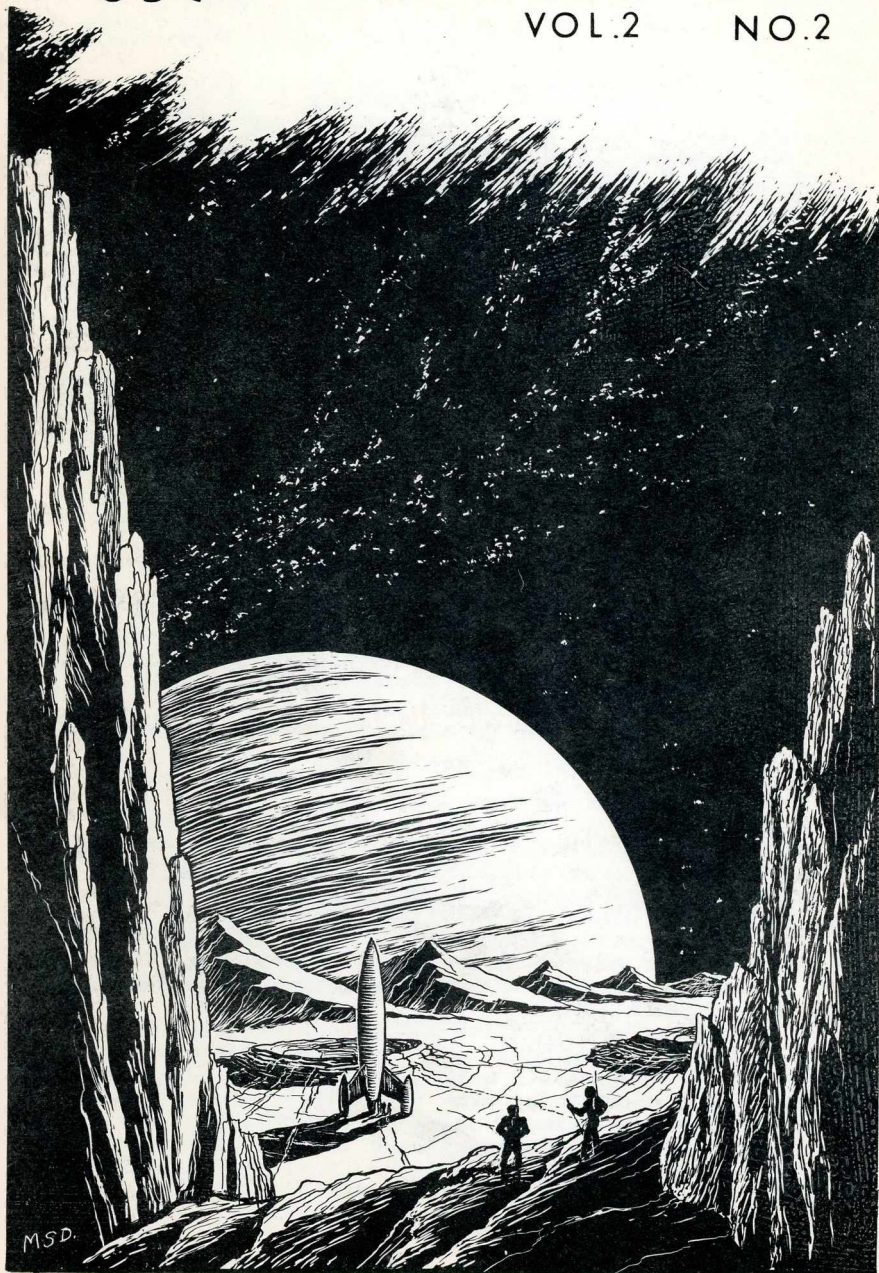


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The Mystic Renais sance ❖❖ A Survey of ❖ F ❖ Orlin ❖ Tre maine's "Astound ing Stories" ❖ by Le land Sapiro ❖ part I

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Without gross inaccuracy we can designate April 1926 as the start for pulp science-fiction, this date marking the first issue of Amazing Stories, edited by its founder, Hugo Gernsback. Several years later, Gernsback lost his magazine when it was forced into bankruptcy by the physical culturist, Bernarr McFadden; shortly after, Gernsback's duties at "Amazing" were assumed by his former assistant editor, T. O'Connor Sloane.

Meanwhile, Gernsback, starting anew, issued an entire series of science-fiction magazines, which eventually coalesced into Wonder Stories; while the Clayton Magazine Company issued its own title, Astounding Stories of Super Science. This magazine exhibited the racial and sexual fantasies of its juvenile readers, and therefore was an immediate success--its termination occurring only when the entire line of Clayton magazines was discontinued.

But the demise of the Clayton Magazine Company proved doubly fortunate, since it resulted in the purchase of "Astounding" by Street and Smith, Publishers, who appointed F. Orlin Tremaine as its new editor. Tremaine was the first editor in his field to display a consistent awareness of literary merit, and the time-interval October 1933--December 1937 (during which he selected all items in the magazine) is what I call the Mystic Renaissance.



Note:

The following article is an expanded version of a lecture given for the Little Men, a Berkeley organisation of science-fiction readers. A portion of this talk also was printed in the Rhodomagnetic Digest, the Little Men's official magazine.

SECTION I -- A Lesson in Pachyderm Ponderosity

For the present, we can regard mysticism as a doctrine which asserts various things about the structure of the world. But before inquiring about what the mystic knows (or claims to know), we ought to ask: how does he know it?

In general, there are two ways in which anybody can know anything: conceptually or by direct acquaintance. We take "direct acquaintance" as referring to what is known from sense-data; any other knowledge we denote as "conceptual."

For example, a man who is totally deaf might obtain conceptual knowledge of music by learning the theory of counterpoint; but even if he writes a symphony, he never will be acquainted with music in the sense of experiencing an auditory sensation and being able to say: This is b-flat.

Conceptual knowledge, then, is knowledge about things; direct acquaintance is experience of things.

However we must not deride conceptual knowledge because of its "second hand" character, since much of our knowledge is necessarily of this variety. Thus it is manifestly impossible for me to be acquainted with George Washington, so whatever I know about him must be classified as conceptual knowledge.

But when I specified direct acquaintance in terms of sense-data, I tacitly assumed these data to be my own. The question now arises: can I experience the sense-data of another individual? Of course, I can imagine myself having someone else's perceptions -- as when I say I sympathise with that person -- but the question is: can I obtain knowledge by "intimate acquaintance," in the sense of thinking and feeling exactly what somebody or something else thinks and feels?₁

(If such intimate acquaintance is possible, it might very well constitute a new type of knowledge.)

Suppose, for example, I wish to study an elephant. To this end I repeat Sir Arthur Eddington's famous experiment, which consists in watching an elephant slide down a hill and in the meantime writing down a series of pointer readings: "4000," to denote the animal's weight in pounds; "60," to denote the slope of the hill in degrees; ".78," to denote the coefficient of friction between the elephant's hoofs and the grass. Such data will furnish me conceptual knowledge of the elephant.

But here somebody might object that I still do not know the elephant in the sense of direct acquaintance with his thoughts and kinesthetic sensations: an entire book devoted to this experiment still will not recreate for me the elephant's own sensation of ponderosity, the massive interaction of bone and sinew experienced by the elephant himself as he slides downward.

Indeed, there is only one way to obtain such knowledge, and this is to be an elephant: in the sense of intimate acquaintance, only an elephant "knows" what an elephant feels and thinks.

Now, it is such knowledge that the mystic esteems. The mystic disdains any knowledge which entails a distinction between the observer and the observed: the mystic "knows" something not by observing it but by becoming it.

A recent statement of this theory is Robert Heinlein's Stranger in a Strange Land (New York, 1961). The Martian equivalent for the verb "to know" is grok, where

"Grok" means to understand so thoroughly that the observer becomes a part of the observed -- to merge, blend, intermarry, lose identity in a group experience. (p.204)

Of course, the mystic is not concerned with elephants and other such gross objects: in fact the mystic would deny that there is an elephant, for he believes that the phenomenal world of grass and hills and elephants is "only an appearance." "Reality," we are told, "is beyond sense-perceptions" (ibid.,9), or to quote from the Hindu mystical canon: "All living creatures are led astray as soon as they are born, by the delusion that this relative world is real."

We need not discuss what is meant by the assertion that the perceived world is "unreal": suffice it to note that a distrust of the senses -- and a corresponding emphasis on the "spiritual" as opposed to the "material" -- is fundamental to both the Eastern and Christian mystical traditions.

But clearly something must be real -- therefore a basic notion of the mystical philosophy is that of a non-material something which underlies the world given by sense-perception. This entity has received a variety of names; but under whatever title, this something is known not conceptually but by intimate acquaintance. To quote a recent pronouncement:

...man's mind can be attuned to the Infinite Wisdom for a flash of a second...Some call this great experience a psychic phenomenon. But the ancients knew it...as Cosmic Consciousness -- the merging of man's mind with the Universal Intelligence.

To summarise: The mystic believes that Reality must be spiritual in character, and therefore he posits the existence of a Cosmic Oversoul or Universal Intelligence that underlies the sensible world -- this Oversoul being cognised via intimate acquaintance, whereby the knower becomes one with the known.

Such mergence was described several times in Tremaine's magazine, a typical instance being Clifton Kruse's story, "Fractional Ego" (February 1937).⁵

Here we witness some instantaneous exchanges of living bodies, these transpositions resulting from the experiments of a Dr. William Eckert. A salesman, driving an automobile in North Dakota, is carried in an instant to Tibet, with the body of a "queerly garbed Oriental" later being discovered in the wreckage of the salesman's car; members of the Coldstream Guards parading in front of Buckingham Palace are transformed into a platoon of pajama-clad school-girls, the soldiers themselves later being found asleep in the girls' dormitory.

Another transition is that of Cora Randolph, Dr. Eckert's own secretary, who suddenly finds herself, razor in hand, staring at a mirror located in Columbus, Ohio. At the same time, one Emery Brundage, preparing to shave, finds himself in Kansas City, seated at a typewriter in the doctor's office. Cora, retaining her composure, telephones her employer at once, and later flies back to Kansas City. There, she explains to Brundage that her employer has developed an "ultra-dimensional generator," through which he has been able to formulate "definite laws of consciousness."

However, before these laws can be elucidated there enters, carrying a tray of coffee, Paulino, the doctor's servant -- who without prior notice is transformed into a "huge, shaggy ape." The beast is killed by a "searing red flame" originating in some undetermined fashion from Eckert's machine, but the doctor admits that if Paulino "went where that thing came from he's probably dead..."

But Paulino's death is not "in vain," pontificates the Doctor, for "it proves that consciousness is all inclusive."

"I found that...the mind of man is a ...composition of fractional consciousness which he has taken... from the universal store...In other words, you and I are but organized assemblages of chance fractions of both physical and consciousness energies. Birth does not create consciousness any more than it creates matter. Instead, it merely organizes the free fractions of universal consciousness into a temporary unit which we call individuality."

Brundage is told that the exchange between himself and Cora was caused by the field of "consciousness energy," which shifted to correct the unbalance produced by the Doctor's experiments. "By mere chance that fractional assemblage of consciousness -- which in your lifetime is the mind of Emery Brundage -- happened to be in line with the shift. So was Miss Cora's..."

At the end of the story, Dr. Eckert, reflecting on the mischief he has caused, feels himself "drowning in a...sea of misty nothingness," as his "organized mind" dissolves into the "common flow of universal consciousness."

Thus Mr. Kruse conveys an invariant notion of the mystical philosophy, that of "a single and universal consciousness representing itself in limited minds and divided egos."

Instead of discussing the author's incoherence-- e.g., his failure to explain why physical bodies are transmuted along with psychic identities-- let us note that if Kruse's "universal consciousness" is replaced by the All-Soul of Plotinus, then it can be inferred from the "sympathy" discussed previously. "Reflection tells us," according to the Enneads, "that we are in sympathetic relation to each other, suffering, overcome at the sight of pain...and all this can be due only to some unity among us" (IV,9,3). And this unity or "response between soul and soul is due to the mere fact that all spring from that self-same soul... from which springs the Soul of the All (IV,3,8).



But an emphasis on oneness is equivalent to a neglect of differences -- and I think that the mystic's spiritual unification predisposes him to reject distinctions of any kind. By contrast to the "materialist," who stresses difference, the mystic can be expected to emphasise sameness. This is because material things generally exclude one another, whereas spiritual things fuse and interpenetrate, like clouds of vapour.

In things spiritual there is no partition,
no number, no individuals. 8

The mystic may be characterised, tentatively, as someone who refutes the notion of divisibility. We customarily believe in the existence of individuals and individual mentalities; we believe, further, that space is partitioned into a here and a there, and that there are temporal distinctions as signified by words like before and after -- but the mystic, according to his particular temperament, regards some or all of these distinctions as illusory.

With respect to the Astounding story temporal categories were ignored by Otto Binder and Charles Diffin. In this first author's Time Entity (Oct. 1936) we overhear a conversation between a man and his yet unborn "direct lineal grandchild, five times removed," who informs him that past, present, and future are "arbitrary...human conceptions." The other writer's Long Night (May 1934) describes a temporal voyage of a thousand years, via suspended animation. After meeting the inevitable Gorgeous Female, the time-traveller returns, briefly, to the twentieth century, a trip made possible by what the author calls the "synchronous existence of all events."

Both space and time are unified in Jack Williamson's "Galactic Circle" (August 1935). This story, like Binder's, was denoted by the editor as a "thought-variant"--with Mr. Williamson's mind-shattering theme being the expansion by human beings into the super-universe which contains our own as a single atom. (Compare Donald Wandrei's "Colossus," Jan. 1934.) But although it requires thousands of years, Earth-time, and necessitates a billion-fold increase in size, the trip ends right where it started, in time and space -- for the big is the same as the small and the future ultimately the same as the past.

"Go far enough in time...and you return to
where you were.

"...the infinitely large is also the minutely
small...when we became too large to exist...in our
universe...we became the smallest particle in it."

For the present, then, we can regard the mystic as somebody who destroys categories -- whether spatial, temporal, or any other kind.

SECTION II -- Mystical Magic



However, our present usage of "mysticism" (and related terms) does not coincide with the word's original significance, which is rendered most accurately by "esoteric," or "secret" in the sense of being known only to the initiated. The oldest mystical testimony we possess are the Hindu Upanishads, composed by anonymous forest seers sometime between 1000 and 500 B.C. -- and the word "upanishad" means, among other things, "secret teaching." 9

Similar connotations were borne by the Scholastic phrase, "mystica theologia"; and even in pre-Scholastic times men spoke of a mystical interpretation of the Scriptures -- "mystical" in the sense that "it unfolded... a hidden meaning of the scriptural text, and revealed mysteries which only the...enlightened could perceive." 10

So if we take "mystical" as a synonym for "incomprehensible" (or "mystifying"), then ours is the current usage which agrees most closely with the Scholastic. Even so, the definition is ambiguous; since the unknown can have varying degrees of mystery. Something can be mysterious in the sense of being just beyond our immediate cognisance, 11 -- as in David H. Keller's reference to the "mystic words" of the story teller -- or it can be mysterious in the sense of being totally outside our rational frame of reference -- as in H.P. Lovecraft's allusion to the "essential mysticism which marks the acutest form of the weird." 12

Again, the word can have imbecilic as well as magical connotations, as when Mr. Campbell remarks that the use of dowsing rods for pipe-locating is "not a mystical notion on my part," but a "hard, objective fact." 13

With all this in mind, let us consider a work by Donald Wandrei, the most frequent expositor of mysticism in the Astounding story.

The title is "Earth Minus" (Sept. 1935), and the fictitious scientist is called Hal Carruthers. Other scientists believe "matter" and "energy" to be "basic categories," but Carruthers knows better. For, in the beginning there existed only the monotron, that primordial something from which matter and energy finally have evolved.

Carruthers proposes to transform a steel cube back into its original monotronic state.

"...I will subject it simultaneously to tremendous heat, pressure and bombardment. The heat will be... at least 1,000,000 degrees centigrade. The pressure will exceed 1,000 tons...The bombardment will come from a concentration of omega rays..."

The results of the experiment are experienced immediately: the scientist feels a "needle-point prickling" through his body; then he hears a crescendo of howls from cats and dogs, as the monotronic radiation diffuses through the neighborhood.

Later, there is a sequence of gunpowder explosions and a strange luminescence penetrating "all things and substances."

"You entertain the opinion...that these phenomena are a result of my experiment?"

"I do...you were dangerously successful...You hurled matter backward a billion years to the very birth of creation. There will be other phenomena. Violent, terrible phenomena."

We already have examined Clifton Kruse's unification of mind; a similar function now is performed by Donald Wandrei, via a universal blending of matter.

At sea, the captain of the good ship Princess watches the funnels turn to liquid and flow upon deck; then (his own body melting) he sees the passengers turn into "convulsively squirming jelly." There is a liquification of decks and funnels and people; finally "the whole ship flowed and blended into bubbling stuff."

In San Francisco, "the sky line flowed and the hills flowed, and the mountains marched down to the sea. Elsewhere,

The Empire State Building tilted, flooded a block of lesser structures.

The streets gummed, and stuff like tar poured into the harbor, and the harbor became one with the tar... Buildings and automobiles and bridges, stone and steel, streets and humanity and vegetation...all ran together in horrible communion...

Eventually there is the "metamorphosis of a world," with the continents and seas blending into one another and the Earth itself being converted into a "sphere of energy, a true oneness that has...absorbed all else into its single state."¹⁴

In the present context we are justified in regarding "mystical" as a synonym for "mysterious" -- "mysterious," not in the sense of "unknown" but in the sense of "unknowable" for the events depicted here cannot be explained under any known scheme of physics.

Mr. Wandrei's principal actor is the monotron, whose behavior, in another story, is explicated thus:

...the releasing of the force of the primary monotron...could not be checked, since the monotron was the base of all things, and the destruction of one monotron set off an enkindling and instantly contagious liberation of basic energy.¹⁵

Now, whatever the monotron can be, it supposedly possesses at least an ancestral relation to what we call "matter." But matter usually is regarded as a source of causal relationships, and a causal relationship is finite, even when the magnitude seems out of proportion to its initial cause. Thus a forest fire can be started by a single match (or a chain reaction by "critical mass"), but at least the action stops when all flammable (or fissionable) matter is consumed.

But no such finitude exists for Mr. Wandrei, who specifies that the reduction of just one object to a monotron (or, in "Colossus Eternal," the destruction of the monotron itself) entails a like transformation for everything else in the world.

To explain the monotron we must recover an archaic mode of thought. The contemporary "scientific" universe is characterized by "temporal structure"; i.e., its components are inter-related by cause and effect, with one always occurring before the other. Thus if I knock over the first in a row of properly spaced dominos, the one at the other end falls not immediately, but only after the required kinetic energy has been transmitted along the entire row.

However,

In the magic world view, all matter is governed by certain harmonies which may be expressed in letters, cyphers, numbers, designs, signatures...or stated correspondences. Everything in the Universe is so related to everything else that any change in one part immediately (not through a chain of causes and effects) implies changes in all parts. The most important of these correspondences is the one between the macrocosmos (heaven, the zodiac, and the planets) and the microcosmos (the human body and its parts).¹⁶

Thus matter, under the occult viewpoint, is regarded not as a source of causal relationships, but as a container of magic "virtues," which are transmitted by resonance or "sympathy" from one object to another -- as in the theory that a man's courage is magnified if he eats the heart of a lion or his jovial "humour" elicited if he is born in the ascension of Jupiter.

The mediaeval universe abounded in such "marvels which are past ordinary comprehension" -- and in terms of these we can explicate Mr. Wandrei's story.

The monotron, since it is the basis for everything, must contain all occult "virtues"; i.e., it must be in "sympathy" with all things. Therefore, whatever happens to one monotron also must happen to its descendants. "Like begets like," states the familiar magical principle -- so that the reduction of one object to a monotron entails a like reduction for everything in the world.

But we must place "Earth Minus" in a wider context in order to see how this story is relevant to our previous discussion of mysticism.

SECTION III -- "Underlying Oneness"



So far, we have used the term "sympathy" in two different ways: to denote a rapport between sentient beings (or between a finite intelligence and a Cosmic Oversoul) and to describe a relationship between objects with similar occult "virtues." But there also exists a physiological rapport between components of a single organism. In words of a 17th century text, there is a "sympathy between the kidneys and the stomach, as when persons diseased in the kidneys are troubled with stomach-sickness..." In its physiological sense, therefore, sympathy is defined as a "relation between two bodily organs... such that...any condition of the one induces a corresponding condition in the other."

(quoted by the Oxford English Dictionary.)

If the universe itself is conceived as an organism, then such organic sympathy can be used to explain the correspondence between human bodies and objects in the sky.

There is one common flow, one common breathing, all things are in sympathy. The whole organism and each one of its parts are working in conjunction for the same purpose...¹⁷

Thus Harl Vincent's "Cosmic Rhythm" (Oct. 1934) tells how the planet Dovar was carried from Sirius into our own solar system, the trip being accomplished via a "new and inexplicable force."¹⁸ This "force" is accompanied by a loud throbbing analogous to a heart-beat, and it renders unconscious a party of human beings, who were obliged to land on Dovar when a "cosmic-ray stream" seized their rocket-ship.

Later comes the explanation.

"I like to think of the universe as a colossal organism...The rhythm of the cosmic-ray stream was the rhythm of a cosmic artery carrying its energies through space for the healing of a...injured cell. Dovar...was the sick cell in the vast organism we call the universe..."

"First came the energy stream which swept Dovar from its orbit and...toward our own solar system. The stream carried...an anaesthetic to be used before the operation. This caused the...suspended animation of those termed 'dead-alive.'"

In this way the mystical notion of organism can be rationalised in terms of periodicity: events recur in the external world just as they do inside a living organism, therefore the universe must be alive -- with its components exhibiting that kind of sympathy which inter-relates the parts of a human body.

Our results so far can be summarised by saying that the mystic considers the universe as one -- either through a direct fusion or through a sympathetic inter-relation between its components, with this "sympathy" being explained in terms of occult "virtues" or by analogy to a rapport between bodily organs.

Returning to our earlier space-time fantasies, we must assume that Orlin Iremaine's writers did not always grasp the full implications of their doctrines. For, to say with Mr. Diffin that "tenses, past, present and future...are all one" or with Mr. Binder that "past and future are man-made figments of the mind" is to destroy not just causality, but scientific inference as well.

Indeed, the mystical doctrine implies the impossibility of conceptual thinking in general. Analytic judgement begins with the perception: this is not that -- and such discriminations are precisely what the mystic rejects.

Nevertheless, mysticism sometimes is justified by an alleged similarity to science. Oneness, we are told, is desired by scientist and mystic alike, therefore the mystic and the scientific ways are the same.

For example, Mr. Wandrei's experimenter, Hal Carruthers, says this:

"Do you remember Plato's discussion of beauty? How the disciple of beauty advances step by step until he sees the final universal all-embracing beauty of which all things are part? That mystical doctrine is, after all, only a more poetic way of expressing the theory. And Lucretius, if I remember correctly, believed in a monistic universe, a cosmic oneness, so to speak, in which all things are inseparably interlinked."

Unfortunately, Carruthers does not "remember correctly," since the unity of Lucretius (like that of the modern physicist) is conceptual rather than mystical. Things are "inseparably interlinked" in the Lucretian universe not by an occult "sympathy" but through the specification of their behavior by physical law, so that

One thing known will light the way to all.¹⁹

The Lucretian representative in the Astounding story is not Carruthers, but Oscar, Stanley Weinbaum's supremely intelligent plant creature from Venus, who says:

"I start with one fact and I reason from it. I build a picture of the universe. I start with another fact. I reason from it. I find that the universe I picture is the same as the first. I know that the picture is true."

("The Lotus Eaters," April 1935)

Such is the scientific conception of oneness. The physicist, like the ordinary person, believes in the existence of separate individuals: the unity he seeks is not in the world itself but in his description of the world. The scientific viewpoint, we can say, favours physical discreteness and conceptual unification; the mystical viewpoint, universal mergence and conceptual vacuity.

(to be continued)

FOOTNOTES

1) Cf. P.J. Farmer's Wogglebug, who says: "...we empathists can put ourselves into somebody else's nervous system and think and feel as they do" (The Lovers (New York: Ballantine Books, 1961), 155).

2) Christopher Isherwood, "Introduction," Vedanta for The Western World (New York, 1960), i).

3) The Song of God: Bhagavad-Gita, Swami Prabhavananda and Christopher Isherwood, trans. (New York, 1954), 73).

4) Advertisement for the Rosicrucian Society, Horoscope, XXVII (1961), 132).

5) Cf. Donald Wandrei's "The Man Who Never Lived," which depicts Professor von Allenstein's absorption into the "universal mind." Also compare Wandrei's "Finality Unlimited" and J.R. Fearn's "Dark Eternity."

6) Sri Aurobindo, quoted by Walter T. Stace, The Teachings of the Mystics (New York, 1960), 53).

7) Mr. Kruse's notions of "matter" and "consciousness" apparently resemble those to which most of us naively subscribe; and one such belief is that they are somehow different -- as when Eckert himself distinguishes between physical and consciousness energies. Whatever comprises Mr. Kruse's "consciousness energy," it is not the same kind of stuff as our familiar brute matter, and therefore cannot be expected to behave in the same way.

8) Rumi: Poet and Mystic, R.A. Nicholson, trans. (London, 1950), 134).

Cf. William Ralph Inge: "Mutual externality is the condition of things in the world of sense, as mutual inclusion on (sic) compenetration is the character of the spiritual world" (The Philosophy of Plotinus (London, 1948), 3rd edition, Vol I, 162).

9) See "Introduction," The Upanishads, Swami Prabhavananda and Frederick Manchester, trans. (New York, 1957), ix.).

10) Rudolf Otto, Mysticism East and West (New York, 1957), 141).

11) Letter (signed "Jacobus Hubelaire"), Marvel Tales, I (1935), 234.

12) "Supernatural Horror in Literature," The Fantasy Fan, I (1934), 186.

13) "John Campbell Replies," Shangri-L'Affaires, (October 1959), 8.

FOOTNOTES (continued)

14) For a similar description of mergence, see J.R. Fearn's "Dark Eternity" (December 1937), 34.

15) "Colossus Eternal," (December 1934), 84.

16) Henry M. Pachter, Paracelsus: Magic into Science (New York: Collier Books, 1961), 256.

17) "De Alimento," ascribed to Hippocrates, quoted by C.S. Jung, The Interpretation of Nature and the Psyche, 101.

18) Another example of mystical "organism" was K. Raymond, "The Comet" (February 1937).

19) Lucretius on the Nature of Things, Sir Robert Allison, trans. (London, 1919), 41.

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ANNOUNCEMENT

The following description is from Jack Chalker, "Howard Phillips Lovecraft: A Bibliography," in The Dark Brotherhood and Other Pieces (Sauk City: Arkham House, 1966), 241:

H.P. LOVECRAFT: A SYMPOSIUM, edited by Leland Sapiro and annotated by August Derleth...Los Angeles, California 1964. 17 pages, paper covers, multilithed...the transcription of a symposium recorded at the Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society meeting of October 24, 1963. The panel: Fritz Leiber, Robert Bloch, Samuel Russell, Arthur Cox, and Leland Sapiro as moderator.

Seventy five copies of this symposium have been received from Los Angeles and are now available for \$2.⁰⁰ per copy.

=====

IN ORBIT

Look here, brother,

Turn your eyes away from the fragile structure
of steel and glass,
and damp the silent blaze of your flaming welder.

Look here, spider,

Turn the facet of your eyes away
from the web -- separating you from night --
with its fat clinging larvae
in their glossy shells,

the honey-scented wheel
surrounded by

bees ablaze.

Behold the luminous radiance of Earth,
like a medusa
in the dark deep of ocean.

Watch the converging depths of space change a
gashed
bleeding
mangled
surface

into a velvet dream.

Bertil Martensson

HEINLEIN IN DIMENSION

Part III Construction

by Alexei Panshin

1. Story Elements

One thing every writer runs into, or expects to run into, is the fellow who comes up and says, "Listen, I've got the greatest story ideas, but I just don't have time to write them down. Let's split fifty-fifty. I'll give you the ideas and you write and sell the stories for us." The inevitable and necessary answer is a hollow laugh, since story ideas count for absolutely nothing ninety-nine per cent of the time. A character, a setting, a situation --almost anything--can prompt a story, but none of these is a story in itself. The idea is nothing, the writing is all. When the story is done, the original idea may not even be there.

I hesitate to state categorically what a story is because tastes and definitions change. Any definition is a line drawn in sand, with somebody being dared to step over it. My own idea of a story is the statement of a problem that involves human beings, together with a resolution of that problem. The trappings that make a story interesting, entertaining, and dramatic are dialogue, characterisation, description, and details of action. Like any list standing by itself, this is bound to seem bloodless, and it is, just as the list of beef, potatoes, carrots, peas, and spices that go into a stew gives no indication of the hand of the chef in the process and the final flavour of the dish. Writers, like chefs, have their own individual ways of doing things, although their stories are made up of elements similar or identical to those in other writers' stories.

In this chapter, I discuss Robert Heinlein's handling of some elements common to every story--context, people, problems, and story structure--and his attitude toward his material. The import of the common elements is clear. Every story has a context, a physical and social setting. An exposition of this is important in any story, but particularly important in

science fiction, because most science fictional contexts are invented ones with which the reader must be made familiar. Since my idea of a story involves human beings, consistent and interesting characters have to be invented, too, and set down as story population. The crux of any story is the central problem arising from the interaction of people within the story context. That problem must be resolved (or, in a gimmick story, illuminated--see "Columbus Was a Dope", for instance) in order to bring the story to a satisfactory conclusion.

"Structure", as I use the word, is the plan of the story action. The plan can generally be represented by a diagram showing the direction a story takes from its opening problem to the resolution of that problem. Edgar Rice Burroughs, for instance, was fond of using a two-pronged structure; that is, he would separate his two central characters and follow one until he or she got into a terrific pickle and then cut back and follow the other, the cliff-hangers coming at the end of every chapter and the two story lines converging at the climax. The total number of possible plans of action is immense, although most writers prefer to restrict themselves to a favoured two or three.

Attitude toward material is tremendously important to the finished story. Almost any kind of story--satire, buffoon comedy, melodrama, high tragedy--can be made of the same basic material. The difference lies in the attitude of the author, the things he emphasises and the things he discounts, the complexity or simplicity of his story, his seriousness or lack of seriousness.

These things are but half of what makes a writer individually himself. The other half consists of the words he sets down on the page--what he actually does with the materials he has assembled. Included on one hand are such things as style and dialogue and, on the other, the degree to which the writer realises the potential of the situation, characters, and problems he has gathered together. But these things will be taken up in the next chapter.

2. Context

One of Heinlein's strongest points has been his skill in delineating situations, and he has always been better able to characterise societies than he has people. The reason seems to lie in his engineering interest in how things work. Describing what people do and letting it go at that is not enough to satisfy in fiction. We demand reasons for what people do. Heinlein does give us reasons, but he doesn't examine them lovingly and in detail. It just isn't something he cares deeply about. On the other hand, describing in detail how a society works is quite enough to satisfy, since nobody is sure why even our society is the way it is. In view of the internal disagreement in the social sciences, almost any science-fiction story that purports to explain how society works is bound to seem superficial and less than convincing.

In general, Heinlein has preferred to show how things work in such consistent detail that his societies speak for themselves; they don't need to be explained or justified. Mark Reinsberg, in his introduction to Heinlein's The Green Hills of Earth, has written that Heinlein has given the future a daily life, which may be another way of saying the same thing.

Heinlein's most ambitious attempt to create a context is his Future History, a body of work which, taken as a whole, some people consider his most important. In essence, what Heinlein did was give a detailed picture of the next two hundred years and a sketchier picture of the five hundred years after that. An ambitious undertaking, it involves twenty-two stories written and rewritten over close to twenty years. Other writers--H. Beam Piper, James Blish, Poul Anderson, and Isaac Asimov, among others--have attempted similar detailed futures since Heinlein began his, and I think most of them are indebted to Heinlein for scouting the territory for them.

The Future History does not actually form a complete whole. It was not all planned at once, and belongs primarily to Heinlein's adolescence as a writer. It was put together by compromise, chopping, and rewriting. The result is that the individual pieces stand up well enough by themselves while the Future History supposedly form does not.

The first notice of the Future History came in an editorial note in the March 1941 Astounding, which pointed out that all of Robert Heinlein's stories up to that time (except two fantasies published in Unknown) were based on common assumptions. In the May 1941 issue, a detailed and involved chart was published. It listed the imagined dates of all his Future History stories, the life spans of his various characters, and the technical, sociological, and historical outlines of his projected future. Later, adjustments were made to the chart and more stories listed; but what was recognisably the same chart was published at the end of each of the first four Future History volumes: The Man Who Sold the Moon, The Green Hills of Earth, Revolt in 2100, and Methuselah's Children.

The chart covers the period from 1950 to 2600. In the 1941 chart there is a break from 1990 until 2070, except for "Logic of Empire", the story about slavery on Venus, which takes place about 2010.

By the end of 1941, every story in Future History after 2070 had been published. These cover the revolt against religious tyranny, the new constitution, the breaking of the constitution, and the exploration of the stars--the stories in Revolt in 2100, Methuselah's Children, and Orphans of the Sky. Except for "Misfit", they do form a whole and, I suspect, were thought of as a group.

The stories set before 2010, on the other hand, do not form a whole and do not really connect with the stories on the other side of the gap.

Until 1950, Heinlein continued to add stories to this front part of Future History, but he never attempted to bridge the sixty years between 2010 and 2070. Those that come before are near-future speculation; If This Goes On... is set in a different world with an almost mediaeval tone.

This gap is one of two things that point out the improvised nature of Future History. The other is the visible chopping and fitting carried out through the years.

"And He Built a Crooked House", the story of the tesseract house, was originally listed in 1941 as a Future History story. It doesn't tie in with any of the other stories, however, and was eventually dropped.

"--We Also Walk Dogs", a 1941 Anson MacDonald story, was not originally included in Future History but was later rewritten to make it fit.



"The Green Hills of Earth" was not originally thought of as a Future History story. References to Rhysling and his songs appear in a definitely non-Future History novel, Farmer in the Sky; and Mary Risling of Methuselah's Children had to be changed to "Mary Sperling" to make room for this new Rhysling.

"The Long Watch", too, was only finally fitted, or shoe-horned, into Future History. It derives from Heinlein's juvenile "Space Cadet", again definitely non-Future-History, and is in fact nothing more than an expansion of a paragraph on page 22 of that novel.

It isn't even necessary to read straight through the whole Future History to perceive its lack of unity. Simply reading The Green Hills of Earth from cover to cover is enough to show that it is no more than a collection of stories, some quite good, that don't have much in common. As Heinlein himself wrote in a note in Revolt in 2100, "... These stories were never meant to be a definitive history of the future (concerning which I know no more than you do), nor are they installments of a long serial (since each is intended to be entirely independent of all the others). They are just stories, meant to amuse and written to buy groceries."

However, if the Future History as written fails to add up to a whole, the chart of Future History serves as a very impressive example of developing a context, as a close inspection of it will show. So impressive is it, in fact, that its existence alone is enough to lend the impression of continuity to a set of stories that would otherwise not seem closely related.

Heinlein's independent stories are truly more important than his Future History. In them he applied less obviously and more convincingly the lessons in planning gained from the Future History chart, and avoided the lapses of the Future History stories.

For some idea of his method, let's take the short story "The Menace from Earth". The core of this story is human beings flying under their own power. Heinlein quite evidently started with this as an idea and wanted to make it plausible, both in itself and as an element in society. A severely reduced gravity, such as that of the Moon, combined with air under normal pressure and elaborate wings solve the first problem. Heinlein has set conditions that make the thing possible. He adds a volcanic bubble underground on the Moon, the bubble serving as an air storage tank--its primary purpose, in fact; a shrewd stroke. This provides a physical setting. The social context is the lunar equivalent of the ski slope; and for this Heinlein has invented rules of the road, learner's wings, flightmasters, and a few other likely possibilities. For added conviction, Heinlein shows us, in bits of pertinent action, the underground nature of Luna City and the low gravity of the Moon before he ever introduces his flying.

The heart of Heinlein's technique is the combination of actual fact (the Moon's low gravity) with possible "facts" (the volcanic bubble as air tank) within the story. The difference between this and, say, the "facts" on economics that Edward Bellamy presents in Looking Backward is that Bellamy presents his facts statically in lectures while Heinlein uses his actively. In Heinlein's case, we see people flying; flying is used as a background within which human problems are developed and resolved; flying provides a plausible, believable, possible context for his people and their problem.

A large part of Heinlein's ability, and a large part of his appeal, lies in the possible but not obvious nature of the trappings of his contexts. Most of us have encountered moments in fiction that carry an emotional shock of recognition. They usually come when perfect emotional communication exists between writer and reader: The writer has his character do, say, think, or feel exactly the right thing for the situation, and it is so right that, looking ahead, the reader can't see it coming, but in retrospect it seems inevitable. Heinlein's forte has been not the emotional but the intellectual shock of recognition.

Set a problem: Given the natures of the Moon and Mars, think of a plausible cargo to be carried from a settlement on one to a settlement on the other. The things that come to my mind are obvious and dull--ore of some kind, possibly. Heinlein came up with a beautiful answer in The Rolling Stones; he used wide-tired bicycles, to be repainted and refurbished in orbit. A bicycle makes perfect low-gravity transportation, so bicycles are plausible. It is cheaper in terms of fuel to send bicycles from the Moon to Mars than from Earth to Mars, so bicycles from the Moon to Mars are plausible. And Heinlein makes a demand for bicycles on Mars plausible by providing two applications for them, prospecting and tourism, the second

application being invented by the Stones when the first turns out to be less important than they had thought. To come up with an answer like that requires not only facts about the Moon and Mars but certain kinds of societies in both places. I am quite sure Heinlein could have invented any number of other cargoes, none of them obvious and all of them believable.

The two most important requirements of any context are that it be self-consistent and that it be used. A complex context is more believable than a simple one but also more difficult to build consistently. The fault of too many science fiction stories of the cheap variety is that their contexts involve little more than the obvious--the cargo of ore from the Moon to Mars, and the little that isn't obvious--say, the drink of zliih the hero gulps down in the second chapter for a quick lift--comes from nowhere and serves no purpose except to add false colour.

By and large, Heinlein has been able to build complex, consistent societies, the complexity coming from individual elements that fit together while furthering story action. "The Menace from Earth", although a nice example, is actually minor stuff. One of Heinlein's longer stories, Beyond This Horizon, for instance, provides a much better sample of what this author can do.

The society of Beyond This Horizon is a planned socialism. It is not threatened from without. Everyone has a basic living wage. Mankind is being gradually improved by the selection of favourable genetic traits. Life in the society is safe and sane for anybody who merely wants to continue living.

This is, of course, the typical utopian dream, which, as given, seems like nothing so much as a vision of eternal boredom. Heinlein has realised this; in fact the problem is implicit throughout the entire story. The people in this society, as people are wont to do, chafe at its strictures. They gamble, they search for thrills, they take to wearing sidearms, they invent an involved code of behaviour, violations of which lead to duels--all simply to keep things lively.

More than this, however, malcontents seek to overturn the society. Revolution is a common theme in science fiction but seldom, if ever, for such a plausible reason as boredom. In fact, the return to a more primitive life is one of the appeals of the revolutionaries. Heinlein, however, rejects such a solution. Revolutions usually settle very little and a return to the simple life is not likely. Heinlein has the revolution defeated as summarily as it would actually be, led as it is by dilettanti. He offers, instead, an alternative solution: Setting to work on some of the larger, less obvious, perhaps insoluble problems that have kept men awake nights. In other words, Heinlein's answer to a static situation is not to retrench but to find new goals.

This picture is built consistently and subtly at all points, subtly enough, certainly, that much of the picture I've just given is set down only in background detail and never explicitly stated. For instance, as an indication of stagnation, Heinlein shows men comparing nail polish. Football, re-introduced, is accepted wildly, but beefed up so that deaths are involved. A scientist just back from Pluto is used for effective contrast; his little outpost society is engaged in solving real problems and not in wasting time fighting duels, so he finds himself at a loss when expected to carry a gun again. A fading dance star is so anxious to have something to do that she undertakes a long jaunt to entertain the outposts on Mars and Pluto. These details are not pounded home--the nail polish is used just once and dropped--but they do form a consistent picture. They form a genuine, solid, three-dimensional context.

3. People

Heinlein's characterisation has not shown the variety his contexts have, but in a way this makes good sense. Not only are his characters the same from one book to the next, but they are the same uncomplicated characters. There is, however, a distinct difference between limitation in characterisation and unconvincing characterisation. One is neutral, the other negative; and Heinlein's characterisation has always been more neutral than anything else.

One would think that almost every writer, when attempting to characterise, would describe his people physically if nothing else, but actually this is not true. In fact, a number of writers, Robert Heinlein among them, make it a policy not to describe their characters. Heinlein always gives the sex, sometimes the age, sometimes the size ("tall"), but seldom anything more.

This policy, as nearly as I can tell, comes from Murray Leinster. The reason for it seems to be that if a character is not described, the reader can picture him as he pleases, and his picture doesn't even have to come close to that of the writer. In practice, the reader usually never notices that the description isn't there. He does what Leinster or Heinlein expects and forms his own picture.

In general, however, I don't think the policy is a very good one. While the reader doesn't notice the lack of description as he reads, individual characters aren't likely to stand out in his mind afterwards. Leinster's characters are a blank-faced crowd and Heinlein's, with one exception, are not particularly singular. Also, the policy can lead to occasional shocks. For instance, Mr. Kiku, the wily diplomat in The Star Beast, turns out to be an old man, but Heinlein doesn't say so until late in the book, though mention of age or gray hair might have been made early. The realisation that Kiku is old requires a readjustment of attitude, and too many needless readjustments can ruin a story.

Instead of describing them or giving them different speech patterns, Heinlein has generally differentiated his characters in terms of action and dialogue. For the most part, his most striking characters come from his earliest period of writing when he did allow himself a certain amount of latitude: Joe-Jim Gregory, the two-headed mutant in Orphans of the Sky, for instance, and Harriman and Waldo and Lazarus Long. They stand out, however, more for what and who they are than for any great individuality. More recently there are Hazel Stone and Mr. Kiku, but again it is their positions in their stories that make them stand out, rather than their unique natures. By and large, the most truly individual of Heinlein's characters have been the various aliens in his juvenile novels--the Mother Thing from Haze, Space Suit--Will Travel, Willis the Bouncer from Red Planet, Lummo from The Star Beast, and "Sir Isaac Newton", the Venerian dragon, from Between Planets--and part of their individuality may come from the fact that they are more thoroughly described than Heinlein's human characters.

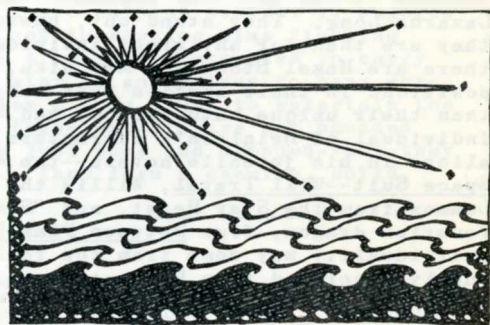
There is one unique and vivid human Heinlein character, but he is a composite of Joe-Jim Gregory, Harriman, Waldo, Lazarus Long, Mr. Kiku, and many others, rather than any one individual. I call the composite the Heinlein Individual. In its various avatars it is Heinlein's most serious attempt at characterisation. It is a single personality that appears in three distinct stages and is repeated in every Heinlein book in one form or another.

The earliest stage is that of the competent but naive youngster. The hero of almost any Heinlein juvenile will serve as an example, as will John Lyle of If This Goes On... and Valentine Michael Smith of Stranger in a Strange Land. The second stage is the competent man in full glory, the man who knows how things work. Examples are Zeb Jones of If This Goes On..., the secret-agent narrator of The Puppet Masters, and Sergei Greenberg of The Star Beast. The last stage is the wise old man who not only knows how things work, but why they work, too. Jubal Harshaw of Stranger in a Strange Land is an example, as are Baslim of Citizen of the Galaxy and Colonel Dubois of Starship Troopers. However, these three stages as I have given them are simply the equivalents of frames cut from a movie film to serve as illustrations--the Heinlein individual forms a continuum covering all points between youngster and wise old man.

Besides this Heinlein individual, there is usually a small supporting cast of side men. Their most striking feature is their competence, reflecting that of the Heinlein Individual. Beyond that, however, hardly any attempt is made to individualise them; after all, they are just supporting characters. If lead characters aren't described, what can be expected for less important ones? Apart from this small circle, Heinlein ordinarily relies on caricature, and he has a number of set pieces which he produces as needed.

One is Whining, Useless, Middle-aged Mama; the mother of John Thomas Stuart in *The Star Beast* is an example. Matching this is the Pompous Male Blowhard; for example, Secretary for Spatial Affairs MacClure, again to go no farther than *The Star Beast*.

I have only two real criticisms of Heinlein's characterization. One--nondescription of characters--I have given. The other is his inability to draw convincing women. There is a vast difference, for instance, between Heinlein's standard juvenile hero and Podkayne Fries, or Holly Jones of "The Menace from Earth". Podkayne uses artificial slang, deceives herself regularly, and is less than completely competent--in fact, she comes closer to being a caricature than to being a female example of the Heinlein individual. In all except his third period stories Heinlein's adult women generally appear seldom, and then only as background figures. The women of his last period, Barbara Wells of *Farnham's Freehold*, for example, are not rounded characters but voices repeating dialogue. This inability may be one reason that Heinlein's juveniles as a group are his best work--in them, women are not demanded as centrally participating figures.



Heinlein's characters, it seems to me, are clear if not striking, and for his purposes this is probably enough. The one overwhelming reason that I can see for the existence of science fiction is its potential for setting the familiar and the unfamiliar side by side to allow new perspectives. Heinlein has concentrated on developing unfamiliar contexts for his stories; if he were to populate these contexts with wild characters, the result might seem chaotic. On the other hand, the small cast of characters Heinlein has actually used has not intruded into our view of his contexts. Moreover, this balance of unfamiliar backgrounds and familiar people may well be a considerable factor in Heinlein's noted ability to provide lived-in futures. The futures seem lived-in because we can see living in them people we readily recognize. Since the hardest thing to achieve in science fiction is credibility, Heinlein may very well have been distinctly ahead by keeping his characters restricted.

4. Problems

Characters, background, and story problem are the interlocking essentials of any story.

A genuine problem, arising from the nature of the background and characters, is probably the most important because character or background alone is seldom enough to hold attention.

Science fiction's unlimited canvas offers any number of possibilities for the testing of human beings. The trouble is that much modern science fiction has been written by men who freeze in the face of unlimited possibility. The result has been a reliance on trivial situations.

One variety of this tail chasing is the arbitrary problem solved in an arbitrary fashion. Here's an example: An urgent reason exists for getting from Point A to Point B. Let's say that everybody on board ship has caught the deadly piffle plague and will die if the ship doesn't get to the medical station on Planet Zed. Halfway there, the ship's hyperspace navigation device goes on the blink, and unless it is repaired, everybody on the ship will die. That's the arbitrary problem. Instead of opening a drawer, taking out a spare part, and fixing his machine, the genius hero of the story fashions with his bare hands a new frabismus from two pieces of wire and some bat's blood, and single-handedly brings the ship in. End of story, arbitrarily solved.

Almost as bad is the silly kind of adventure story that starts running after the science fictional equivalent of the jewel idol's eye (smuggled gorph beans) and never stops long enough for us to see that we are pursuing a meaningless goal. "The Egg of the Phoenix" in *Glory Road* is exactly this sort of problem.

Some very sharp problems are set forth in science fiction. Poul Anderson's "The Man Who Came Early" is a good short example. It poses a familiar character, a modern airman, in an unfamiliar context, Viking Iceland. The story problem arises from character and situation: The man thinks and acts wrong; by the standards of the time and the place, he isn't a real man. The solution of the problem is the character's death. Whether or not you like its conclusion, the story does examine a portion of what it is to be a human being.

All but a small number of Robert Heinlein's stories ask similarly serious questions about people and society. This, in fact, is the second of Heinlein's obvious strengths, his first being his ability to portray strange contexts. This isn't a small matter, either, for it takes real discernment to develop genuine problems from a given situation and character.

As an example, look at "Sky Lift". This story is in fact about the deadly piffle plague, but there is a great difference between the story I outlined above and the one Heinlein actually wrote. In Heinlein's, the people with the piffle plague are on Pluto and medical supplies have to be rushed to them. The crux of the story, however, is nothing so empty as a breakdown in an imaginary device. It is a fact that to get from Earth to Pluto in nine days requires a constant boost at

three-and-a-half gravities, and it is another fact that the human body is not built to take acceleration of that kind for that length of time. Heinlein simply sets as one of his story conditions the necessity to get from Earth to Pluto in nine days. The plague is not the story problem. The problem is the difficulties a man encounters in attempting to function at a necessary job under conditions that are slowly turning him into a moron. The difference between a problem that involves a broken hyperspace navigation device and a problem that involves a broken human being is an important difference and deserves to be more widely recognised in science fiction than it presently is.

Take another example: a man with an inquiring mind and a society that has turned fact into allegory. What does the man do when he finds everything he has been taught is completely wrong?

Or say a guild system exists and you can't get a job unless you belong. What does a young fellow do if the only job he wants is protected by a guild he can't join? In fiction, his obvious reaction would be to start a revolution and throw the blighters out. At least a dozen science fiction novels have done just that, but a revolution obscures the central problem that Heinlein takes the time to examine: What does a person do when every choice he has seems a dead end?

Once it is granted that Heinlein chooses real problems to examine, it is interesting to see where he lays his emphasis. If a story problem results from the interplay of characters and context, there is the question as to which side of the interplay the problem emphasises. With most writers, the question doesn't even arise--the story problem is always character-centred. An example of a character-centred story is the one just given, Starman Jones. In it, the story problem is Max Jones' frustration at being stymied by a guild system. As a rule, however, Heinlein not only draws contexts with a heavier line than he does character, but he emphasises context-centred problems rather than people-centred problems.

For instance, the interest in Heinlein's first story, "Life-Line", is in the effect of an invention on society rather than on any individual person. There is still an interplay of human beings and society, but society is central. The same holds true of "Misfit", Heinlein's second story. While Andrew Jackson Libby, the young protagonist, is important, he isn't of central importance. The story problem is the building of a space station, not the metamorphosis of a young boy; the metamorphosis is important only in that it makes possible the final success of the space station.

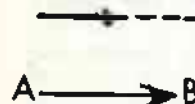
Beyond This Horizon is centrally concerned not with its individual characters but with the human problems of a perfect society. The Puppet Masters is concerned with what happens to a society threatened by an enemy that is implacable and totally alien. Both stories are context-centred. We see what happens from the point of view of one man, but the story is not his.

This emphasis on context-centred story problems was greater in Heinlein's early stories than it has been since, but even in his more recent fiction there are strong strains of context-centred problems. In Have Space Suit--Will Travel there is the minor problem of refurbishing a used space suit. It reveals little about the hero, but it does reveal a great deal about space suits, which in the developing context of the story become important. This kind of problem is typical of Heinlein and shows his continuing interest in how things work.



5. Structure

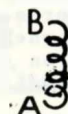
As I said, you often can chart the structure of stories. There are three simple basic structures, and Heinlein has used them all.



The simplest structure is the straight line. In it, a problem is set and then resolved, and the process of resolution carries the characters a distance away from the original situation. There are two variants.

The first variant can be illustrated by The Rolling Stones, an episodic story with an open end. The problem is one of wanderlust, so Heinlein sets his people wandering. It is resolved when they accept travel and exploration as a way of life. The ending is not a resting point, but an arrow which points onward.

The Puppet Masters is an example of the second variant. The problem is begun by the landing of parasitic slugs and is resolved by their extermination. The characters have moved from Point A to Point B, and no infinite series of points is implied.



The second structure is the spiral. There is movement again from Point A to Point B, but the points are related. For instance, Tunnel in the Sky begins with a boy watching and envying a wagon train guide leading a band of settlers out to start a colony on a new world. It ends with the boy himself as a wagon train guide leading another band of settlers in a scene that is a direct reply of the opening scene.

A more complicated example is Glory Road. Oscar Gordon, the hero, is dissatisfied with life here-and-now. He goes out to find adventure, but after finding it he comes back still dissatisfied. In this case, a continuing series of spirals is implied, a series of adventures with stops at home base in between.



The last structure is the circle. In this one, Point A and Point B are identical. The archetype might be the fairy tale in which the protagonist is granted three wishes, which he uses badly. The end of the story finds him back in the rude hut from which he originally started. The structure is used in Have Space Suit--Will Travel, and it may be one of the things responsible for its fairy tale mood. It might seem at first glance that this is a spiral, since the hero comes back from his adventures a wiser, more competent fellow, but it isn't. The hero comes back to exactly the same point he left--in the drugstore mixing malted milks.

These simple structures can be complicated greatly by various narrative techniques--flashbacks, multiple plots, and the like. Generally, however, Heinlein hasn't used them. He has always told his stories in the most straightforward possible manner (and I include "By His Bootstraps" and "...All You Zombies"). The one single exception that occurs to me is Starship Troopers, which is not related in sequence. Heinlein has generally stuck to one point of view, and any experimentation (Beyond This Horizon, for instance) has been mild.

6. Attitude

The words "romance" and "realism" are very slippery things to take hold of and will be just so long as we can call Tennessee Williams both a "realist" and a "romantic" and mean something by these terms. The dictionary doesn't help much, either. Realism. "A tendency to face facts and be practical rather than imaginary or visionary; the attempted picturing of people and things as they really are." Romance: "a fictitious tale of wonderful and extraordinary events, characterized by much imagination and idealization; a type of novel with emphasis on love, adventure, etc." Where does that put Robinson Crusoe, a practical fact-facing story about wonderful and extraordinary events?

Let's take an example, a Saturday Evening Post story that at the age of thirteen I found entertaining. In this story, a jealous and protective father and his pretty young daughter live near an airbase. The protagonist, an airman, persuades the daughter to go to a dance with him against her father's wishes. However, they don't get back home on time, and when they do arrive they say that they had an auto breakdown on the way home. The father doesn't believe this for a moment and kicks the airman out.

But then he has second thoughts: the airman was oil from top-to-bottom, and there wasn't a single paw print on daughter's white party dress. A happy ending follows. The airman is admitted to be a first-class citizen and daughter is allowed to go out with him again.

Stretching a point, we could characterise the situation as "realistic" in the sense of life-as-experienced and prosaic. The treatment of the situation, however, is "romantic" in the sense of being simple, implausible, and clichéd.

In the same way, it seems to me that all speculative fiction is bound to be romantic in situation. Science fiction stories are seldom life-as-experienced, seldom prosaic. Some may be closer to what we know or think to be true, or closer to us in space or time, and hence more realistic, but this is a relative thing. For a non-reader of science fiction, what is there to choose from between the situation of The Dragon in the Sea and that of The Weapon Shops of Isher, The Enemy Stars and The Dying Earth? To regular readers of science-fiction there is a difference, but to an outside observer all of these situations are equally strange. It seems to me, then, that within science fiction any major distinction between romantic and realistic stories has to be made in terms of treatment.

Heinlein's story situations, however, are sometimes more romantic--in the sense of implausible--than their science fictional nature requires. Take, for example, two of Heinlein's accounts of the first trip to the Moon. In one, Rocket Ship Galileo, the author has three boys and a scientist hop off to the Moon in the scientist's private spaceship. In the other, The Man Who Sold the Moon, the first trip to the Moon is financed by an extinct animal, the old-fashioned entrepreneur of the Carnegie-Rockefeller variety. These situations are thoroughly romantic, as are the situations of Sixth Column (seven men and super-science throw out a Pan-Asian invader), Double Star (we want you to impersonate the Supreme Minister of the Solar System, John Joseph Bonforte), and Glory Road (needed: a Hero), to name just three.



On the other hand, Heinlein's attitude toward his material is with little exception overwhelmingly realistic. It is prosaic, plausible, complex, critical, unsentimental, and life-as-experienced. More important, however, is the fact that Heinlein's treatments are intellectual rather than emotional.

Arthur Jean Cox has pointed out that Heinlein's stories have more warmth than passion, and this is one aspect of Heinlein's intellectualism. Heinlein's characters seldom become angry or excited, seldom cry, feel despair or elation. Like Heinlein, they are interested in facts and in knowing how things work; passion would only be an intrusion in their lives.

An example of Heinlein's intellectualisation can be seen in his use of one of the ideas he loaned Theodore Sturgeon in a dry period, the idea that the reading of news may be a cause of mental illness. Heinlein's use is non-dramatic, factual, and general: Jubal Harshaw, of Stranger in a Strange Land, tells one of his secretaries to make a note of the idea so that Harshaw can write an article on the cause of neurosis. Sturgeon's use of the idea in the short story "And Now the News," on the other hand, is dramatic, personal, and specific: he is concerned with one man driven insane by a compulsion to identify with other people's troubles. The difference is in attitude: Heinlein's is intellectual, Sturgeon's emotional; in the same way, Heinlein's stories are always interesting but seldom, if ever, moving.

An added factor in Heinlein's realism in his constant seriousness of purpose. There is no comedy in his stories, or even levity, only a smattering of satire and very little pure adventure. Heinlein picks serious problems to write about and solves them as directly as he can.

On balance, then, I would call Heinlein a realist. His situations are romantic, true, but the difference between a romantic science-fiction situation and a realistic one is a comparative thing, and Heinlein's realism in treatment is so pervasive and so marked as to put him definitely in the realistic column.

Kwa Wenderling

by *Patricia Ann Morris*

illustrations by *Ann Germann*

I stood in the long empty hall to wait for Philhp. Through the tree-scratched windows far away I could see the glowing sky and the gloomy land around the house. I knew that mist was draped over the chimneys and gables of Kwa Wenderling. It was a day like any other, like every other. Life is suspended; we wait only for Philhp to come.

Out of the blended haziness of trees and grass he walked, slowly, not rapidly as he had before. Once he stumbled on a rock that reached to stab him. He stopped to look at the sign on the crooked iron post.

"What is wrong?" I whispered as I looked at him from the narrow window beside the iron-bound door. "Never before has he come so slowly." I knew he couldn't read the sign; the letters always wobbled into queer patterns whenever anyone tried to read them.

Philhp reached the front step and a luxuriant tangle of weeds and flowers clawed at his feet. They fell limply back when I opened the door and spoke. "Welcome, Philhp."

He didn't say, "I am glad to see you, Saiya," as he always had before. He stood there and stared at the tiny globes caught in my long hair; he seemed enchanted by the splinters of light on them.

I smiled and extended my hand. "Come. We have been waiting for you." He didn't speak as he entered the hall. He was as cool and distant as water in a secret lake; I had never seen him like this and I was frightened. "Perhaps Dar Krya will know," I thought. "I must go to her as soon as he is asleep."

I put my hand on his arm. "It has been a long time, Philihp." He stepped back, flinching as my words echoed in the vastness.

"How..." he blurted, in a strangely harsh voice, "how did you know my name? What place is this, anyway?"

I knew I mustn't show my fear, but the globes began rotating slowly, whirring and flashing. I turned and walked to the twisting steep stairs. "You are tired, dear Philihp," I told him. "Of course I know your name. And you know where you are; you have just forgotten for the time." I began climbing and he followed. Soon I was many steps ahead and his voice floated up to me. "But I don't understand...I don't understand..."

I waited for him where the stairs ended in a narrow hallway. Never had he been like this; I knew I must not stay with him as I had in the past. I must give him a sleeping potion and go to Dar Krya. She would know.

He reached the top and stood opposite me. I pointed to his room. "Come. Your room is ready, and I will give you wine." I led him to the large oval bed and pulled back the scarlet blanket and sheets. Slowly he sat down and looked at the tall windows and black tapestries. I went quickly to the closet and poured some pale amber liquid into a long-stemmed glass.

"This is our special wine, Philihp," I told him, trying to calm him. "Maybe you would like to rest; I will come for you later." He gave me the empty glass and I left. I wanted to kiss him, as I always did when I left, but I was afraid he would become more upset.

It was ten o'clock and Dar Krya was in the circular room with vein-blue curtains and red-spattered rugs. She was rocking in her favorite chair, the one without legs, and there was a continual squeaking from the rockers which could not be seen or which perhaps were not there. She would not tell me. "A secret, dear Saiya," she said. "When you have been here as long as I..."

Today her hands were moving in weaving patterns. I hoped she would talk, for it was hard for me to speak with my hands. I did not know the weaving language well. The globes in my hair began slowly rotating, clicking as they spun, and she turned her head to watch me approach. "Dar Krya," I whispered, and bowed.

"Yes, Saiya, come closer." Her voice was blankly unreal and quietly imperious. "What is it? I have told you that I do not like interruptions in this room. For it is here that I think and plan."

I stood as close as she allowed, arm's length away. "Dar Krya, Philihp is here, and he is different. Something is wrong; he says he does not know where he is or who I am. He has a strange, confused look in his eyes, and I am frightened."

She stopped rocking and gazed at me. The only sound in the room was the clicking of my globes.

"Where is he now?"

"I gave him the greenlinger potion in his room, so he sleeps, Dar Krya." I bent my head to await her decision.

"That was wise. You are learning, my dear one." She moved her hands slowly, but she continued to talk to me. "I have not told you much about Philihp, have I? Well, the time has come for you to know more. But not now. Later." She smiled with the left side of her mouth, as she did when a crisis arose. My globes began clicking more loudly.

"Now, Saiya, do not be afraid. This is, after all, our house. Bring Philihp here when he awakens; I will be ready. Tonight you and I will talk. Go. I must ponder."

She waved her clawed hand and I quietly walked away into the oval purple room. Philihp would sleep for several hours yet.

"If I could talk the weaving language better, I would ask Unity questions," I thought. "But..." Then realization that I had nothing to do until Philihp awoke made me decide to seek Unity. He was even older than Dar Krya and possibly older than Kwa Wenderling. I walked through the hall with the white arches, and as I passed, the silver birds began to sing. At the end of the hall was the golden door with the square iridescent knob, and I knocked softly, two-and-a-half times.

Unity opened the door, his bent body silhouetted against the pale light from the room's thick windows. He waved his fingers, asking me to enter. I bowed and sat on the violet cushion he indicated. As we began talking, I watched his face; it was without age and without youth. The dark skin had no lines or wrinkles, and yet it did not have the smoothness that mine did.

His hands glowed deep beneath the skin as we talked our weaving words. The shreds of mist that had clung to my globes dissipated. I did not understand all that Unity said, but he told me to trust Dar Krya, for she knew what was best for us. "Be careful when Philihp awakes," his hands told me. "There has been a change in him since he came last."

He paused to look at the triangular orange fish swimming in a large lighted aquarium. "Take him directly to Dar Krya," he continued. "Tonight I will be there when you talk to Dar Krya."



He waved his hand just as she had done, and I arose, bowed, and left.

I was still nervous when I went to Philihp's room. He was looking from one of the windows to the garden below where the green violets and scarlet lilacs were blooming.

As I opened the door he turned. "You--- you brought me here earlier, didn't you?" he blurted.

I rested my hand on an amorphous jade table. "Yes, of course, Philihp. I always meet you when you come here." I smiled, trying to stay calm so the globes would not click more loudly and reveal my fear. "But now Dar Krya wants to see you."

He followed silently down the twisting steps, through curtained dim rooms, past cracking, bleeding statues in misty corridors, to the circular room. When Dar Krya raised her head, I bowed.

"Welcome, Philihp. It has been a long time." She started rocking and the creaking was as sharp as an angry cricket's sound.

Philihp stared at her, then looked to where the rockers should have been. Clenching and unclenching his fists, he said, "She said that too." He pointed to me. "But I haven't been here before; I've never seen this place."

Dar Krya laughed softly, then spoke a few weaving words to me, warning me to be careful. "You must be very tired, Philihp. You see, you have visited us often in the past, and we remember you well."

She stopped rocking. "Saiya can tell you that, too," she added.

He looked puzzled when she spoke my name, so I smiled and said, "I am Saiya."

"Who is she then?" he asked, pointing to Dar Krya.

"Do not point, Philihp, do not point, not at her..." I shouted as Dar Krya began rocking wildly and screaming, "beiyao, beiyao." Her chair flew around the room as mist came from the curtains and swirled around our feet. "Beiyao," she kept screaming at Philihp. He began to sink in the mist, and looked with terror at me standing firm and at Dar Krya flying.

"What is wrong, what is this?" he shouted, as violently as Dar Krya's screaming. "Help me, I'm falling, oh god," he moaned as he went lower. I could not move, I too was frightened, for I had never seen Dar Krya in this mood. She circled closer, cackling as Philihp moaned and thrashed his hands, trying to grab something.

"I am Dar Krya, do not cross me," she yelled. "Get up, Philihp, get up. Walk like a man!" She rocked wildly.

Philihp's eyes burned in the mist that surrounded his chest and floated up around his face. Dar Krya told me with her hands that Philihp was insane, that he threatened us.

Then Philihp stopped thrashing and pointed again at Dar Krya. In a quiet voice without uncertainty and fear he spoke. "Watching dreams disappear incorporates fear, but only the phantoms can name it."

Dar Krya shrieked as her rocker flew straight up. Suddenly she and the chair were gone. The room began spinning and I fainted.

I awoke lying on the floor, which now had jagged cracks. Philihp was sitting against a wall, his head resting on his hands. When I got up and rubbed my eyes, he looked up. "What in hell is going on here?" he asked curtly. "What made that old witch act like that?"

I approached cautiously. "Do not speak of Dar Krya in that way; she is the head of our house. You pointed at her, and that was the cause of her anger." I reached for his shoulder, but he jerked back.

"Look," he said urgently, "I've got to find out what's going on."

He motioned me to sit down. I did so, and he crouched near me. I knew he would ask questions, and I remembered the warning. Perhaps my talking to him would calm him.

"First of all, where am I?" he said.

I answered. "Kwa Wenderling, of course." I smiled a little. My globes began clicking.

He got up and began pacing. "But where is Kwa Wenderling? What city, what state?" He stopped in front of me and glared down. Never had I seen him like this; before he had been happy.

"City? State? I...I don't know," I stammered. "I haven't been here very long. I came on your third visit." Had I said too much? My globes clicked louder.

"Why do you have globes in your hair?" he asked. I was glad he was diverted, for he was dangerous and he threatened us.

"I don't know, really; they've always been there...you...you..." and then I stopped, uncertain of whether to remind him.

"I what?" he demanded, pacing again.

"You used to like them," I whispered.

"How many times have I been here?" he shouted. "And why don't I remember-- if you are telling the truth?"

"You have come to us many times, when you were tired." Perhaps I could calm with him the memory of his contentment. "You came to rest, and you said you never wanted to leave," I said, rising to walk towards him. The thought of our joy together made me forget that he was now an enemy and I put my arms around him.

He pushed me away just as Unity opened the door. "Who is he?" Philihp asked me.

"He is Unity." I backed away as Unity walked towards me, his hands moving in short, tense motions. I understood only that I had done wrong and that I must leave at once. Unity would take care of Philihp.

The last thing I saw as I closed the door was Unity's moving hand close to Philihp's face. I was trembling as I went to my room. When I saw Dar Krya there, my globes began to click.

She was sitting on the three-legged red chair by the windows. Her face had several new wrinkles and her eyes were red-rimmed. After I bowed, she said, "Sit here," and pointed to a wooden chair. "We cannot wait until tonight to talk, for you must know now what is happening."

I held my hands tensely in my lap, keeping my eyes lowered to the rug. The look of weakness on Dar Krya's face disturbed me. "What if she's lost her power?" I thought. "What will happen to us?"

"Look at me, Saiya," she said. "This is important; I can only talk a short time, for I am tired and must rest soon. You must understand what I tell you."

"Yes, Dar Krya," I answered. I looked at her face, wishing I could give her the strength of my youth.

Her voice was far away and hoarse. "Before this you did not need to know much about Philihp; he came now and then, and most of the time he was with you. He was tired and lonely, and when he left he was well and rested."

"Yes," I whispered. "I know." I rubbed my hands together in nervousness.

"Calm," she said. "Fear will not defeat our enemy--for this is what Philihp is now. Do not forget that. There has been a change in him. He lives far away from here, and in that life he has found happiness."



"But..." I said, for I was puzzled.

"Do not interrupt. I have but a few more minutes." Dar Krya coughed and put her hand to her throat. "I know this. Do you remember what he said to make me disappear? That means that Philihp will not want to visit us anymore. I tried to prevent this." She leaned forward and extended a thin, many-ringed hand in my direction. "He must not leave this time, Saiya, for he will not return if he does."

She began coughing as if she would never stop. Her hands shook. I stood up and stepped toward her, but she motioned me back. "No...I must rest," she gasped, then faded and was gone.

Feeling as if I had been slapped, I stood. I did not doubt Dar Krya's words, for she was the head of Kwa Wenderling. But previous contentment made the danger difficult to accept.

I began to cry, falling to my knees and burying my face in the red chair. Tears began dripping from my globes, too, leaving tiny spots on the velvet cushion. "I like Philihp," I whispered, "he was always kind to me." I did not understand why he was our enemy now; was it because he was also happy somewhere else? "But why couldn't he also be happy here?" I thought.

I cried even harder when I thought that Philihp wouldn't want to come. Then I felt Unity's hand on my shoulder.

I looked up and saw that his face was very stern. I took a corner of my robe to dry my face, and stood to bow. He told me that Dar Krya would have to sleep for many hours and that Philihp was in the ivory cell.

Unity's hands moved in very short circles, as if he had very little energy, and it was even harder than usual to understand him.

I wove my fingers. "What shall I do?"

He answered, "Go to him and talk to him, for I cannot and Dar Krya sleeps now." He paused and went to my closet, searching among the robes there. He gave me a pale green robe with silver birds embroidered on it. "Wear this."

"Be as nice to him as you can; make him want to stay. Do you comprehend?"

I moved my fingers "yes." He left, saying "I must be near Dar Krya now."

I dressed and my globes began to whirl and click as I realized what I must do. Never before had I thought of what would happen to us if Philihp were to stop coming. But after hearing Dar Krya's words I knew that Kwa Wenderling was threatened.

Through the white-arched hall I again walked. The silver birds did not sing as I passed; they sat dumbly on their ebony perches. I had been in the ivory cell only a few times before. Dar Krya had told me that it had long ago been used for prisoners.

Within the room were many small cells with ivory bars. Philihp was in the smallest one, looking at the scratches and gouges on the bars. "No one can escape," I remembered Dar Krya saying, "for the ivory is stronger than steel or diamonds."

Philihp looked up. "You again." He ran his hands up and down the smooth ivory. "What happened to the monster?"

I was puzzled. "Monster? You mean Unity? He is with Dar Krya now." I walked closer to the cell. "I thought you might be lonely here."

He stared at me, at my robe, at the faintly whirling globes in my hair. "You talk and act as if you had seen me many times. Yet I can't remember." He sat on the triangular ivory stool in one corner and rested his head in his hands. "Ah, yes, I do remember now, a little..."

I smiled and spoke softly. "What do you remember?"

"Nothing clear." He looked intently at me. "But...you're not as pretty now as you were...then. You're older, paler... I see another face, a beautiful one...who?" He jumped up and began pacing. "Anne...Anne..."

"Anne?" I repeated. The word sounded strange. "Is... is that a word from the place far away where you live?" I was too upset to remember about being careful.

He stopped pacing and looked at me. Then he rushed to the bars, reached his hands through and grabbed my throat. "Tell me again, what you said about a far-away place." His voice was harsher than Dar Krya's ever had been. "Tell me."

My globes whirled so fast the clicking became shrieking. His fingers were tight around my throat. I could do nothing but gasp an answer.

"All I know is that Dar Krya said you lived far away from here and..." I hesitated; he must not be reminded that there is happiness for him somewhere else.

"And?" His fingers tightened.

"You came to visit us whenever you got lonely there." I had to let him know of his happiness here.

He released his hands and rested his head on the bars. "Whenever I got lonely there, far away," he whispered. "There, here, where? Many visits, why don't I remember, why?"

He sounded so afraid and helpless that I forgot he was our enemy.

"Philhp, can I help you? Please, I want to help you." I reached my arms toward him through the bars. He watched me for several minutes, and when he spoke his voice was no longer harsh.

"Tell me, how was I when I came here before?"

He did not come close enough for me to touch, so I withdrew my hands. "You were sad. Here you rested and stayed with me and then you were happy."

"Did I leave then, when I was happy?"

"Yes."

He rubbed his hands together. "Did I ever say anything to you about where I came from?"

"I...I don't think so." I tried to remember. "Wait, once you said 'I don't know why I can't be happy like this down there.'" I smiled, for I was sure that I had said the exact words he had spoken to me.

"Down there." He looked confused. "But I didn't fly to get here, I walked, I'm sure of that. I remember walking and walking until my legs hurt and then...there the house was, like in a dream..." His voice trailed off and he repeated, "dream...dream..."

"What about a dream, Philhp?" I asked. "What does it matter if you're happy here?"

He glanced at me coldly. "But I'm not happy here. You seem to like me; why can't you help me?" His voice was entreating suddenly.

I heard Dar Krya's voice, I saw Unity's weaving talk, and I listened to Philhp asking for my help. Nothing made any sense.

"I don't understand," I said, "I just don't..." I began to cry, but he paid little attention.

When he spoke my name, I stopped crying.

"Saiya, do you remember what I said to make that old woman disappear? Do you?" His fingers were around my throat before I could step back. Again I had relaxed my guard.

"No," I lied. But my globes shrieked even more loudly.

"Ah, but you do, don't you?" he shouted. "Tell me."

"Watching dreams disappear incorporates fear but only the phantoms can name it." I gasped for breath, and he released his grip, shoving me away at the same time.



"That's it." There was triumph in his voice, triumph that made me feel weak and cold in my bones. I had to sit down, for my legs would not support me. My globes shrieked one final time and stopped.

"You are a dream, Saiya," he told me bluntly, "a phantom."

"No," I whispered, "no." My heart was pounding wildly.

"Stay with me, Philhp. Kwa Wenderling is real, I am real, our happiness is real."

He smiled slightly. "Yes, I guess to you they're real enough." Then he said what had made Dar Krya disappear, spoke each word savagely, and the ivory bars crumbled. He walked from the cell, kicking aside the white splintered fragments.

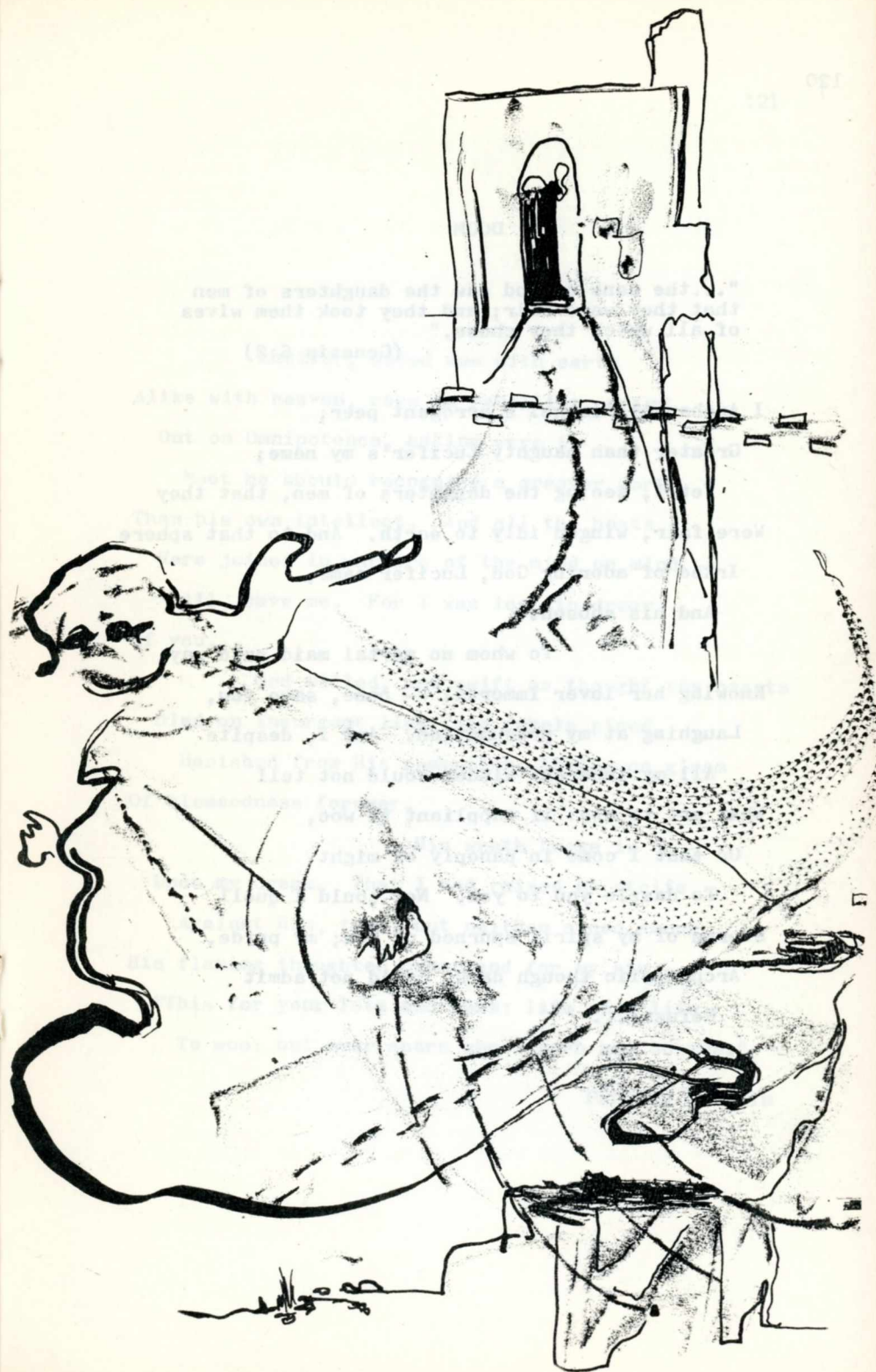
I tried to rise to reach him, but I was too weak. I collapsed, and my globes fell from my hair. They rolled crazily across the floor.

Philhp walked down the hall with white arches; I knew, for I heard the birds screeching and beating their metallic wings against their cages.

I crawled to the doorway of the cell and saw blood dripping from the cages. The hall was silent, empty; dust sifted down through the fetid air as a deep rumble began in the heart of Kwa Wenderling. The walls began to crack and the windows were shattered.

Using all my reserve strength, I managed to limp out the hidden door near the cages into the garden. I crouched behind the moon dial and watched Kwa Wenderling fall. There was no sign of Dar Krya or Unity.

Sighing, I looked towards the horizon. Here and there on the plain were houses as tall and dark as Kwa Wenderling had been. Perhaps in one of them I could find another home, another Philhp.



DOOM

"...the sons of God saw the daughters of men
that they were fair; and they took them wives
of all which they chose."

(Genesis 6:2)

I Archangel Michael's arrogant peer;

Greater than haughty Lucifer's my name;

Yet I, seeing the daughters of men, that they
Were fair, winged idly to earth. And to that sphere
Irked of adoring God, Lucifer came,
And his chosen.

To whom no mortal maid said nay,
Knowing her lover immortal -- none, save you,
Laughing at my presumption. And I, despite
All my inherent wisdom could not tell
What art to use: if suppliant to woo,
Or that I come in panoply of might
To dazzle you to yea. Nor could I quell
Storms of my spirit spurned of you; my pride,
Archangelic though dark, could not admit
Refusal...

Lucifer, sated now with earth
Alike with heaven, rose in rebellion, cried
Out on Omnipotence, asking were it
Meet he should recognise a greater worth
Than his own intellect. And all the hosts
Were joined in warfare of the mind on mind --
All, save me. For I was lost in dream
Of you...

God willed, and swift as thought the boasts
Died on insurgent lips, and rebels pined,
Banished from His communion; theirs no gleam
Of blessedness forever.

His wrath broke in
Upon my dream. That I had raised no strife
Against Him, true; but neither stood among
His flaming thoughted ones, and for my sin --
"This for your fate and hers: life upon life
To woo; but ever scorn shall barb her tongue."

Padraig Ó Broin

The Vintage Season

BOOK REVIEW ····LELAND SAPIRO

The Vintage Anthology of Science Fiction, Christopher Cerf, editor, New York, Random House, 1966. \$1.65

10th Annual Edition The Year's Best S-F, Judith Merrill, editor, New York, Delacorte Press, 1965. \$4.95

From the "Best" anthology the initial shock is provided by James Farrell's Benefactor of Humanity, for this is not a story at all but a synopsis, which can be compressed still further in the phrase, Invention of Fiction-Writing Machine. To write a story -- and I beg indulgence for talking baby-talk -- an author must do more than list a sequence of fictitious events; he also must express the relationship of these events to human thought and purpose.¹

For a bona fide story on this particular theme the reader is referred to the "Vintage" collection, where Roald Dahl, with his Great Automatic Grammatizer, allows him to experience the obsession which impels the inventor. There is also a concluding anecdote (whose portent is unmistakable) about the author of dime romances who agrees to be subsidised for not writing because "she saw the machine-made stuff was better than her own."

But as homologue to Farrell's opus one must take an equally silly "Vintage" piece, "Pie in the Sky," by William Styron -- and thus anticipate that in any science-fiction type anthology the worst contribution will be from the big name (non-fantasy) writer, who is furnished an excuse to dig up an earlier work that would be rejected if submitted by an unknown.²

In addition to the inept "name" story the anthologies exhibit other similarities. Each has two selections from continental Europe; each has a mediocre story by Arthur Clarke and a better one by J.G. Ballard; and each contains another "also ran" by a big name within the science-fiction stable -- the "Vintage's" Man Who Murdered Mohammed, an Alfred Bester "gimmick" story which this time fails to convince, and the "Best's" Rose for Ecclesiastes, by Roger Zelazny, which I might have enjoyed had it not been for memories of uncountably many earlier stories about racial extinction of Martians or acolyte-priestess sex relationships.



But the likeness extends no further. Mr. Cerf restricts both quantity (to twenty) and range, so that most of his selections have relevance; Miss Merrill includes practically anything, so that only a fraction of her (thirty three) selections show any visible relationship to science-fiction.

Without risking an ex cathedra definition, I observe that the "science-fiction" classification can be extended in two directions: toward the logically possible, if any fantasy or "marvel tale" is considered

relevant, or toward the technically (i.e., presently) possible, if one argues that any story about a "technical" device is related to the science-fiction category. This last rationalisation, however, leads to a reductio ad absurdum -- as when Miss Merrill includes two stories about automobiles, James Houston's "Gas Mask," which describes an inextricable traffic jam on a speedway, and John MacDonald's Legend of Joe Lee, a tale of speed cars built by teenagers.³

In the other direction, various fantasies in the "Best" are merely extended "gags." I recall from college days a mathematical joke on how to catch a lion in the Sahara desert: just step inside a circular cage of radius R and perform an "inversion," specified by the formula $R' = 1/R$, after which everything outside the cage (including the lion) will be transformed to the inside and everything inside, outside. In such a classification belongs Norman Kagan's Mathenauts, since it likewise applies to a physical situation a purely conceptual mode of reasoning. Mr. Kagan's gag is that a person can literally float "in the raw stuff of thought" -- but all this requires not just one sentence, but fifteen pages.

Other unfunny (more conventional) gags in Miss Merrill's collection are Robert Wallace's "A Living Doll" and Donald Hall's "The Wonderful Dog Suit." Included also is a pair of trite commentaries on mechanisation, Hap Cawood's "Synchronicity" -- "Political corruption is programmed regularly for Thursday nights" -- and Russell Baker's Sinister Metamorphosis, with its closing allusion to "...what the machines are talking about when they sit around brooding that they are in danger of being replaced by people."⁴

More "Best" items also eligible for "gag" classification are Rick Raphael's "Sonny," a combination of Psi and The Sergeant York Story -- Hillbilly sharpshooter thinks bullets to their targets -- and Jack Sharkey's Iwerlick, still another human visitation from viewpoint of alien thing. But these stories, I conjecture, were meant to be taken seriously.

In addition, the "Best" contains various attempts at symbolism. Kit Reed's "Automatic Tiger" is unacceptable because allegory itself is unacceptable: the desired symbol must be distilled from combinations of sense data rather than being presented directly, all at once, in the form of a gross material object which in the literary sense cannot be ingested. A slightly better story is Jose Gironella's Red Egg -- in which a malignant tumour is visualised as an oval shaped mass drifting through air -- since its imagery is a direct rather than contrived result of a psychic state. But Mr. Gironella still does not exemplify the indirect mode of exposition we now expect. Most successful is Tom Disch's "Descending," with its evocation of the bewilderment known to any train passenger whose inattention has allowed him to ride past his destination.

The stories by Tom Disch and J.G. Ballard and Fritz Leiber are the only "Best" items worthy to be anthologised -- although Honourable Mention might be given to John Brunner, David Bunch, and Mack Reynolds.⁵

By contrast, the "Vintage" includes only one totally inappropriate item, John Brust's Red White and Blue Rum Collins. Indeed, the superiority of Mr. Cerf's collection is obvious from the very possibility of enumerating in a short space all its unsatisfactory selections, which, besides those cited above (and the one to be cited later), constitute only Cyril Kornbluth's Rocket of 1955 and Clifford Simak's "Shadow Show."

Kornbluth's story, about a fraudulent trip to Mars, was pertinent in 1951 (its original publication date), but today it is passé, since there was no such fraud in 1955.⁶ Naturally, the "obsolescence" of the deceased Cyril Kornbluth is not a fault of his, but no such excuse applies to Clifford Simak. This author tells of biologists who seek to create life and in off-duty hours entertain themselves by a private electronic "shadow show," with the action of each character on the screen being determined by a member of the audience. But these shadow entities -- which somehow, somewhere in the story, are changed to three dimensional creatures on a stage -- assume an independent existence of their own; and in the final scene we are led to believe that mind-shattering events will happen when they step down to confront their auditors.

The "moral" of this story is that the biologists, by their experiments, have usurped the role of God and that the unpleasantness at the end is their deserved punishment. Such notions about "forbidden" knowledge would have been appropriate in the Amazing Stories of the late Twenties, but in the present era they are not fit to be exhibited in public.

But these aside, Mr. Cerf has assembled an enjoyable collection. In addition to Walter Miller's Canticle for Leibowitz (in its original short story form) there are representative titles from Ray Bradbury, Damon Knight, and Ted Sturgeon, a trio mandatory in any anthology of this kind, and Robert Sheckley's Unknown-type fantasy, "Something for Nothing."

But most important in the "Vintage" is J.G. Ballard's fictional theorem, "Chronopolis." In our present world of regulated space and matter one might logically imagine population increased so greatly that time itself would have to be rationed, but it would be trivial (if not false) to apply the term "extrapolation" to Mr. Ballard's story. For, the author's concern is not the historical plausibility of temporal agencies like his Time Police or Ministry of Time but the use of such concepts to express a state of mind, namely, his own concern with the ordering of events in our four-dimensional geometry.

The protagonist, Newman, is obsessed with time: he cannot tolerate a world which is unstructured in any way: he must always be oriented temporally as well as spatially. This obsession causes his arrest by the Time Police, and so while awaiting trial he fabricates a "clock" by marking the varying positions of shadows in his cell. (On sunny days this cell-clock furnishes that same "sustained rational order of time and space" that, in the "Best" anthology, is supplied by the "geometric regularity" of the megaliths in Terminal Beach.)

Newman realises that his gaol term will enable his partner, who has not been apprehended, to continue unmolested his illegal clock repair activities; therefore the prisoner does not try to evade the twenty year sentence which awaits him. But there is a concluding irony. The gaolers do not want to be needlessly cruel, and so equip cells in the "long term" division with clocks, so that the convicts' subjective time will pass less slowly. But while a sensitive mind cannot exist in a "gray purposeless limbo of timeless events," it also loses coherence by too strict a temporal ordering -- and at the end we listen to the "insanely irritating tick" of the clock in Newman's cell...

On the basis of this story alone Ballard would have to be placed among the select half-dozen imaginative science-fiction writers.

Now, my guess is that relative to science-fiction Christopher Cerf is still "newly arrived." To support this contention I would cite Martin Gardner's story, "The No-sided Professor," and the quotation (p.viii) from Kingsley Amis about literary critics who "declassify" science-fiction. A more experienced reader, I think, would know that Mr. Gardner's topological theme has been handled more capably by several earlier writers; he also would be aware that Mr. Amis's New Maps of Hell was the loudest articulation of such a critically contemptuous attitude.

Of course, all this does not prevent Mr. Cerf's anthology from being a success -- nor Miss Merrill's from being only an embarrassment.

Footnotes

1) One might object that Mr. Farrell's goal was to write not a story but a commentary on a society where writers are esteemed less than ball players. But the author's farcical method of narration, which has all the finesse of a steam roller, causes pain rather than laughter. By contrast, Vintage's Mr. Dahl has taken the trouble to express his "message" indirectly in the form of a story, thus allowing the reader himself to make the desired inference.

2) Cf. Miss Merrill's remark in the current Extrapolation (p.37) that "...Farrell wrote the story almost fifteen years ago, and wasn't able to sell it..." (italics Miss Merrill's). In short, Benefactor of Humanity was so bad that even the reputation of James Farrell did not enable him to jettison this piece.

3) Mr. MacDonald's justification (p.67) of this story -- his attraction "...to the fantastic mechanistic elements that explode, implode, and drive the machineries of our existence" -- illustrates science-fiction's time lag behind "mainstream" writing, in both imagination and literary technique. For Mr. MacDonald is a half century late, as we can verify from F.T. Marinetti's Futurist manifesto, "The Joy of Mechanical Force," printed in 1909 (and reprinted in Ellmann and Feidelson, The Modern Tradition: Backgrounds of Modern Literature).

4) Amidst the current clichés about dehumanisation of men by machines, I am gratified to see an intelligent comment by Felice Rolfe:

...am I less human because I have a machine to wash dishes, one to wash clothes, and one to clean floors? Is this article dehumanized because I typed it instead of writing it longhand...?

So what if we're reduced to a number on an IBM card? Anyone who feels a loss of identity because he is designated by a unique number rather than by a non-unique name...had better have another look at his definition of identity.

("Blast Off," Auslander #2, February 1966, 11.)

5) I regret not being able to cite Frank Roberts' "It Could be You"--but this theme was handled with greater economy, a long time ago, in Shirley Jackson's "The Lottery."

6) Mr. Kornbluth's story could not have been updated by a change of title to (say) "The Rocket of 1965," since a fraud of the kind therein described presupposes a public conception of the interplanetary rocket as something built by single individuals -- a naïveté impossible in the days of space industry.

A critique of "the once and future king" 3: the tale of the ill-starred knight by barbara floyd

King Arthur's quest, as White describes it, it like a ride in a gathering storm. Just as one does not notice the first few raindrops because the road ahead is still visible, so Arthur ignores the slowly brewing emotions around him as long as he can see the way to his dream -- and he perceives too late that the right path has been blotted out.

The author's perceptions seem keener in his third book, and his understanding of personal motivations works deftly through the actions of his main characters, Arthur, Launcelot, and Guenever. The Ill-Made Knight can be regarded as a man's slant on the romantic triangle, a subject most popular in woman's novels -- but the author's treatment of this theme is not the usual one.

White's skill shows to best advantage in his portrayal of Arthur. The king has retained most of his boyish naïveté about the goodness of life; vaguely aware of the currents of feeling between Launcelot and Guenever, he nevertheless urges their companionship. With everyone else entangled in violent emotions, Arthur moves serenely onward, mesmerized, it seems, by the utopian Camelot taking shape under his direction.

Launcelot is dedicated from boyhood on to being a part of Arthur's magnificent world, spending years in rigorous training to become the best knight at the Round Table. And he holds the position of "Commander in Chief," as White puts it, from the very first to the very last days of Camelot. Launcelot feels himself somehow wretchedly deformed (the author depicts him as looking like an ape), his image making him strive all the harder to be good. His secret dream is to perform miracles, and the key to this, he believes, is celibacy. Such a notion, of course, conflicts with his feelings toward Guenever, and so he requests to be sent on missions to distant places. (But absence is no cure, and the author describes Launcelot as riding about in a daze, constantly day-dreaming of the queen and giving

It is on one of these excursions that Launcelot performs his first miracle, rescuing a young girl from an enchanted pot of boiling oil. His reward is a prolonged stay at her father's castle, where an "understanding" butler fills him with wine and administers a love potion, with the message that Guenever is awaiting him in a certain castle five miles away. Launcelot runs from the hall, yelling for his horse -- and the next morning awakes to find the boiled girl, Elaine, in his bed. Appalled, Launcelot refuses to accept any responsibility for the child she may have by him.

Launcelot is embittered and remorseful. All he has lived for has been lost in one farcical night with a woman he cares nothing about. There is no reason anymore to try to be good, no reason why he may not sleep with Guenever...

There is a strange dream-like quality in this love affair between the ugly knight and the selfish queen, who become enchanted beings, with their days drifting by in slow motion. A whole year is spent without haste or worry or anxiety, for Arthur is far away at wars. "They were not aware," says White, "that it ever rained in that glorious year, or that there was ever frost." The dreams burst when Arthur comes back to court. From that day on, all meetings are secret and silent in the dark dawn hours while the king sleeps.

But shortly after, rumours of Elaine fill the court, and talk about a baby named Galahad, after his father, Launcelot. The rumour becomes fact when Elaine appears at the gate with a cherubic blond baby boy and asks to see Launcelot. With uncharacteristic restraint, the queen welcomes the poor girl to the castle.

That night, however, Launcelot is deceived a second time by the ruse of a messenger from Guenever. Of course it is not she, but the silence and darkness imposed on the lovers by Arthur's presence in the castle give Launcelot no chance to find this out until next morning, when the guilty pair are summoned before the queen. Launcelot, screams the queen, has behaved like a common animal; his actions are an insult to royalty. All the while, Launcelot sits in the middle of the room and stares at the floor. Incensed at his apparent lack of attention, Guenever starts to beat him with her fists -- at which point the ugly knight jumps screaming out the window.

Through bits and snatches of gossip in the countryside we learn of Launcelot's career as the "Wild Man," who attacks people without reason and runs about in the woods with nothing on. In towns he is stoned by crowds of little boys. Finally, he reaches the castle of Elaine's father and is locked in a shed, with food being pitched to him through the door.

But Elaine, who had decided to become a nun because there seemed no chance of having the man she loved, returns to her father's castle. She recognises Launcelot and orders that he be brought inside and cared for. Later, when Launcelot's mind rights itself, they make a pact to live together "for the sake of Galahad."

As Elaine's "husband" Launcelot becomes known as the "Cheval Mal Fete" or the ill-starred knight. On his shield is a knight kneeling at the feet of a woman. Elaine is flattered for many months, until she realises that the woman on the shield wears a crown.

Of course, the mysterious knight causes interest; rumours soon reach Camelot and lead Bors and Ector to investigate whether he is their lost brother, Launcelot. Shortly after, his brothers convince him that he must come back.

It is a new world at Camelot when Launcelot returns, and his love affair with Guenever, its fiercest passions spent, settles into calm every-day court life. Launcelot sets himself to the task of directing Arthur's army of knights. Many new knights have come during Launcelot's absence, and among them is Mordred, Arthur's illegitimate son.

Indeed, all of Morguase's sons are at Camelot, although they are divided by the continuing feud between their family and the Pellinores. Morguase, now in her sixties, yet still beautiful in a way, seduces every Pellinore she meets, including Lamorak, the seventeen year old son of that house. Mordred and Agravaine -- with their brothers -- find their mother with the boy and kill them both.

Arthur takes this action as an insult not only to the ideals of the Round Table but to himself. Mordred, when asked to beg pardon of the king, responds arrogantly, his apology being snide and sarcastic. Arthur is nonplussed, and complains that his scheme has failed. "I must have left out something in the plan of things," he muses, "If I can't keep my fighters from wickedness by matching them against the world, then I must match them against the Spirit."

"Oh that is Launcelot's chosen field," says Guenever, "He would love to perform miracles."

Launcelot doesn't hear her; he is dreaming of his boyhood aspirations. "A crusade!" he says enthusiastically.

"Could be," says Arthur, "We could look for something, like a bit of the True Cross, or ancient manuscripts."

"Or the Holy Grail!"

"Well, maybe not the Holy Grail, but something like that.."



And so the transformation begins. The characters who had their beginnings in innocence and who have waded through life's every inescapable sin now turn to the idealisms of religion in order to save their minds from feelings of failure.

Elsewhere (in speaking of Guenever) White describes how survival in this life is like a balancing act, how we learn to break every commandment and still continue to believe in God, how we are guided by some seventh sense that enables us to live with our selves and our damnation all at once -- for, standing on the heights, we cannot comprehend the void which separates us from the pure enchanted valleys whence we came. And so all these characters, Arthur included, continue to dream of God and his mercy.

Everybody goes to the crusades, and one by one they come dragging back, with their tale of murder, lust, and deceit. Nothing is known of Launcelot, but stories are heard concerning Galahad, Percivale, and Bors and their magical accomplishments. (White says little of the chaste, God-struck Galahad -- who is still in his teens -- explaining that we must refer to Mallory if we are to know the true goodness of this knight, who even as a toddler played with dolls instead of spears and called them "Holy Holy.")

Finally Launcelot returns, withered, wet and small, out of a rainstorm, with a half-dead mare. The citizens of Gramayare are told to remain inside so that the poor old man might arrive undisturbed. Only his ancient uncle Dap meets the knight and takes him to his rooms; later Dap tells the king that under Launcelot's scarlet gown had been a fair white garment and under that, a shirt of hair; he also reports that Galahad, Percivale, and Bors had found the Grail, but that it could never be brought to Camelot and that no one else but Launcelot would ever return.

But later, Guenever and Arthur see a new Launcelot, serene, wise, with a strange presence about him. He tells of his holy adventures, of being stripped of his vanity, of confessing his one great sin and begging for atonement. Arthur thinks he means Elaine.

Guenever, now forty two, resolves to have her lover again, despite the life of grace he so wishes to live -- and it is here that White tries, unsuccessfully, to explain his characterisation of Guenever. The queen, we are told, had to spend endless days in the castle, with no children and no other diversion, and she received little attention from her husband, who had an absent-minded fondness for his wife, but was more concerned with his dreams for England. So Guenever, obliged to find love where she could, did what women do -- so the author says.

But there is no mercy in Guenever, and love without mercy is small indeed. Incapable of empathy with Launcelot's deeply religious nature, Guenever exhibits scorn rather than understanding; she is insanely jealous of Launcelot, and picks at his inmost feelings when they do not centre entirely on her. The author attempts to create Guenever as a many-sided creature, embittered when the two men she loves have children by other women, but she comes out only as a selfish and frustrated queen.

So Guenever listens as Launcelot patiently enumerates why they can no longer be lovers -- that after the Grail he cannot go back to the old ways, that had it not been for their adultery he might have joined in finding the Grail himself, that their relationship is a bitter shame to Arthur, whom they both love.

Guenever agrees pleasantly -- and continues to entice him. But after a year, when he fails to relent, she sends him away on a quest.

Meantime, the court is on its slow descent, the bywords being anger, sarcasm, and frivolity. Guenever, with her growing ostentation and her gross mannerisms, continues to grow old ungracefully and becomes universally disliked.

Then at a dinner a knight is poisoned by the dissenting faction at court, and since it is Guenever's dinner, the blame falls on her. The decision of justice is combat by champions of the defendant and plaintiff. But nobody wants to defend the queen. Of course, Launcelot returns just in time to save the queen from being burned.

But Launcelot had come only to save his queen, not because he loved Guenever more than he loved God -- and when Guenever realises this, she becomes hurt and bitter. She explodes with jealousy when Launcelot expresses the wish to enter a tournament near Elaine's castle, but finally lets him go.

The plump and dumpy Elaine awaits him in a manner similar to that of Guenever. "You will stay with me now, forever, as you promised," she says, and it isn't a question. But after his defeat in the tournament Launcelot returns to his jealous queen, and poor Elaine commits suicide.

Some time later Guenever is kidnapped. Launcelot goes to save her -- and it is his undoing. For that something of the old days happens between them when they meet in the kidnapper's far-away castle, and Launcelot again loses his grace with God.

Following all this, the three of them, Launcelot, Arthur, and Guenever, muddle pleasantly through their years of Indian Summer. But, as White puts it, the story is not that of an eternal triangle, but an eternal quadrangle, and God has the last move.

There is brought to Camelot a wounded knight, bound by a curse that his wound will never heal unless ministered by the best knight in the world. All the knights of Camelot are gathered together in a grand pageant except for Launcelot, who hides in the harness room, knowing why God would not allow him to perform the miracle. Everyone else believes he is the best knight in the world, pure and able to heal the man; Launcelot hopes nobody will remember he is there at all.

But he is called, and goes down the long avenue of knights -- the deceiver of the king, the adulterer who had returned to his mistress. "I wish I could help you," he tells the trembling old man, "But you do not understand."

"For God's sake," quivers the old one, struggling on his bed, "It was to you that I came."

Launcelot looked into the East and said in his mind, "I don't want glory, but please can you save our honesty? If you will heal this knight for his own sake, please do," and he touched the wounds.

The cheers went up like thunder, for the knight was healed.

And Launcelot knelt in the center of the great pavilion and wept like a child that had been sorely beaten.

So ends this third and longest of White's books about Arthur.

FANZINES FROM ALL OVER

FROM GREAT BRITAIN

SF Horizons--Brian Aldiss and Harry Harrison, editors
(subscriptions: Tom Boardman, Jr., Pelham, Priory Road,
Sunningdale, Berks., 3/6 per issue).

Zenith Speculation--Peter Weston, editor
(9 Forlock Crescent, Northfield, Birmingham-31; 2/- per
issue; U.S. agent: Al Lewis, 4600 Kester Ave, Sherman Oaks,
California, 30¢ per issue).

SFH is one of the three amateur magazines in the world to be listed in the Bibliography of the Modern Language Association--and this honour is deserved, SFH's only fault being its infrequent publication (one issue per year). Noteworthy in the current (second) issue are Brian Aldiss's "British Science Fiction Now" and Jim Blish's "SF: The Critical Literature." The first assesses three writers--Lan Wright, Donald Malcolm, J.G. Ballard--who started in Ted Carnell's Nova magazines. Mr. Aldiss documents clichés and random construction in the first author, tedious irrelevancies in the second, and the Metaphysical sensibility of the third--and properly concludes (after denying that a conclusion is possible) that "Ballard seems to offer most for the future." Mr. Blish evaluates works, critical and uncritical, about s.f. by Damon Knight, Sam Moskowitz, Alva Rogers, etc.--and the editors append a few inadequate sentences on The Issue at Hand, Blish's own book of criticism. This article has been called "naive" because it fails to mention such scholarly names as Marjorie Nicholson; but despite her general erudition Dr. Nicholson displays relative to s.f. a knowledge which, literally, extends only to the comic strips²--and there are equally good reasons for Mr. Blish's other omissions. The naiveté, then, belongs to the commentator, not to Jim Blish.

1) Tom Clareson, "The Launching Pad," Extrapolation
VII (1965), 1.

2) See Arthur C. Clarke's review (written for the British Interplanetary Society and reprinted in Fantasy Advertiser, January 1950) of Dr. Nicholson's Voyages to the Moon:

The continually recurring theme of Miss Nicholson's book--the idea that poetry and romance were exorcised by the arrival of exact science--surely will not bear close examination. Miss Nicholson's erudition and width of reading are both phenomenal, and one therefore hesitates to suggest that she has overlooked a large part of modern fantastic literature. But it is rather difficult to judge the extent of her reading in this field, as her chief references to the current scene are to "Flash Gordon" and the comic strips--surely of anthronological rather than literary interest.

Zenith Speculation is the most improved magazine in the United Kingdom. From its early directory-type issues, which were chiefly lists of publications, ZS has developed into a bona fide critical journal, with explications from professionals like Bob Bloch, John Brunner, and Fritz Leiber; and informal essays from top amateurs like Harry Warner and Walt Willis. The range of Weston's magazine can be seen from our own "Selected Letters," with its references to Al Lewis's "Farnham's Freehold--An Assessment" (issue 7), Anon's note (same issue) on the bungled sale of Jack Vance's story, and Alexei Panshin's forthcoming Period of Success (issue 14), the missing instalment of the serial currently appearing in RQ. (Even ZS's advertisements--on foreign language fan magazines, etc.--can be read with profit.) My only objections to ZS would be its occasional lack of discrimination--as manifested in recent diatribes against Cordwainer Smith and J.G. Ballard--and a tendency toward "completeness" rather than depth--as when a periodical is reviewed via a 3 or 4 sentence summary of each individual story. But the editor has been honest enough to print rebuttals to both polemics, and even the synoptic reviews have a "reference" value not duplicated in more penetrating types of criticism. Even without the Panshin article--in its next issue--ZS will be a useful luxury, if not a necessity.

FROM THE U.S.A. (east and midwest)

Amra--Richard Eney and George Scithers, editors.
(subscriptions: George Scithers, Box 9120, Chicago 60690;
35¢ per copy, 8 issues \$2; British agent: Archie Mercer,
"Rosehill," 2 Cotham Park South, Bristol-6; 2/- and 14/-).

Extrapolation--Tom Clareson, editor.
(Subscriptions: Thomas Bowman, c/o English Dept., Wooster
College, Wooster, Ohio 44691; 60¢ per issue, \$1 per year,
3 years (six issues) \$2.50).

Lighthouse--Ferry Carr, editor.
(41 Pierrepont St., Brooklyn, N.Y. 11201; 25¢ per issue,
\$1 per year).

Amra is devoted to "various heroic heroes" in stories "of swordplay and sorcery...set in fantasy worlds"--worlds like Edgar R. Burroughs' Barsoom or Robert E. Howard's Hyboria. But the magazine contains much of value to readers not interested in epic fantasy--e.g., Don Freyer's Alleged Influence of Lord Dunsany on Clark Ashton Smith (vol. 2, no. 25). The amateur pieces usually do not approach the quality of Freyer's essay; but the magazine is sustained by articles from top professionals, e.g., L Sprague de Camp's "Hyborian Technology" (2, 25), Fritz Leiber's review (2, 35) of James Cabell, and Anthony Boucher's note (2, 13) on "The Dubrovsky Motif," an "archetype...most familiar as the Superman-Clark Kent syndrome..." There are also Poul Anderson's translations from the Old Norse plus an occasional poem or review by Roger Zelazny, Katherine MacLean, etc.

Extrapolation, the second fanzine listed in the MIA Bibliography, is surely the best critical s.f. journal in the U.S. Nevertheless, its earlier articles often displayed pedantry without scholarship and its later pieces are sometimes disjoint, i.e., without unity or coherence. Thus Bernard Paris in his "George Eliot, Science Fiction, and Fantasy" (May '64) makes a few remarks on the first and then follows these by generalizations on the second--e.g., that it "cannot by its very nature...deal with the complexities of man's emotional life"--which (in addition to being false) bear no relation whatever to his statements about Eliot. Again, Bruce Franklin begins his "Science Fiction as an Index to Popular Attitudes toward Science" (May '65) with a list of seven "problems" which confront a researcher who adopts his particular approach--but in his later remarks on Hawthorne's Birthmark he discusses none of these problems.

The successful articles in Extrapolation are often the more modest "historical" variety which trace sources for particular stories or fictional derivations from particular theories. Thus David Hughes' "P.D. Wells: Ironical Romancer" (May '65) notes "some hitherto unobserved sources of three early short stories" by this writer (Sea Raiders, "Aenyornis Island," and Empire of the Ants) and W.E.G. Armytage, in "Extrapolators and Exegetes of Evolution" (Dec. '65) notes the Darwinian influence on various novelists from Bulwar Layton to M.P. Shiel.

Of more speculative character is Robert Plank's Geography of Utopia (May '65), which notes that modern exploration of hitherto unknown portions of the globe has not caused imaginary islands to be abandoned as locations for idealized countries. (He naturally would expect that all 20th century utopias would be displaced in time rather than space, since so few unknown locations are now possible.) After remarking about the emotional forces that motivate this persistence of choice, the writer conjectures (accurately, I think) what these forces are by an analysis of Thomas More's original Utopia island.

Also of interest is Tom Clareson's "The Scientist as Hero in American Science Fiction" (Dec. '65), for in his article he does what Bruce Franklin only talks of doing in his; specifically, Dr. Clareson gives us information about popular attitudes towards science as they are reflected in "fictional" attitudes towards scientists. Thus we have the scientist patterned after Frankenstein (M. Morrow's The Monster-Maker, 1897); then the "mad scientist" who, with powers similar to Frankenstein's, sets himself up as omnipotent in order "to correct the evils of the world" (W.H. Rhodes' The Case of Sommerfield, 1897); finally we see the messianic scientist (as in Serviss's The Second Volume, 1912) who leads the world from chaos--after a natural catastrophe--into the "utopian millennium." The critic errs in his remark about the heroic uniqueness of Doc Savage--evidently Clareson is not acquainted with the "Skylark" series--but there is no refuting his general arguments.

The current issue is devoted to Judith Merrill's "What Do You Mean--Science Fiction?" (plus a brief notice on "New Books"). The reader should not be intimidated by the heading--"some notes on the completion of an anthology of the year's best what?"--for Miss Merrill's article, unlike her anthology, is both competent and readable. After a glance at s.f.'s conceptual background the writer sketches a history of pulp s.f. from Hugo Gernsback's "extensions of mechanistic realism" through to John Campbell's golden years of the early Forties and the boom and collapse of s.f. during the early Fifties. But here we reach the end of part one, and so must wait for the next issue. Any s.f. reader who misses this article--or any back issue of Tom Clareson's magazine--can blame only his own laziness.

Note: back issues of Extrapolation are 75¢ apiece, with volumes 1 through 6 (twelve issues) now available for \$8.50. "As past issues go out of print, they will remain so until the autumn of 1967-8; but individual back numbers will then be supplied to anyone subscribing to the back file who may miss an issue."

Lighthouse, while containing various science fictional names, does not feature s.f., but personal essays in the Charles Lamb-James Thurber tradition. In the last issue, for example, we find Carol Carr's reflections on "Anarchy 1965" and David Susskind's attempt to exploit it, Salt Willis's remarks on the "fink" behavior castigated in American TV, and Redd Boggs's account of the confusion caused at the A.S. Pick office supplies company by his request for an ounce of correction fluid. There is also Ted White on some recently read cowboy novels--plus Gina Clark on Tolkien's not so good-clean-Fellowship of the Ring and an amusing (true) story, by the editor himself, of a phone call from one of the gaiety boys. If you think there is vet fun in the world, you might enjoy Terry Carr's magazine.

FROM TEXAS

Trumpet--Tom Reamy, editor.

(1709 Debbie Drive, Plano, Texas 75074; 60¢ per issue).

The Howard Collector--Glen Lord, editor.

(Box 775 Pasadena, Texas 77501; 60¢ per issue, twice yearly).

Trumpet's first issue was impressive, with two excellent short stories--Charles Porter's Altruist, the converse side of "The Red Badge of Courage," and James Twigg's Cosmic Dancers, on the scepticism of intelligence vs. the complacency of pseudo-intelligence--plus some nightmarish surrealist comics by Gilbert Shelton. But after the second issue, with its memorable short story by George Lewis, the fiction disappeared and the reader was left with only the magazine's original deficiencies: reviews of old grade "B" horror movies--The Crawling Hand (1963), Attack of the Giant Leeches (1959), etc.--and assorted varieties of trivia--such as one note on the use of italics and another on the Psychology of Beards. The title of this magazine should have been Great Expectations--for its history has been that of promise unfulfilled.

Howard Collector is a more sedate version of Amra and also a more specialised, its only concern being works by and about (or related to) Robert E. Howard. Certain HC items are valuable for historical rather than literary reasons, e.g., "Spear and Fang," Howard's first professional sale, or his "Cunid vs Pollux," a college fight-story; but there are always worthy associational pieces such as letters by Howard and fiction or poetry by other writers in his subfield. The feeling induced by the HC, as well as this author's own general outlook, can be inferred from the following lines in Howard's "The Dust Dance":

For I was made of the dust and the dew,
The dust and the clouds and the rain,
The snow and the grass, and when I pass,
I'll fade to the dust again.

I laughed when Nero's minions sent
Fire tortured souls to the sky.
Without the walls of Pilate's halls,
I shouted, "Crucify!"

I roared my glee to the sullen sea
Where Abel's blood was shed,
My jeer was loud in the gory crowd
That stoned St. Stephen dead.

You say God's spark has kindled my eye,
As the sun-rise reddens the east;
Into your beards I roar the lie--
'Tis the gleam of the stalking beast.

HC lacks the diversity of Amra, and its colourful sketches of Herculean males and Junoesque females; but it also lacks Amra's failures, its trite verse and pseudo-mythological fiction. Indeed, within its self-imposed limitations Mr. Lord's magazine cannot be improved. It is not known how much new Howard material is still available, but the serious student who fails to subscribe will never find out.

FROM CALIFORNIA

Haunted--Sam Russell, editor.

(1351 Tremaine Ave., Los Angeles 90019).

Queen Anne's Revenge--"Blackbeard," editor.

(323 Steppney St., Apt 2, Inglewood).

Unfortunately, neither publisher has done anything since his magazine was reviewed in RO's second issue. Mr. Russell inaction, one supposes, results from the degenerative effect of Los Angeles, a city characterised by Edmund Wilson as "the great anti-cultural amusement-producing center" which "...grew up, gigantic and vulgar, like one of those synthetic California flowers, and tended to drain the soil of the imaginative life of the State" (Classics and Commercials, 47). Of course, "Blackbeard" has no such excuse; I suggest that both commerce and belles lettres would benefit if he spent less time on privateering activities in the Caribbean and more time on literary activities in California.

Selected Letters

Dear Leland:

RO at hand, and a most impressive issue all around, though I'm afraid Mr. Panshin's work takes precedence because of its very nature.

It is going to be most interesting to observe the reader-ship reactions to the critical assessment presented in this issue...I shall expect violent expressions, pro and con, which will not necessarily do justice to Mr. Panshin's carefully ordered thesis.

In my opinion he has done a very conscientious job, and whether one agrees or disagrees with his conclusions, he is to be commended for the effort--because, to my way of thinking, this sort of evaluation is all to infrequently encountered in...current fanzines. And whether or not his opinions meet with favour, I'm sure the subject-matter is preferable to yet another subjective discussion of the effects of LSD; the influence of modern jazz, country-and western music; or even the political commentary which often seems to crowd out even a mention of science fiction in many fanzines today. I'd like to commend him--and commend you--for this.

Gratefully,

Robert Bloch

I can only thank Mr. Bloch for his encouragement and express hope that the critical brawl is as lively as he anticipates.

1605 Thayer

Richland, Washington 99352

Lee--

I found Work in Progress immensely fascinating...For several reasons it reminded me of Stranger in a Strange Land, probably because of the...religion and its role, the distinct typing of characters, and the general flavour. I hope Cox finishes the work...and gets it published...

...Panshin's dissection of Heinlein is a thing of beauty. ...I practically choked when he suggested Starship Troopers was a training-film book, but the more I think about it, the more apt it seems...I was surprised with Panshin's discussion of "Stranger." He seems unsure of his understanding of the book, and the criticism doesn't come through quite so sharply.

And now we come to "The Evil of Banality." My...accusation will be that in attacking the so-called evil...you are yourself practicing this same evil. What could be more banal than discussions of banality?

Yours,

James Wright

But in Cox's story the religious view is essentially a counter to the naturalistic, whereas in Heinlein's the religion itself is central, with a rational or even a self-consistent explanation not being attempted. Also, the personality "types" are essential--and deliberate--for the MIP in a sense not applicable to Heinlein's story.// I have yet to see an adequate criticism of "Stranger," i.e., one which shows how it concretises the mysticism implicit in previous works and which points out how the author's eschatology--wherein each believer goes to his own particular heaven--contradicts everything scientific in his earlier career.// With respect to the banality of banality we must distinguish between language and language about language. That a statement S is a tautology does not imply the tautological character of a "meta-statement" about S.

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1 Eden Close, Alperton
Wembley, Middlesex, England

Dear Leland,

RQ seems to be on much the same level as the British SF Horizons, a "professional" magazine which has managed to maintain a high standard of literary criticism over its first two issues. Both magazines display a welcome lack of regionalism...However, I don't think RQ is as well-balanced as SFH, which manages to be serious without being earnest. Dare I say that your magazine tends towards earnestness? Perhaps it is just the...one or two items of poetry which gives me this impression.

The most weighty item...was, of course, the "Work in Progress"..., a good idea in principle but not as successful a glimpse into how a writer "works" as it might have been. I would have preferred more comprehensive notes interspersed throughout the text--even if this necessitated their being contrived expressly for this purpose. However, the piece did serve to whet my appetite in anticipation of the novel when completed. Perhaps this is all the article was, a well-intentioned piece of carrot-dangling.

Sincerely,
Graham Charnock

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MIP has been completed, although the author is still not entirely pleased with it. Nevertheless, F&SF has expressed interest in this story, so perhaps Mr. Cox will sell it despite his dissatisfaction with the present revision.// Poetry needs no justification in the RQ or in any magazine devoted to imaginative literature. Indeed, its poetry department and its comparatively regular publication schedule are the only ways in which RQ excels SFH.

Box 40, White III, Room 2
RPI, Troy, New York 12181

Dear Editor:

Panshin...is too hard on Starship Troopers; maybe he just doesn't enjoy a good Devil's Advocate story. By the way, I...believe that all veterans of government service, not just of the Navy or Mobile Infantry, have the vote in Juan Rico's society. This may bother many people, but it is better than the wholly Prussian outlook some people read into the story. At least in Starship Troopers the theme seemed to be that somebody pays for what they get; Glory Road seemed to say that if you are lucky and quick on the draw you can have your cake, eat it, and sell it too. Glory Road is the flip side of "Troopers."

When will Panshin comment on The Moon is a Harsh Mistress? This yarn makes up for the last few bad ones...I have minor qualms; for the sake of the story you have to go along with the idea that four weeks on the moon or whatever makes you no good for Earth--even if the Gemini flights seem to be disproving this...

...try to get the instalment of Heinlein in Dimension we've missed...

Very truly yours,
Sanford Zane Meschkow

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Our correspondent is right about Starship Troopers: voting is not restricted to war veterans alone.//The missing instalment of RQD, entitled "The Period of Success," is to appear in Peter Weston's Zenith Speculation, discussed elsewhere in this issue.

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Sallskapsvagen 7
Stockholm 48, Sweden

Dear Leland,

...I have to disagree with Mr. Panshin on...Heinlein's political arguments. Panshin says, in effect, that Heinlein deliberately "stacks the deck" in favour of his own ideas--that he...does not present opposing views strongly enough...

I think that this is not true--I'm quite certain that Heinlein does not consciously (and I don't think he writes unconsciously, either) present a slanted argument: he simply presents truth as he is able to see it...Look at it this way: if you're convinced...that Capitalism is the only acceptable political system and that Communism is not only politically wrong, but...also morally evil, and evil on such a scale that you are convinced that anyone who promotes it must either be evil or ignorant--then could you write a "defense" for Communism that would be acceptable to anyone not sharing your own views? I think not...Heinlein...knows that he is right...and so simply presents what he is certain must be the truth...

...What most critics seem to have missed totally is the simple fact that Heinlein is a moralist...All, or virtually all (a few are exceptions, such as "...All You Zombies" and "By His Bootstraps") of his stories deal with the simple moral of good versus evil, and what makes Heinlein a moralist is (a) his supreme belief in the eventual triumph of good and (b) his black-and-white view of the issues at hand: there are no middle-of-the-roads in Heinlein's stories, no compromise. The...best examples here are Sixth Column and The Puppet Masters, but most any story would do.

Politically, of course, Heinlein is neither a fascist, a conservative, nor any of the other things he's been said to be: he is simply an anarchist, although he is slightly more moderate than most. His views are rather close to those of Ayn Rand, by the way, but Heinlein is neither quite as thorough nor quite as consistent as Miss Rand when it comes to devising ideal societies.

Very best, again,
Carl Brandon

I agree that a writer is not required to give both sides of a question: what matters is how he presents his side. Perhaps the justest criticism of Heinlein is that he does not always argue his case the way a fiction writer ought to argue it. To quote a letter from associate editor, Jim Harmon, the case is presented "not even in demonstration but in mere exposition." Mr. Harmon continues, "In the past, certain writers have attempted to write fiction in which the way their characters behaved and reacted 'proved' the validity of the author's opinions. While Heinlein makes token attempts at such stories of 'demonstration' as Starship Troopers, he obviously tires of the necessity and merely presents the 'facts' in dialogue, his word being good enough for us."

1128 Birk, Ann Arbor
Michigan 48103

Dear Leland:

...Would it be fair to say that one measure of a book's...success or value in raising a moral point or dealing with some serious issue, is the amount of reaction, pro and con, which it causes? If it is ignored...the book is not doing much good. Starship Troopers and Stranger in a Strange Land have both caused a great deal of discussion...Do we want to pay a writer to tell us the obvious?

Of course, it might have been better if Heinlein could have brought out his philosophy through conflict in action with alternatives, and Panshin is justified in complaining of patness. However, as long as the implications and alternatives are realised, must they be written? A large part of Panshin's complaint is that the books aren't fair: he comes closest to saying it in this way when he laments that Heinlein "will treat opinion as fact."

But surely...an author has no obligation to build up for us a dialectic framework for every conclusion expressed in the book; we want a novel, not a philosophy dissertation. Rather, he is entitled to use all the tricks he can think of in attempting to elicit the desired response from us, including slanted dialogue, improbable societies, or a postulated universal recognition of the rightness of the outlook espoused...

Suppose Alex did write that "story in which Heaven was only open to mass murderers"? Would it necessarily be a failure because of that postulate? On the contrary, the contrast with our postulates could well be forceful and valuable if the story were handled right. Likewise, if Heinlein "dismisses all other possibilities"...in his portrayal of war, etc., this does not mean that the...arguments which are present must necessarily be worthless; and to demand that all "opinions" be treated as opinions, would be to ask not only for the hopeless, but the artistically ruinous as well...

Yours,
William Van den Broek

One qualification: while the hack-writer does accept and exploit the current morality, it does not follow, conversely, that the worth of a story is proportional to its moral deviation. I think the "shock value" of "Stranger," for example, just makes a literary evaluation more difficult.

2762 Ortmann, Quarb.38
Austria

Dear Leland:

I differ with Alexei Panshin on some points on principle...when he states: "...I wasn't sure how much of my dislike was because the book was every bit as annoying as it was meant to be..." I do not believe that it is a legitimate purpose for a novel to annoy; if Stranger in a Strange Land really intended nothing but to annoy, the novel achieved its purpose, which, after all, isn't much of an achievement. But if Heinlein tried to win over the readers to see the merit of his point of view, he failed miserably.

If I am not mistaken, Panshin attempts a purely technical job of reviewing. I think purely technical criticism is at best a shallow affair; it has often struck me that American critics of s.f. seem to be afraid to take a firm moral standpoint. Let me assure you that no European critic would hail a story glorifying mass-murder or attempting to prove that heaven is a place...for murderers. If something is...disgusting and despicable why not say so? I do not think that such a point of view will hinder you from pointing out admirable features of such a story (if it has any). I find it hard to believe that a [composition like] Piper's "Lord Kalvan of Otherwhen" or Heinlein's Farnham's Freehold should have any virtue as a story.

Both show an utter disregard for human beings and human values; their characters are amoral and callous. Farnham's Freehold especially has a number of passages that are vulgar, annoying, and dirty; without ever using a four-letter word Heinlein manages to pervert innocent-looking ones.

There is a scene in Farnham's Freehold that seems to top all others; there is nothing like it even in Spillane...It is just when Karen tells her father that she is with child: "I didn't come here to ask you to marry me. Nor even to seduce me though I might as well say, having said so much, that you can have me if you want me. I think you've known that for years" (p.94, Signet edition). This is irresponsible writing and it is more filthy than any number of pornographic novels thrown together, and besides, it is a curious way for Karen to prepare her father to accept the fact that she is pregnant. A swine who thinks evil of such a daughter! What does it matter, that the mother is still living and there are other men? It is not even defensible from a logical point of view: for all Karen knows there may be millions of men living...

The second point I would like to raise is the matter of Hugh Farnham's suffering and impotence. "Most important," writes Panshin, "he does not one thing to avert the global war he has seen coming." This is, I think, one of the few good points of the book...There are...too many heroes in s.f. toppling governments, opposing whole galactic civilisations, and influencing the course of all history. And I am sick of them.

Best wishes,
Franz Rottensteiner

But in complaining that certain of Mr. Heinlein's books "aren't fair" (in Mr. Van den Broek's phrase) our critic departs from "purely technical" reviewing, since he is claiming (among other things) that the views advocated are wrong. Like Mr. Rottensteiner I see nothing amiss in Farnham's inaction the first time; but I think it is inconsistent the second time. For, after remarking that the alternate future might be less destructive than the first and vowing that "we'll try" to make it so, Farnham barricades himself (and wife) in his mountain stronghold and except for customers--and "Social Evening Every Wednesday"--displays no concern at all for the outside world.// It is not Farnham who "thinks evil" of his daughter, but his daughter of him. This scene re-enforces Al Lewis's argument (Genith Speculation, Dec.'64 p.65) that in Farnham's Freehold the author sets out deliberately to exhibit our nastiest fears and revulsions. For there is nothing in the earlier behavior of father or daughter to make such incest plausible--unless one argues that Karen's college beau was merely a father substitute.

816 South First Street
Mayfield, Kentucky 42066

Dear Leland,

I boggle a little at Panshin's statement that "...I see no reason for the ordinary reader...to bother [with the novels of Heinlein's last period]." The key to this statement is found in the second paragraph of the current article: "The result from an artistic point of view is a mistake" (*italics mine*).

I work part-time in a public library which has all the novels discussed except Starship Troopers. "Stranger," Glory Road, and Farnham's Freehold are far more widely read...than almost any other s.f., including the earlier Heinlein books we have. The ordinary reader does not read from an artistic standpoint; he reads for entertainment, which may include mild intellectual stimulation. He will be concerned with artistic aspects of a book only when they become so prominent they can't be ignored, as in a novel of completely petrified dialogue...Heinlein's faults are not quite this obvious. The ease and facility of his writing carries the reader right over the little inconsistencies Panshin brings out.

The flaws that Panshin cites will be noticed by someone with his keen literary insight or by almost anyone who is rereading the book and is not so concerned with "what happens next," but to the "ordinary reader" they are seldom evident. Right now I'm in the middle of The Noon is a Harsh Mistress in its serial version, and enjoying it thoroughly, despite such interesting little bits as one character's statement that the basic human right is the right to bargain in a free market. On rereading the story, I'll undoubtedly come across a myriad little bobbles, misplaced harangues, and so forth, but now I'm just having a good time with Heinlein's story.

But going back to the "ordinary reader"...we assume that he finds a certain quality in good s.f. that is lacking in an Avalon Books nurse-and-doctor romance or the latest...Perry Mason. For many of this group Heinlein is ideal, because the themes are near enough to the surface to be accessible to those without literary sophistication to dig the meat out of Camus, Faulkner, or for that matter Philip K. Dick...

Sincerely,
John Boston

Mr. Panshin's complaint, however, is not with individual flaws--minute inconsistencies, etc.--but with the author's general mode of presentation. I do not think, then, that Mr. Boston has told the whole story, for the question is not whether library patrons prefer Mr. Heinlein's current books, but whether they are right in preferring them. The literary artist is concerned not merely with entertainment or pleasure but with evoking, as Lionel Trilling puts it, "psychic energies which are not to be summoned up in felicity." Insofar as our author was doing this but is not now doing it, the result "from an artistic point of view is a mistake."

46 Mainwright Drive
Bakersfield, Calif. 93308

Dear Leland:

The arguments cited by Mr. Solon in the Riverside Quarterly are not valid, and Mr. Solon's audaciousness in presenting them surprises me. He overlooks the fact that... most fan magazine editors are not capable of presenting any type of material intelligently (science fiction or otherwise)... Fandom, at present, reflects propensities similar to those seen in fandom's "Dark Ages," which followed the folding of Fantasy Magazine in 1937. I think that any sociological analysis of fandom as a subgroup would show that anti-intellectualism is not a single unit of philistinism... but rather a complex. In Richard Hofstadter's Anti-Intellectualism in American Life we find: "...it [anti-intellectualism] is not a constant thread but a force fluctuating in strength from time to time, and drawing its motive power from varying sources."

Why, then, is anti-intellectualism so prevalent? I think, like you, one can trace the trend to... the rugged "individualistic" pioneer... who had no time for "intellectual" activities [which], the provincials assert, are for the wealthy classes, the women, the "eggheads."

Convention reports are not the only area... in which the anti-intellectual attitudes of "fannish" fandom appear. For example, in the ostentatious and... ethnocentric organisations as... FAPA, et alia, for over 20 years, we have seen a group... which is promulgating a philosophy of anti-rationalism... One is recognised as a member of the group--"one of the boys"--so to speak--if one condones their own particular brand of immaturity...

Best wishes,
Stephen Pickering

My earlier notions about "local" philistinism as a derivative of pioneer days--when the he-man was out home-steading or murdering Indians--must be qualified, since they do not explain that particular kind of anti-intellectualism found in U.S. fan magazines.

339 49th St.
Brooklyn-20, New York

Dear Leland:

"Work in Progress" is a better title for Arthur Jean Cox's projected novel than the possible titles he lists, all of which would prejudice me against the work if I encountered it as an editor... because of their amateurish connotations. As for the work itself, I was not expecting to be impressed, and was pleased to find that I was, after all... There are, of course, certain questions left unanswered aside from that of the sign of Earth ("The sign of Earth"; that grabs me more as a title than Cox's) which is in itself a good one. They include the basic questions: What Earth is this? Why do these planets actually influence the people? Do they influence all the peoples of Earth? Etc.

Actually, if these points are left unexplained in any rational manner, but simply exist in presumption for the story's background, the work will not be science fiction at all, but Fantasy.

Jim Harmon's reviews betray several inaccuracies, none of them major, but which do prod me to nitpicking them.

He has the order of submissions backwards on novels. Very few novels are written these days for magazines first and then sold to paperback houses, much less so after magazine rejection. While this may happen once in a while, in most cases novels are written first for the paperback publisher, and then, if possible, sold to the magazines for serialisation. This requires careful coordination of publication dates. The failure of such coordination was what resulted in Vance's Killing Machine coming out from Berkeley before it could appear in IF, as scheduled.

Today most professionals submit the Portion & Outline form of presentation--usually two opening chapters and the remainder in outline--to the paperback house, and if the editor likes it, a contract will be drawn up, and the remainder written. At this time, the finished work is submitted for serialisation (usually as a carbon), while the original copy goes to the contracting publisher. Editors prefer this form of submission. It not only makes it easier to read (I've been clearing out mountains of manuscripts from Lancer's backlog; I can attest that I prefer short presentations to complete and lengthy novels), but allows suggested changes to be made with a minimum of effort.

The basic reason for this... is that the paperback houses (and hardcover firms, like Doubleday) are buying a great deal more original s.f. in novel form than the magazines are. Writers now write for the book publisher; serialisation is icing on the cake.

Harmon lists GAMMA, along with AMAZING, FANTASTIC, and MAG OF HORROR, as a reprint magazine. ...I believe he is wrong on two counts: (1) it wasn't a reprint magazine, but bought almost all new material; (2) it's dead. However, he can add HORROR's new companion, STARTLING MYSTERY to the list in GAMMA's place. And I believe there will be a fourth magazine in the GALAXY group shortly.

It's a real nitpick, but Wally Wood has never drawn "Captain America" for Marvel Comics. To begin with, there is a reprint called Marvel Tales, but no Marvel Comics. He is thinking of the Marvel Comics Group. Secondly, while Wood (or someone in his studio) did some work briefly on The Avengers, which includes Capt. America as a character, he never drew the Captain America feature, which is in Tales of Suspense. Wood's main Marvel feature was Daredevil. He left Marvel a year or so ago, I might add, and is now doing Thunder Agents and Dynamo for Tower Comics. Finally, most of the drawings appearing in the last year in GALAXY and companions signed by Wood were, as are most of his comics work, by his assistant, Dan Adkins.

You appear uninformed as to the origin...of "sercon." The word was coined around 1953...in application to the 103% NSF types whose watchwords were that we must all be "serious and constructive"...The term is a sarcastic outburst, not a literal description of those who are serious and constructive. In adapting the label to a genuinely serious...effort and then protesting its original sarcastic and abusive meaning, you are ...tilting at windmills.

...in my own case whatever abilities I have as a writer of fiction were developed by my...authorship of fannish articles ...It was in such moments of trivia as my VOID editorials that I learned to handle pacing, dialogue, and anecdote. I'm also inclined to think that an attitude of a certain irreverence toward the Glorious Field of Science Fiction is necessary if one ever wants to do more than worship it abjectly as a reader...

All best,
Ted White

For more information on the mis-sale of Vance's Killing Machine readers may consult Zenith Speculation, Dec. '64, p.24.// My etymology stands corrected but my complaint remains the same: that "sercon" now is applied, with its "original sarcastic and abusive meaning," to any non-trivial s.f. project.// I do not know which is more objectionable, blind adoration or mindless frivolity, but I see much less of the first than the second.

5021 Seminary Road
Alexandria, Virginia

Dear Mr. Sapiro,

...I particularly liked Mr. Panshin on Heinlein: a fair assessment, I think -- and the Schneeman drawings.

If I have any criticism, it is that...your own editorial comments, though I agree with them more often than not, are so uniformly pompous that I sometimes long to stick a pin in you. An example: there is really no excuse for adopting Miss Arendt's difficult philosophical point about the banality of evil--what agreement you vest in it is irrelevant--to title a little lint-picking piece about s.f. convention reports. That's exactly like Moskowitz's calling a book about the internicine politics of 23 teen-age fans "The Immortal Storm."

I am pretty serious about s.f. myself, but doesn't anybody have any saving sense of the ridiculous in this muddle?

Cordially,
James Blish

Of course, the "evil of banality" refers to the entire corpus of fan activity discussed in the editorials, not merely to convention reports. Dr. Arendt's thesis, I take it, is that evil contains a passive as well as a daemonic element; the inversion of her title was to signify that banality is not just "empty" but also time-wasting, and so in a real sense evil. As Voltaire puts it, "Life is too short and time too precious for us to speak of useless things."

SOME MODEST PROPOSALS

Here I must discuss theft from both readers and authors.

I) Theft from Readers

This reference is to dealers who charge outrageous prices for old magazines. In a recent Fantasy Collector, e.g., there were advertisements asking \$12.50 for one copy of an early fan magazine and \$37.50 for one copy of the 1927 Amazing Stories Annual. True, such thefts require consent of the victim, who cannot be robbed unless he wishes to be robbed--but all this hardly mitigates the crime: it simply makes the reader an accomplice.

To reduce prices I propose that photostatic copies be made of rare magazines and that these copies be sold at or near cost. These sales would not directly affect dealers, but I assume that collectors would be unwilling to pay twelve dollars for a copy of Fantasy Magazine if they could buy a "reasonable facsimile" for (say) two dollars.

As a start--there is in the RO's files a complete set of "Time Traveller," the first science-fiction fanzine ever published. The total page count is less than 90, so if duplication is (say) 20¢ per page, the entire set could be reproduced for less than \$18. (The university printing service charges only 10¢ per page, but I assume a commercial printer would ask more.)

For the present, I wish to hear from any reader who:

a) would be interested in buying such a duplicate file of Time Traveller (DO NOT SEND MONEY),

b) owns a complete set of some old fan magazine (e.g., Fantasy Magazine or Science-Fiction Digest) which he would lend for duplication,

c) knows a commercial printer who can equal or approximate university prices.

More generally, the RO invites suggestions and inquiries about this first Modest Proposal.

II Theft from Authors

A) Theft by Paperback Publishers

Here the reference is to publishing houses which neglect proof-reading or which make changes and deletions without the author's consent. Such a practice injures an author's reputation by making his readers think that he cannot spell or write a coherent page--and it is an indirect theft of money because it decreases sale potential for an author's future books.

A specific example is the Tower Books edition of Harl Vincent's Doomsday Planet, a novel based on his Astounding story, "Cosmic Rhythm." Among the dozens of misprints and misspellings one finds "...the now colemn-visaged group of people" (26), "...what had ben done..." (116), "No matter what the source, it is a brian image" (126-7), "...they coinsided closely" (129).

In addition, there is an entire paragraph omitted on p.121 and another on p.124, so that printed passages reduce, literally, to nonsense. As Mr. Vincent remarks, in a note to the RQ, "...this wasn't just an editing and proof-reading error; it was plain lack of understanding of the writer's meaning."

Now, the RQ cannot stop a fait accompli, but it modestly proposes to print other such examples brought to its attention--and thus, perhaps, persuade some publishers to exhibit consideration for their writers.

B) Theft by Magazine Publishers

A recent inquiry to Kris Neville disclosed that he was not paid for his story, "If This be Utopia," reprinted in the June 1966 Amazing Stories; from Damon Knight I learn that Ultimate Publishing Company treats in the same way authors of all other reprints. So Mr. Knight has requested members of Science Fiction Writers of America to submit no manuscripts to these publishers until they "agree to make fair and reasonable payments to the authors of all reprinted stories..." (Amazing--and presumably its companion magazine, Fantastic--does pay for one original story per issue, but payment of one writer naturally does not justify theft from half a dozen others.)

A reader who buys either Ultimate publication just makes it harder for a fantasy or s.f. writer to earn a living. A reader might accidentally pick up a copy of Amazing instead of the less conspicuous Magazine of Horror (which pays for both new stories and reprints); but if such a mischance is repeated often enough, then Koff would be obliged to stop publication--and there is a loss of still another paying market.

Anybody who feels compelled to read the reprints in a current amazin, or Fantastic is urged by the RQ to buy, at a fraction of the price, the old Eiff Davis magazines from which most of these reprints are taken. (Two dealers who sell used magazines at fair prices are Richard Litter, Box 415, Staten Island, New York 10302 and Ben Stark, 113 Ardmore Rd., Kensington, Berkeley-7, California.) If he also feels obliged to read the one new story per issue, the RQ modestly suggests that he do it at the magazine stand without making a purchase.

"Romans--I come not to admire you but to educate you! I bring knowledge from the age of miracles to solve problems in the age of the Caesars."

"Oh stranger with the odd manner of speech, do you claim that Jupiter has given you the power to see into the future?"

"You with the dirty toga, I do not see into the future--I am from the future. I can prove this by showing how our superior intellects of the Twentieth Century can solve your political and economic problems."

"Show us, then, oddly dressed stranger, how we can rid ourselves of crime and heavy taxes, how we can help the dispossessed farmers and find work for the unemployed."

"Romans, this is what you must do. First, you must start great public work projects and give free handouts to those still not employed--and to defray the cost the government must impose still higher taxes. Further, the government must regulate your..."

"Stranger, your brain surely has been deranged by the gods! Our Caesars already have tried each of your suggestions and have seen each of them fail."

"But I tell you that..."

"Citizens, this man is an imposter who deceives us with tales of a higher civilisation! Let us give him the sword!"

Before you travel to ancient Rome, dear reader, or even before you speak in the present century about Economics, you will find it safer to learn some basic facts about the subject. We suggest that you inquire about the free adult discussion classes given by the Henry George School of Social Science. The main office is at 50 East 69th Street, New York, New York 10021--or via your phone book you can obtain information about classes in Calgary, London, San Francisco, Sydney, Toronto, or any major city. If you do not live in such a city, then write to the main office and ask about free correspondence courses.

Henry George School, 50 E. 69th St., New York, N.Y. 10021

