</sup>[I]f a story bogs down badly, it may be because some vital factor is missing in the initial conception. If you put it away, you may later discover in plotting a different story that the two can be combined and fill each other out" (from *The Mystery Writer's Handbook*, ed. Herbert Brean [New York: Harper and Brothers, 1956], 159).

<sup>7</sup>According to Dean W. Dickinsheet's (or possibly Robert E. Briney's) annotation in "A. Boucher Bibliography," *The Armchair Detective*, 2:2 (January 1969), 84, a robot bartender was actually developed in 1968.

<sup>8</sup>For the Anglo-Saxon, cf. Isaac Asimov, *The Early Asimov: or, Eleven Years of Trying* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, 1972), 81–82, 203.

<sup>9</sup>Cf. Poul Anderson's identical point about humanoid robots in "Quixote and the Windmill" (originally published in *Astounding Science-Fiction*, November 1950; collected in *Strangers from Earth* [New York: Ballantine Books, 1961]).

<sup>10</sup>Herbert J. Gans, *Popular Culture and High Culture: An Analysis and Evaluation of Taste* (New York: Basic Books, 1974), 81–84.

<sup>11</sup>It should be noted that, although this essay is concerned with Boucher's stories involving usuform robotics, others of his stories are related to these. For example, in "Q.U.R." sollies are referred to on pp. 74, 77, 78 (they also are in "Robinc," pp. 105, 108); they are some sort of three-dimensional movies—p. 74 has the reference to "two-dimensional shows way back before the sollies"—and hence *sollies* is presumably a popular form of *solids*. (They are not TV shows, for television is referred to in addition to the sollies on pp. 78, 105, 108). These conjectures about the nature of sollies are confirmed in "One-Way Trip" (*Astounding Science-Fiction*, August 1943), published by "Anthony Boucher" between the two usuform stories. (Sollies also appear in "The Barrier," by Anthony Boucher, *Astounding Science-Fiction*, September 1942.) "One-Way Trip" is set partly in the studios of Metropolitan Solid Pictures in Hollywood (by then renamed Sollywood). Interestingly, the Metropolitan public relations girl is named Maureen Furness—she is obviously a descendant of Drew Furness and Maureen O'Brien of Boucher's *The Case of the Baker Street Irregulars* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1940)—and Maureen O'Brien worked in that book and several others in publicity for Metropolitan Pictures. And so, despite the conjecture about the reason for Boucher's pseudonym in footnote 3, the usuform robotic series is connected to the Fergus O'Brien series (Maureen is Fergus's sister). The reason "One-Way Trip" has not been reprinted is that it is very much dated by its references to World War II (the Nazis won, at the time). But in its concept of the delayed passage of radiation through Lovestonite, Boucher may well have produced his most "scientific" science-fiction



story—and a forerunner to the slow glass in Bob Shaw's "Light of Other Days" (1966), incorporated with two other stories in *Other Days, Other Eyes* (1972).

<sup>12</sup>It was published under the name "Anthony Boucher," probably because by that time "Boucher" was known and "H.H. Holmes" earlier stories were largely forgotten in the science-fiction field (but Holmes started reviewing SF in the year of its publication—see footnote 24). The story appeared in *New Tales of Space and Time*, ed. Raymond J. Healy (1951). The page references in the text are to the reprint edition, published in New York by Pocket Books, 1952. (For what it is worth in connection to the subsequent discussion above of the time of the story, Healy's introduction calls the story a "picture of the San Francisco area a thousand years hence" [p. 253]; perhaps he had Boucher's authority for this statement.) Poul Anderson's statement quoted above is found in Offord's "A Boucher Portrait," p. 71.

<sup>13</sup>Something of the same point—man's destructive nature leading to atomic wars—is made in *A Canticle for Leibowitz* (1959), by Walter M. Miller, Jr. It may be helpful to recall that Miller's three episodes first appeared as stories in *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction* when Boucher was its editor. Boucher was not a human perfectionist.

<sup>14</sup>Phyllis White, in a letter of 18 March 1981, suggests gently the more obvious possibility of *-arch* meaning "a ruler or leader": thus, a rule by technology. Some other passages from her letter will be cited later in the essay.

<sup>15</sup>Offord, p. 75.

<sup>16</sup>One may also admire the use of a reference to a well-known nursery rhyme (p. 269) to show Thomas's reaction when the robass charges into a group of brambles, for it is a way of avoiding a difficult (and unessential) description with an allusion. But, although it is a mark of good writing, it is less significant than the religious allusions.

<sup>17</sup>The most serious attack on the theme of the story has been mounted by the Polish science-fiction writer, Stanislaw Lem, in his essay "Robots in Science Fiction" (a translation by Franz Rottensteiner appears in *SF: The Other Side of Realism: Essays on Modern Fantasy and Science Fiction*, ed. Thomas D. Clareson [Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1971], 307–325; the paragraph on "The Quest for Saint Aquin" appears on p. 316). Lem's basic argument is that Thomas refuses the robass's argument that he should keep St.

Aquin's robot nature a secret, for one cannot serve Truth with lies; but that Aquin himself hid his robot nature, and so did precisely that—served his religious Truth with a personal lie. This is at least debatable; the main textual passage is this:

"And all the time," Thomas gasped, "my sought-for saint was only your dream... the one perfect robot in man's form."

"His maker died and his secrets were lost," the robass said. "No matter[;] we will find them again."

"All for nothing. For less than nothing. The 'miracle' was wrought by the Technarchy."

"When Aquin died," the robass went on, "and put died in quotation marks, it was because he suffered some mechanical defects and did not dare have himself repaired because that would reveal his nature." [p. 270]

Since the robass reveals several times that it knows about the "perfect" robot (pp. 260, 261, 270), Aquin's nature was hardly a complete secret. More probably, the above passage simply means that a Christian robot did not dare turn himself in for a Technarchy repairman to correct. Thus the human converts, under this interpretation, would know of the nature of their teacher.

<sup>18</sup>The robot monotone disagrees with the expressiveness of the robots in the first two stories. No doubt it is possible to hypothesize that the Technarchy deliberately reduced the robots' ability of expression in order to make them clearly a servant class (or for some other reason). Also see footnote 22.

<sup>19</sup>Another allusion, to C.S. Lewis's *Screwtape* (p. 271), has been briefly discussed in Joe R. Christopher's "In the C. S. Lewis Tradition: Two Short Stories by Anthony Boucher," *Mythlore*, 2:3/7 (Winter 1971), 25.

<sup>20</sup>Offord, p. 74.

<sup>21</sup>Isaac Asimov, *I, Robot* (New York: Fawcett/Crest paperback, 1970 [original hardcover published in 1950]), 52.

<sup>22</sup>If the reader assumes that Asimov's story influenced Boucher's, then it is possible that the flatness of the robass's voice is imitated from "Reason": "Cutie [QT] laughed. It was a very inhuman laugh—the most machine-like utterance he had yet given vent to. It was sharp and explosive, as regular as a metronome and as uninflected" (Asimov, p. 52); "Ha ha," the voice said in lieu of laughter" (Boucher, p. 256). But there must be dozens of science-fiction stories in early magazines in which a robot's voice is flat and uninflected.

<sup>23</sup>The present writer forgets where he read this characterization; it is probably in one of the volumes of essays on science fiction since it predates (he believes) the recent journals of academic criticism of the field. He realizes the current attitude agrees about *Astounding* and *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*, but believes *Galaxy* to have been important for its stress on psychology and satire. However, a comment by Theodore Sturgeon seems to hark back to the earlier formulation: "*Astounding* has been likened to *Popular Science* of its day, *Galaxy* to *The Saturday Evening Post*, *F & SF* to *Harper's* and *The Atlantic Monthly*" ("Introduction," *The Eureka Years: Boucher and McComas's "The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction": 1949–1954*, ed. Annette Peltz McComas [New York: Bantam Books, 1982], p. x).

<sup>24</sup>The story appeared under the H.H. Holmes by-line, probably because it was for a competing magazine to that "Anthony Boucher" was editing at the time. Certainly Boucher was not using that by-line for any other fiction that late (see footnote 12). Boucher's mysteries as "H.H. Holmes" appeared from 1940 to 1946 (two novels, two short stories, and a novella). His SF stories under this name appeared in 1943 and (this story) in 1953. A fantasy—"Review Copy"—appeared in 1949—in the first issue of *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*; probably Boucher was not certain it was appropriate to print his own stories then. However, "Holmes" reviewed science fiction and fantasy from 1951 to 1963 for *The New York Herald-Tribune*. The month of the *Galaxy* issue for "Secret of the House" was March. The page references in this paper, however, are to the reprint in Boucher's first collection of short stories, *Far and Away: Eleven Fantasy and Science-Fiction Stories* (New York: Ballantine Books, n.d. [1956]).

<sup>25</sup>The New York setting of this story and the emphasis on television is enough to explain the absence of any reference to sollies (cf. footnote 11); but also cf. footnote 32.

<sup>26</sup>It occurred to the present writer that *robowaxer* might have been Horace Gold's substitution for *usuform waxer*; Gold, the editor of *Galaxy* at that time, was known for revising his authors' stories. For one anecdote about him (without his being named), see the fourth paragraph of Theodore Sturgeon's "Introduction" to *Sturgeon in Orbit* (New York: Pyramid Books, 1964), 7; for another, more detailed, see Frederik Pohl's *The Way the Future Was: A Memoir* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1978; paper-



back edition from the same publisher, 1979), 188–190 (paperback). But Cheryl Baumgart, Reference Assistant at the Lilly Library of Indiana University, checked a carbon of the original story in the William A. P. White manuscript collection there and it reads *robowaxer* (letter of 25 September 1984). (Phyllis White first informed the present writer about the collection in a letter of 25 March 1978.)

<sup>27</sup>Offord, p. 73 (a brief reference). A glimpse of Boucher the gourmet can be gained in *Cooking Out of This World*, ed. Anne McCaffrey (New York: Ballantine Books, 1973), 9–12 (an account by Poul Anderson with a Boucher recipe), 21–25 (three of Boucher's recipes).

<sup>28</sup>Offord, pp. 73–74.

<sup>29</sup>In the November issue. (The cover by Ed Emshwiller illustrates the story.) Nothing is known by the present writer of the circumstances which delayed publication until after Boucher's death; for the present purposes, they do not matter.

<sup>30</sup>The Wagnerian reference is owed to Phyllis White (letter of 18 March 1981).

<sup>31</sup>Another story which mentions Venusberg (but which has no reference to robots) is "Public Eye," first published in *Thrilling Wonder Stories*, 40:1 (April 1952), 117ff.; reprinted twice, in *The Best Detective Stories of the Year—1953*, ed. David C. Cooke (New York: Dutton, 1953), and in *Space, Time and Crime*, ed. Miriam Allen DeFord (New York: Paperback Library, 1964), pp. 97–109. The brief Martian background at least does not contradict that of the other stories in the sequence: there is an opening reference to the mass murder "of an entire Martian family" (DeFord, p. 97)—although that may be a family of human settlers—and a later reference to "a Fifth Dynasty Martian statuette" (p. 101). Even though the visit in this story is to Port Luna, not Venusberg, the latter gets a reference which ties to half of its description in "Man's Reach": the protagonist refers to fictional private eyes of the twentieth century who could "outlove an asteroid hermit hitting Venusberg" (p. 100). (In fact, Boucher plays the traditional connotations of *Venus* heavily in this story: "The victim was a salesman from Venus, ostensibly travelling in microbooks but suspected—according to a note in the dossier—of peddling Venusan pictures on the side" [p. 105].) There is also a reference to "a Venusan swamp-doctor" (p. 106), which at least indicates the presence of swamps there, as included in other stories. Like "One-Way Trip," this story is related to Boucher's Fergus

O'Brien mysteries, for the detective here is Fers Brin and he refers to his "great-great-grandfather who was a *private eye*" (p. 106). The time relationships also seem clear, for there is a reference to Faurot's use of fingerprints as evidence five hundred years earlier (p. 102); no one named Faurot has been found who is connected with the history of fingerprinting (the name may be one of those which have "worn down" through the centuries—see a following comment), but the appropriate time is the second half of the nineteenth century—hence the story is laid approximately in 2375. (Since Fergus O'Brien is intended most probably to be the great-great-grandfather, that indicates only five generations in five hundred years. But the narrator in "Q.U.R." comments that he will "never see a hundred again" [p. 74]. Thus life spans have been lengthened in Boucher's future history. There is no necessary contradiction in these chronologies. On the other hand, it would have taken some impressive social disruptions to allow the linguistic slackness that would wear down names to the forms in the story in just 500 years: "Dolf Mase" from "Randolph Mason," etc.) The government, by the way, is World Federation, which grew out of the United Nations (p. 99), using Anglo-American criminal law (p. 97). Cf. the use of a Federation in "Man's Reach."

<sup>32</sup>One clear inconsistency is the reference to Greater Hollywood (p. 76); according to the related story described in footnote 11, the name should be Sollywood. But the time differences in publication between the two stories, as well as their appearances in different magazines, probably precluded the obscure reference in the later story.

<sup>33</sup>One of Boucher's fanzine writings—"The 12 Days of Christmas," *The Zed*, No. 782 (Winter 1955)—is labeled "*Trad.* (erroneously attrib. Rhysling) transcr. Herman W. Mudgett." Boucher used the Mudgett pseudonym on several pieces of light verse published in *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction* during his editorship; but the reference to Rhysling is interesting in light of the above allusions.

<sup>34</sup>Boucher, *The Case of the Crumpled Knave* (New York: Simon and Schuster [An Inner Sanctum Mystery], 1939), 109. The character had just quoted from John Webster.

<sup>35</sup>A reader who knows more of opera than the present writer might find more allusions in the story. Does the woman singer's name—Faustina Parva—have significance, for example? Of course, there is Gounod's *Faust* (1859, rev. 1869), but that does not seem

particularly functional here.

<sup>36</sup>Perhaps the oddest loss in this story is any copy of St. Thomas Aquinas's works; none is available to the Church in the story, although Thomas thinks "surely somewhere in the world we can find a copy" (p. 272).

<sup>37</sup>From *Ellery Queen: A Double Profile* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1951).

<sup>38</sup>Asimov, *In Memory Yet Green: The Autobiography of Isaac Asimov: 1920-1954* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1979), pp. 311–312.

<sup>39</sup>A shorter and more informal version of this paper was read before the Science Fiction and Fantasy Section of the South Central Modern Language Association, meeting in Hot Springs, Arkansas, on 28 October 1977 (an abstract of that version appears in *The South Central Bulletin*, 37:3 [Fall 1977], 118).✱

### *BLOOD, continued from Page 35*

into its respective components. For all I know it might wind up being used on two or three different patients: red cells for aplastic or sickle cell anemia, white cells for leukemia, platelets for hemophilia, and so on. In modern medical practice whole blood is not used as often as in the past, though whole blood transfusions are still used for some traumatic injuries and certain types of surgery such as open heart surgery.

They do heart transplants at Johns Hopkins. Maybe it will wind up there, or maybe in the shock trauma unit at University Hospital. I don't know. I will never know. I have signed an absolute release for the Red Cross to do with my blood as they see fit. I'm not sure I want to know. Hospitals depress me.

My nurse tells me to sit up and asks how I feel. I'm fine. I'm always fine. We go through the usual routine. Don't do anything strenuous for the rest of the day, no heavy lifting, drink lots of fluid, eat well for the next few days, don't smoke for at least a half an hour. "I don't smoke," I say. The nurse smiles vaguely and says, "Good."

Since I don't appear about to pass out the nurse calls for an "escort" and lets me go. This is a volunteer, usually a man, usually young, since his function is to keep me from bashing my brains out on the floor if I should suddenly pass out. This is known to happen though most often to first-time donors. Blood loss for any reason, even under controlled circumstances like this, is a certain shock to the system. There's a psychological factor, too. First-time donors are especially vulner-



able. Let one faint and the rest will start going down like a row of dominos. Very rarely someone might get nauseated. The worst that's ever happened to me has been an occasional hematoma. That's medicalesse for the discoloration, slight swelling, and discomfort caused by minor blood leakage beneath the skin. In short, a bruise.

I would, however, recommend against your going jogging or participating in other sports the afternoon after having donated. Remember what the nurse said. Don't do anything strenuous. If you follow instructions and drink lots of water the body will replace the fluid loss within 24 hours and the cells within three days or so.

My escort leads me without incident to the *canteen*, another piece of accepted terminology, dating I suppose from World War II. It consists of a table with baskets of cookies and other goodies. Another volunteer, an older man, gets me a styrofoam cup of water and asks me what else I will have. Fortunately there's a good selection today: orange juice, iced tea, coffee. The juice is the best choice for new donors. I know how my physiology reacts to a caffeine jolt on top of fluid loss. Besides it's still before 10 o'clock in the morning. I can use a cup of coffee.

All these goodies are donated by area grocery chains. This is very nice of them. It's probably nit-picking to observe that it also gets slow-moving items off their shelves, or that they can write off the fair market value of these things as a charitable donation on their corporate tax returns.

I have some water and head back to work. Elapsed time, portal to portal, just over an hour. The process, if not actually uncomfortable, is at least inconvenient.

So why do I put myself through this?

Perhaps some day I or some member of my family will need to be on the receiving end. For the time being, so long as my health holds up, I'll be back in two or three months. It's no big deal.

Someone has to do it.✱

#### **BRINK**, continued from Page 37

researches of universities and scientists? We can venture some guesses. At the moment, the superconductor is uppermost as a possible shadow of things to come. If one can be discovered that will perform perfectly above the melting point of ice, it would definitely transform the life of the 21st Century.

It might render the internal combustion engine obsolete. It could open doors for inventions and methods of living now still

closed.

Yet another faint shadow has shown up. Some data has been found that indicates that somehow molecules react instantaneously to changes in similar molecules regardless of distance. I am no physicist, but if there is anything applicable to this, and if it can be utilized practically, then we could be on the verge of true space and star flight.

Atomic power has yet to be safely controlled. Perhaps it can be. Or perhaps it will turn out to be a hopeless case and have to be set aside for something different.

Back when I was a kid fan, a boy in the 1920's and 1930's, there were many wonders science fiction was promising. By the year 2000, we would have space flight and moon colonies. Mars would be contacted and the ancient and wise Martian race would give us Earthlings a boost up. Venus, the new Earth, with its oceans and swampy continents and unusual beasts, would be a dozen new Americas to colonize and exploit. Television, then still a toy for experimenters, would become universal and two-way, and perhaps its adjunct teleportation would be made practical. Above all, as H.G. Wells had promised in some of his novels, like *The World Set Free*, atomic energy would bring peace and plenty to all. And wise leaders would end war.

So what did happen to those dreams of SF fans in the formative days of this century? Beautiful fantasies became hard realities. Mars turned out to be a barren desert, Venus a piece of Hell. Most of the solar system was made up of airless cratered lunar battlefields. Atomic energy held as many horrors as hopes. We got rid of such killer diseases as typhoid fever, smallpox, pneumonia and syphilis, and we got instead radiation sickness, cancer, and AIDS. Television perfected earned itself the derogatory nickname of idiot box—and justifiedly so. Instead of Wellsian wisemen, we got Nixon, Johnson and Reagan...and Margaret Thatcher, Franco, Hitler, and Stalin.

Yet life is in certain respects utopian compared with what it had been: air conditioning, aviation, cars within reach of the majority, social security, and Medicare. But here we are, a dozen years or less from 2000, and this is definitely not utopia. Old messes have given way to new ones—and possibly worse ones. Most of this audience will live on into the first half of the Twenty-first Century. Your generation will dominate it. Will you be better off? I hope so, but you get no guarantees. For, again looking into history books, I note yet another last-decade phenomenon. Each century brings forth both a great social

reformer and a great military conqueror. The writer of 1788 might have suspected the rise of Robespierre, who was to come to power in but a year or two more. But he certainly could not have predicted the rise of Bonaparte. In 1888, who could have predicted the radical reformer Lenin and the military conqueror Hitler? Even in the hypothetical writings of a 1488 Heinlein, who would have predicted the society-splitting power of Martin Luther and the military successes of a Gustavus Vasa?

So will the Twenty-first Century see an end to this duo of society-shatterers? I doubt it. So hold on to your hats—somebody is going to shake the social world in the decades to come and someone else is to muck up the world with violence—let us hope not nuclear. So says history. Is human nature going to change? It hasn't yet.

And so we move steadily to the year 2000. What will astound and amaze us in the next eleven years? Science fiction may speculate as it will, what will really happen will not have been predicted. That is the one thing I am sure of.

You may then ask why read science fiction if it is always going to guess wrong? Read it as a hint of things possible. Read it for warnings and for grand hopes. Some predictions do come true. Science fiction inspires the embryonic scientist. Science fiction is hope, it is mind-enlarging, it is, above all, fun.

It may not be prophetic. It rarely has been. But it is always an inspiration. Make your notes now as to what you believe is coming. Then come to the grand World Science Fiction Convention of 2008...and check it out. In the immortal words of the great fans of yore: "Gosh, wow, golly!"

[GoH speech from NolaCon II.]✱

#### **SPACE CRONE**, continued from Page 41

over"—powerful rascals, what is a god to do?—refer, I think, to these structural mysteries that seize any serious work, whether or not it possesses fifth-column characters who wreak havoc from within. Sometimes part of a book simply gets up and walks away. The writer cannot force it back into place. It wanders off to die. It is like the astonishing—and common—starfish called the sea star. A sea star is a starfish with many arms; each arm is called a ray. From time to time a sea star breaks itself, and no one knows why. One of the rays twists itself off and walks away. Dr. S.P. Monk describes one species, which



lives on rocky Pacific shores:

"I am inclined to think that *Phataria*...always breaks itself, no matter what may be the impulse. They make breaks when conditions are changed, sometimes within a few hours after being placed in jars....Whatever may be the stimulus, the animal can and does break of itself....The ordinary method is for the main portion of the starfish to remain fixed and passive with the tube feet set on the side of the departing ray, and for this ray to walk slowly away at right angles to the body, to change position, twist, and do all the active labor necessary to the breakage." Marine biologist Ed Ricketts comments on this: "It would seem that in an animal that deliberately pulls itself apart we have the very acme of something or other." [ellipses in original]

Like the nature Dillard observes so acutely, the book may be red in tooth and claw:

I do not so much write a book as sit up with it, as with a dying friend. During visiting hours, I enter its room with dread and sympathy for its many disorders. I hold its hand and hope it will get better.

This tender relationship can change in a twinkling. If you skip a visit or two, a work in progress will turn on you.

A work in progress quickly becomes feral. It reverts to a wild state overnight. It is barely domesticated, a mustang on which you one day fastened a halter, but which now you cannot catch. It is a lion you cage in your study. As the work grows, it gets harder to control; it is a lion growing in strength. You must visit it every day and reassert your mastery over it. If you skip a day, you are, quite rightly, afraid to open the door to its room. You enter its room with bravura, holding a chair at the thing and shouting, "Simba!"

As those familiar with Le Guin's work will already be aware, her struggle is principally against the values of the white, patriarchal Western culture in which she was raised, not only against its overt manifestations, as in the famous incident in which *PLAYBOY* bought one of her short stories but insisted on publishing it as by "U.K. Le Guin" on the grounds that its readers were not interested in reading stories by women writers, or the male resentment so many must face and which she counts herself fortunate not to have found in her own family relationships, but also in its values unconsciously inter-

nalized during her upbringing:

That is the killer: the killing grudge, the envy, the jealousy, the spite that so often a man is allowed to hold, trained to hold, against anything a woman does that's not done in his service, for him, to feed his body, his comfort, his kids. A woman who tries to work against that grudge finds the blessing turned into a curse; she must rebel and go it alone, or fall silent in despair. Any artist must expect to work amid the total, rational indifference of everybody else to their work, for years, perhaps for life: but no artist can work well against daily, personal, vengeful resistance. And that's exactly what many women artists get from the people they love and live with.

I was spared all that. I was free—born free, lived free. And for years that personal freedom allowed me to ignore the degree to which my writing was controlled and constrained by judgments and assumptions which I thought were my own, but which were the internalized ideology of a male supremacist society. Even when subverting the conventions, I disguised my subversions from myself. It took me years to realize that I chose to work in such despised, marginal genres as science fiction, fantasy, young adult, precisely because they were excluded from critical, academic, canonical supervision, leaving the artist free; it took ten more years before I had the wits and guts to see and say that the exclusion of the genres from "literature" is unjustified, unjustifiable, and a matter not of quality but of politics. So too in my choice of subjects: until the mid-seventies I wrote my fiction about heroic adventures, high-tech futures, men in the halls of power, men—men were the central characters, the women were peripheral, secondary. Why don't you write about women? my mother asked me. I don't know how, I said. A stupid answer, but an honest one. I did not know how to write about women—very few of us did—because I thought that what men had written about women was the truth, was the true way to write about women. And I couldn't. ["The Fisherwoman's Daughter"]

In Dillard's terms of reference, life and literature often seem to be interchangeable, or synonymous; one of her books is called *Living by Fiction*, a concept which would probably cause Le Guin to say, "Yes, but..." and reduce Heinlein to helpless laughter.

For Heinlein, writing is the work he does, to be taken no more seriously—and no less—than building a house or organizing a trip around the world. For Le Guin, life and literature dance together—a dance at the edge of the world—as she writes of what is important to her in literature and fiction. Her two dominant themes are feminism, whether discussing a strictly political issue like abortion rights, considering menopause as an important rite of passage ("The Space Crone"), or wondering how different fiction from a woman's viewpoint might be from traditional tales of conflict and winning ("Heroes" and "The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction"); and traditional Native American culture, especially its oral literature and mythology. In her two travel pieces about crossing the U.S., "Places Names" and "Along the Platte," it is the glimpses of the Indian past that haunt her. "Theodora" pays tribute to her mother, author of the classic *Ishi* and of *The Inland Whale*, retellings of Indian myth and legend. When asked to comment on fiction or critical theory, she often slides into it slantwise by invoking these myths; in one case, asked by a scholarly conference for a paper on a theme that rather baffled her, she gave them a myth instead ("The Woman Without Answers"). These themes come together in the other major essay of this collection, "A Non-Euclidean View of California as a Cold Place to Be" (reprinted from the *YALE REVIEW*), which moves from a discussion of the differing and mutually incomprehensible world-views of the early white settlers of California and its native cultures, through a survey of Utopian and Golden Age ideas to a proposal of an alternative:

Utopia has been euclidean, it has been European, and it has been masculine. I am trying to suggest, in an evasive, distrustful, untrustworthy fashion, and as obscurely as I can, that our final loss of faith in that radiant sandcastle may enable our eyes to adjust to a dimmer light and in it perceive another kind of utopia....

...Who will even recognize it as a utopia? It won't look the way it ought to. It may look very like some kind of place Coyote made after having a conversation with his own dung....

Non-European, non-euclidean, non-masculinist: they are all negative definitions, which is all right, but tiresome; and the last is unsatisfactory, as it might be taken to mean that the utopia I'm trying to



approach could only be imagined by women—which is possible—or only inhabited by women—which is intolerable. Perhaps the word I need is yin.

Utopia has been yang. In one way or another, from Plato on, utopia has been the big yang motorcycle trip. Bright, dry, clear, strong, firm, active, aggressive, lineal, progressive, creative, expanding, advancing, and hot.

Our civilization is now so intensely yang that any imagination of bettering its injustices or eluding its self-destructiveness must involve a reversal....

...To attain the constant, to end in order, we must return, go round, go inward, go yinward. What would a yin utopia be? It would be dark, wet, obscure, weak, yielding, passive, participatory, circular, cyclical, peaceful, nurturant, retreating, contracting, and cold.... Persevering in one's existence [she is referring to a comment by Lévi-Strauss on primitive societies] is the particular quality of the organism; it is not a progress towards achievement, followed by stasis, which is the machine's mode, but an interactive, rhythmic and unstable process, which constitutes an end in itself.

Elsewhere in this essay she suggests that the archetypal creator of yang utopias is Heinlein. (I doubt if she would be any more pleased than I was at the references in *Grumbles from the Grave* to "gals" or, in the case of black women, "chocolate items.") Yin and yang are not inappropriate terms for these two books: Heinlein's is rational, full of argument, and deals with his actions rather than his inner life. Le Guin's is not only feminist but much more interior, dealing with imagination and feeling, with relationships and intuitions, and often expressed in verse, metaphor, and myth. To stretch the image, Dillard's book may be considered neuter, or neutral, almost pure perception and meditation. (Yet this is the same woman who in *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek* describes how she chased some cattle out of her way by rushing at them yelling "Swedish meatballs!") But that too is primarily a book of observations and meditations.) Dillard is by anyone's definition a literary writer, and at that not even a fiction writer. Her book is not easy, and will certainly not be of much use to one whose primary interest is in becoming a successful genre writer; but it will richly reward those who make the effort to approach it on its own terms. *Grumbles from the Grave*

is primarily of autobiographical value; to those like myself, who do not subscribe to the Hoiden Caulfield school of literary criticism (i.e., wanting the author as a personal friend), it is of only passing interest. To those who are Heinlein completists/devotees, it is of course indispensable. I recommend *Dancing at the Edge of the World* to everyone except unreconstructed male chauvinists (strike that; to everyone, especially unreconstructed male chauvinists). It certainly pushes all my buttons. Dillard gives us a view of writing itself untrammelled by the constraints of genre or marketplace; Heinlein gives us a glimpse over his shoulder of where sf has been; Le Guin unrolls a map of its future chock full of possibilities.\*

#### *DALMAS, continued from Page 42*

(Geez! That listing of background makes me seem old! Actually, I'm a mere lad.)

My long-time curiosities provide a lot of ideas. My experiences in ecological research, Hubbardism, the merchant marine, the woods, etc., and the characters I've known in them, provide lots of details with which to paint word pictures. I've been collecting characters most of my life.

David goes on to point out Rod Martin as an influence on my writing. That was correct but underplayed. In fact, my writing has been influenced far more by Martin's voluminous unpublished work (letters, fables, and research notebooks) than by Hubbard's even more voluminous writings. A kind of desert pixy, Rod Martin has an insatiable curiosity in the area of metaphysics and parapsychology, and indeed is the father of what David has dubbed my "Transcendental Video," (Rod's wife and four sons have also taken part in that research to varying degrees.)

It is inaccurate to say that Rod Martin has "re-interpreted" Hubbard's work. Though Rod is very familiar with Hubbard's work, that is part of his older, broader, and deeper interest in cosmology, why the world is the way it seems to be, and what we're up to in it. Rod has been delving into the area since he and his wife read and experimented with the work of Edward Cayce, in the 50's when Rod was a petroleum engineer. Later, in the early 60's, he ran into Hubbard's work. (Rod was then doing a stint in the Washington, D.C. area as the editor of NASA's weekly abstract journal.) After a time he found Hubbard's and Scientology's insistence on orthodoxy to be unacceptably repressive, and he departed as so many others have. Martin's

general views have little in common with Hubbard's except the broad area of interest. Also, Rod has made no effort to commercialize his work. It's been done in a remarkable spirit of play.

I've assimilated Rod's ideas to a considerable degree, altering them to some extent in the process of fitting them into my own conceptual reality.

To one degree or another my novels reflect a two-fold view: (1) For humankind, in its numbers and potential numbers, the physical/biological sciences are essential to survival, Luddites to the contrary. And (2), a science of man is equally important, a science we don't have yet despite the diligent efforts of generations of philosophers, psychologists, anthropologists, theologians, etc. They've provided a considerable database and a lot of heuristic insights, but no successful integrating theory. A practical technology of man is needed to go along with our physical technologies, and this brings up the question: What might such a technology be like, and what might people be like as a result?

David also commented on my novel, *The General's President*, which has no ideas from parapsychology and Transcendental Video. He wrote that the political theories explored in *The General's President* are somewhat influenced by the political theories of L. Ron Hubbard. I don't think so, at least not that I can identify. They were definitely influenced by a different *ism*—libertarianism. But in the process of taking my fictional president through a horrendous set of situations in which he had to make all kinds of quick and pragmatic decision, I became less and less a libertarian, although enough libertarian viewpoints persist in it—those stressing individual ethics and responsibility—that the libertarian slant was commented on by some reviewers and in letters from readers.

And, having said all of this, I have to add that David's reflection of me was more accurate than any I'd every expected to see. Not many people know me well enough to have done it, and hardly any of them write as well as David. Jon Gustafson, my ex-journalist wife, and my daughter Judy would be the only others, I think.

And that's all on that.\*

#### *LITHUANIA, continued from Page 43*

SF novel or story had to be translated into Russian. Nobody wanted to have that done.

The end of the 60's witnessed the rise of SF literature in Lithuania. Today, well-known



authors like Vytautas Norbutas, Banguolis Balasevicius, Kazys Paulauskas and others published their first stories. V. Norbutas was the most talented among them. He widened the genre, introducing stream of consciousness and methods of narration and presentation. In general, SF in the 60's was very popular in the Soviet Union but the "Lithuanian Wave" lagged some five years behind. That is why it did not differ greatly from Soviet SF.

The second wave of Lithuanian SF came at the end of the 70's till the beginning of the 80's. B. Balasevicius and K. Paulauskas wrote more books, V. Minius and L. Latonaitė had their small collections of stories published. Several new names appeared. The paper *Komjaunimo tiesa* played an important role in all this. From 1981 till 1984, the paper often carried SF stories. Moral and ethical problems prevailed in SF then. B. Balasevicius became interested in social SF and K. Paulauskas went on writing adventurous stories.

Though S. T. Kondrotas and J. Ivanauskaitė are representatives of traditional prose, there are some elements of SF in their books.

The Lithuanian SF writers have always written in Lithuanian, making it difficult for people who do not speak Lithuanian to read their books. On the other hand, Lithuanian SF writers are original, though they do not write about Lithuania itself, its present days and its future. The theory about the convergence of all the Soviet nations into one (Russian) nation which has been put into practice since the tsarist times must have had something to do with it. Writers do not believe in this future, and the action in their writings often takes place on some other planets or in imaginary capitalist countries.

Now, many taboos do not exist any longer. The Lithuanians are a much stronger nation. All the changes may give rise to a new wave of SF dealing with politics and social life.

New times have brought new hopes to writers of Lithuanian science fiction.

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#### GINCAS, continued from Page 51

Though erudition is a wonderful thing, analysis and synthesis, in this case, are more what I have in mind. To put my money where my mouth is, I'm about—finally—to start an Arthurian novel based on Wagner's and

Wolfram's *Parzival*.

#### Mike Ashley

*My Pendragon Chronicles* is now just about out. It's a Peter Bedrick April release in the States and a Nick Robinson trade paperback U.K. release in May.

Included in this anthology is a story by Maxey Brooke from an early 50's issue of *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine*, where Merlin acts as a detective. It's called "Morte d'Alain," Brooke had one other in *EQMM*. When I contacted him for reprint rights I asked if he'd done any others and it turned out there were four, maybe even five as he has vague memories of another. I've got copies of the four and they might make an interesting little booklet. He's done one other Arthurian spoof, non-Merlin. All the stories are humorous in a way, or light-hearted would be a better description, but I suspect many Arthurian fans would be interested in them perhaps as much for their novelty value as much as their literary quality. [Being considered for Niekas publication. mb]

#### Brian Earl Brown

You have done a fine job here, collecting varied essays on The Matter of England few of which are slight or disappointing.

I would question the inclusion of non-Arthurian material like D'Amassa's Haunted Library or Jane Sibley's bit on Tolkien runes. Or perhaps just question running them intermixed with the Arthuriana and not as a package at the back with the letter column. It's hard to say which essay I liked the best, perhaps Phyllis Ann Karr's "Last Temptation of Arthur" which makes a convincing case for Merlin as the evil genius of this whole shebang. Curiously this sounds a bit like the setup in Glen Cook's "Dream Empire" series where a character called "The Director" seems to manipulate people into alliances and blood feuds, apparently for the pleasure of some celestial audience.

I was gravely disappointed by Marion Zimmer Bradley's piece which seemed hasty, casual, and thrown off. Not at all the sort of thing I would expect from a major Arthurian author. She claims that before she could write *The Mists of Avalon* she had to convince herself that Morgaine le Fay existed but after a superficial look into Arthur's reality Bradley just proclaims herself satisfied of le Fay's existence and intuitively her connection with the Druids. Well, none of that is obvious to me and since that is the crux of her book one would expect Bradley to put a little energy into showing exactly how

le Fay fit in with Druidism and what evidence of Druidism existed in the literature.

Alexei Kondratiev did a better job of this in his rather dry and academic essay on "The White Phantom." He at least shows the connections between Arthurian and Welsh myths. [Arthuriana is actually the Matter of Britain; the Matter of England is stuff like Guy of Warwick and Bevis of Hampton. ajb]

#### Thomas M. Egan

I loved "Arthur, Arthur" by Ben Indick in #39. He fills in the cracks of modern interpretations of King Arthur, especially Thomas Burger and David Drake.

#### Joseph T. Major

Apparently there was more than one "Sir Thomas Malory" in the middle 15th Century. One of them served under kingmaker Warwick's father-in-law and predecessor as Earl of Warwick. This could explain how someone could be a supporter of Warwick, an opponent of Edward IV, and yet died at the start of the readeption of Henry VI (engineered by kingmaker, and thus the only time it was possible to be the first two). Of course, I was being a trifle sarcastic when I wrote that, and humor is against the political beliefs of those who made the original reply.

#### Anne Braude

When Ben Indick, in reviewing *The Mists of Avalon*, says that "Morgaine here is no fey character," he's got it exactly backwards. While "fey" means "fairy," the connotation he is trying to banish (she was in the original French Morgan *la Fée*), "fey" means "doomed, unlucky, or accursed" (from Old English *færi*), which Bradley's heroine certainly is. When the Lady of Shalott cried, "The curse is come upon me!" she was fey. If the airy-fairy sense Ben objects to was ever actually attached to the word in this spelling, it was probably in Victorian times (perhaps the influence of J.M. Barrie?). The literary instances I can recall offhand of a character's being called fey usually involve his foreseeing his own death.

Also, Viviane's dynastic plotting was not to unite Christianity and paganism, but the old Pictish tribal culture (Goddess-worshipping) with the Romano-British power structure (as likely to, be Mithraist as Christian, if not more so, and venerating the Druids). Galaad or Galahad is the given name of Lancelot in some of the medieval material, so MZB can't get credit for inventing that bit.

Another interesting change White made in revising the original books for the final



version of *The Once and Future King* was that Robin Hood's men, called "outlaws" in the original, are called "partisans" in the revised version, stressing that they are Saxon freedom fighters opposing a Norman tyranny, comparable to the *maquis* of the French Resistance rather than bandits. He has a plausible if not perfect case; the laws of England, whoever was in power, have always favored the interests of the rich and powerful (so unlike the laws of any other country in the world!), and at the time of his ahistorical Arthurian the Normans were the property owners while the Saxons, by and large, were the property. Robin McKinley's *The Outlaws of Sherwood*, which I mentioned last time, is just out in paperback; it is a good illustration of my point.

Ben mentions Disney's option on *The Sword in the Stone*. Disney originally paid him about \$200; after *Camelot* made *Sword* a hot property, Disney refused for years either to make a film of it or to sell it back to White for many times the original price. Also, I was surprised to learn (in White's journal of his trip to the U.S.A. that was cut short by his death, *America At Last*) that he adored *Camelot*, always went to see it if a road company was playing in the city where he was speaking, and always cried at the end.

Mark Blackman chides me for not including in my "quest for the historical MacArthur" fantasy that "mac" means "son of" and that Douglas's father and son were both named Arthur. The idea was inspired by watching a TV serialization of William Manchester's biography of him, *American Caesar*, and noting parallels between his deeds and some attributed to Arthur but dismissed as impossible. My version involved most of the concrete facts having been lost in the course of the transmission of the legend—I postulated a nuclear winter as the equivalent of the Saxon conquest—and supposed only a few items would either have been included in the surviving records or have impressed themselves on the folk memory.

An example of the first might be maps and charts showing where and when he conquered the Japanese-held islands; one of the latter, the "I shall return" speech. Since genealogy was important in the times in which Arthur lived and in which the stories about him were written, the name of his father was remembered (or invented). I assume there would have been less interest in recording MacArthur's. Someone with the requisite knowledge of World War II Pacific Theater history, and time on his hands, could invent a whole Matter of MacArthur (it would

also make a fascinating alternate-history sf novel), with competing American, Anzac, and Japanese versions, Truman as a Mordred figure (especially when he fired him during the Korean War), Roosevelt as the Maimed Fisher King (Eleanor as the Loathly Damsel?), an epic modeled on *Beowulf* contrasting the glorious heroic triumph of his "youth" (the war) with the doomed attempt of his "age" (his try for the Presidency). Can't you just see the death scene, with him setting out to sea on a veiled barge, attended by Hitler, Stalin, Tojo, and Mussolini—the boat being set afire for a Viking funeral, of course? Any other ideas?

Incidentally, my father, a West Point graduate and career Army officer, knew men who had served with both MacArthur and Patton during the war. He once told me that those who had served with MacArthur still idolized him, while those who were with Patton tended to speak of him in terms Dad couldn't bring himself to repeat to his daughter. ✱

#### REVIEW, continued from Page 55

tradition. Its time of origin is the year 2363. Sometime in the preceding centuries the dreaded nuclear holocaust has been triggered. Genetically engineered warriors were created, artificial twins linked together telepathically. The 68-year-old patriarch of a band of space pirates was saved when a boy by a more benign pair of hunters. The line of Alexander knows that the only way to stop the lunatics who are launching attacks on colony space terminals and wiping out computer data bases with a powerful virus is to revive Nick and Gillian from hibernation where they have been for fifty-six years. The problem is, if they are brought back, can they be persuaded to help fight the threat? Or will they join forces with the new Ash Ock assassins? To the surprise of those who never knew Nick and Gillian when they were put into stasis, it turns out that they are not part of a Paratwa. Instead, Nick is a midget and was one of the top-notch computer experts of his time. He has a stubbornly independent turn of mind, and has been known to not follow orders when those orders do not serve his purposes. Gillian's linked twin Catharine is long since dead, and that fact is still creating problems for the survivor.

Meanwhile, a young executive—Susan Quint (who has connections with the founding families), is a witness to a massacre on an orbiting space city that was engineered by surviving Paratwa assassins. She is on the

run, and both sides must attempt to find her first. An ironically-named brigand called Ghandi appears to be in charge of the assassins and he has an affair going with the female half of a Paratwa known as Colette. He is intensely jealous when the male counterpart shows up after twenty-five years of having her all to himself.

Susan is not all she appears to be, and although not a Paratwa herself, she is part of a genetically engineered conspiracy that was planned before her birth. No one is entirely certain if Gillian can be trusted—what if he is lured back to an alliance with those who are admittedly more his people than ordinary humans? Paratwas have the ability to create intense desire in individuals which no doubt explains some of the hold Colette has on Ghandi. To complicate matters further, a mystery ship is returning from the stars, and it appears that the chief Paratwa killer is something unheard of until now—a triplet complex. The ending is somewhat inconclusive, but as this is merely the middle book of a planned trilogy, it is understandable that the author does not wish to give away all of the twists and turns in the plot.

There are hints that the triplet has been produced by alien sources far beyond Earth technology. As that idea is not really resolved, I expect it is a foreshadowing of things to come.

The plot is swift and fast-moving, so it is not hard to follow even if you missed the original book. As mentioned in the opening lines of this review, it is a pleasure to see the return of space opera on a grand scale, especially when it is mixed in with the conventions of the pulp detective genre. By this I mean there is an immense conspiracy and the hero must thwart it by any means possible (the Ash Ock have a master race psychology and plan a takeover that would leave ordinary humans as their slaves forever).

The book does what it sets out to do—entertain in the manner of a good made-for-TV movie and at the same time whet your appetite for more. Solid craftsmanship and well-drawn characters.

w. ritchie benedict ✱

#### LAISKAI, continued from Page 60

again I haven't read either book. Her comments on selling out *The Revolution* remind me of a piece by Irving Howe on Herbert Marcuse that I read in the Sixties: he contrasts Marcuse's condescending sneers at the materialism of the proletariat with what it was actually like for a mother of twelve living in



# Good Riddance to Jim Henson, David Palter

## Bastraw's Bastion

by Michael Bastraw

It's about time that Jim Henson bit the big one.

There is only some much room in this ole whirl for true genius and he'd been hogging *way* too much of it for his own use...

...and our delight.

I always seem to get roped into doing the obits for some strange reason. This is odd when you consider how much easier it is for most people—myself included—to find fault rather than praise the good stuff. (Or maybe it's because my father manages our friendly neighborhood cemetery?)

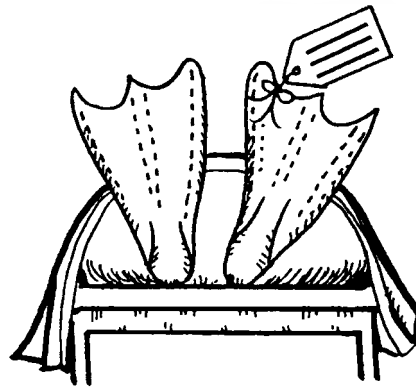
So Henson is dead. The cause was a treatable form of pneumonia; but you *do* have to seek treatment in time. He did not.

Data, the android officer from *STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION*, observed after the funeral for a defunct regular cast-member (who must have asked for a raise) that his thoughts were not for the departed but for himself. He asked the captain if he missed the point of the service.

No, of course not.

As weddings are for everyone but the bride and groom, funerals are for everyone but the dearly departed.

So what are we-who-remain-behind going to be missing out on?



Obviously there should have been a suicide pact between Henson and his alter ego, Kermit the Frog. I don't have too much of a problem with Mel Blanc's son continuing in his father's footsteps, supplying the voices for various Warner Bros. cartoon characters. (Mel might have had a certain amount of input as to the characters presentation but the words belonged to others.)

While Henson had others writing material for him in later years, one still had the feeling that everything was filtered through

Henson's own personal brain and came out more or less ad-libbed.

Kermit should R.I.P. *Ave atque Vale.*

Which brings us to the matter of *NIEKAS* columnist/sometimes-gadfly David Palter.

He ain't daid folks; we just won't have his soorey butt to kick around no more, no how.

This issue contains David's last column for us. Even before becoming a regular contributor, he brought unique points-of-view to our forum and sparked some of our livelier discussions.

(Now how crazy does his proposal to ship Israel and contents to the United States southwest seem, with current developments developing in the Muddle East [I write on August 14, 1990]?)

I've only met Mr. Palter once—at Noreascon Three in Boston. This urbane, erudite man hardly seemed the flamer that I'd envisioned him to be. After all, he actually had the temerity to question the contents of our practically perfect publication!

But he will be missed.

As will his sometimes deformed, sometimes informed opinions on dis dat and de udder ting.

Take care, Dave and drive carefully.

That's all she wrote.✱

### *LAISKAI, continued from Page 71*

a tenement to have to do the family laundry on a washboard. What price ideological purity when you have a chance at a Maytag? One thing I remember about the Sixties at Berkeley is that the Movement was a terrific "high," better than anything psychedelic. It eventually got to be its own excuse for being, with the causes practically irrelevant. We saw the same thing on civil rights marches, at Woodstock, at "love-ins," and more recently and tragically, in Tiananmen Square. Remember Wordsworth on his own youthful enthusiasm for the French Revolution: "Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive, [But to be young was very heaven!]" I think the popularity of *glasnost* is partly if not mostly that it engenders the same kind of euphoria,

since it has yet to produce most of the concrete results promised. Add the right explosive elements to the euphoria (such as a few British soccer fans) and you get a lynch mob. It is still incredible to me that the Chinese demonstrators remained so peaceful for so long. Consider the behavior of exactly the same population—students and workers—during the Cultural Revolution. No doubt the social psychologists have an explanation for it—but is it any better than Pogo's?

Ruth, I did read and enjoy *The Daughter of the Bear King*, though I didn't like it quite as well as the books I cited. I particularly remember the heroine watching alternate-world public television and commenting, "I didn't know Louis Rukeyser reported on

dragon futures."

WAHF: Jean Berman, Robert Bloch (Very pleased with both booklets and very happy to be part of *Obsessions*), Richard Dahlstrom, Larry Dickison (*NIEKAS* cover artist who admits that he hasn't read non-assignment SF since 1960; he'd rather be fishing), George Alec Effinger, Ann Sprague, Paul Demzioquoui, Leo Gallagher, Norma Lorre Goodrich, who received the Wallace Award from the American Scottish Foundation for her Arthurian research and writings, and Joan Hanke-Woods (on the move).✱





