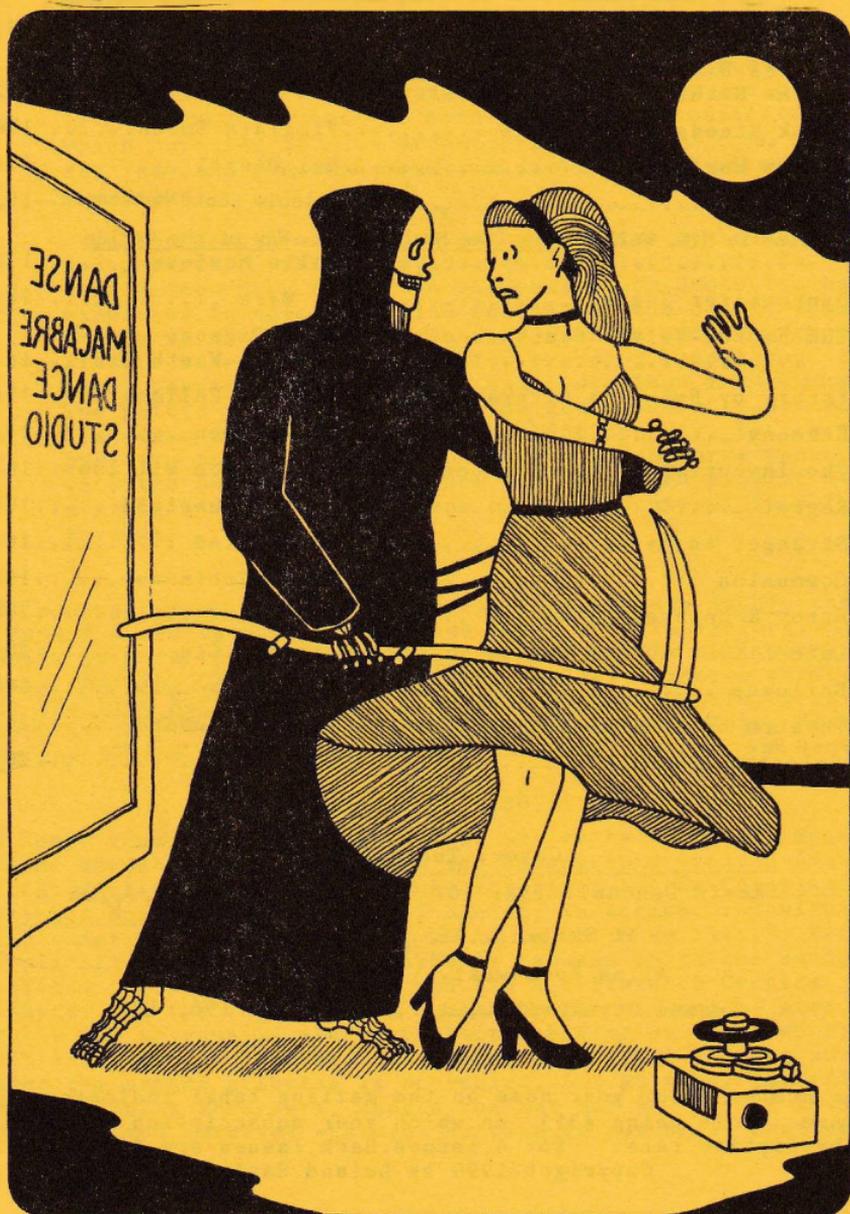


VOL 8 NO 3

\$2.00

# RIVERSIDE QUARTERLY



Copyright © 1990 by Teddy Harvia

## RIVERSIDE QUARTERLY

Volume 8 number 3 (whole number 31) July 1990

Editor: Leland Sapiro

Addresses:

Fiction: Box 1111 Berkeley CA 94701 (Redd Boggs)  
 Art: 2521 SW Williston, Gainesville, FL 32608 (Mary Emerson)  
 Poetry: 515 Saratoga #2, Santa Clara, CA 95050 (Sheryl Smith)

Send other mail to:

Leland Sapiro  
 807 Walters #107  
 Lake Charles, LA 70605

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

RQ Miscellany .....	151
Charles Dickens' <u>Old Curiosity Shop</u> : The Gothic Novel in Transition..Pat Hodgell .....	152
Black Steeds of Midnight .....	Virginia Smith..... 170
Aldous Huxleying .....	Hal Daniel ..... 171
Memory .....	Malcolm Scott MacKenzie..172
Dualism in H.G. Wells's <u>The Time Machine</u> and <u>War of the Worlds</u> .....	Colin Manlove ..... 173
Synthesizer Suzie .....	B. Ware ..... 182
The Smoked-Velvet Feathers of Aesthetic Pigeons .....	Patrick Worth Gray.. 183
Error by Bad King Literate .....	Stanley Fellman..... 184
Harmony .....	Jim Harmon ..... 185
The Invention of the Frisbee.....	Phillip Lee Williams..187
Regret .....	Judy Kronenfeld .....188
Stranger to Myself .....	Sue Elkind .....189
Communion .....	Lance Robinson .....190
Error & Unintelligibility .....	Joel Ward .....200
Late Flight across Nevada .....	Stephen Liu .....201
Epilogue .....	Mark Rich .....202
Theatre of the Fantastic .....	Peter Bernhardt .....203
Selected Letters .....	.....205

Cover: Ted Harvia

Kevin Duncan...152, 167 Cathy Huberuz...204

Al Satian...155, 158, 161, 163

Allen Koszowski...174, 176, 178, 180

Eugene Gryniewicz...157, 192, 194, 196, 199

The number after your name on the mailing label indicates the issue (this being #31) on which your subscription expires. Subscription rate: \$6/ 4 issues. Back issues are \$2.00 each. Copyright 1990 by Leland Sapiro

## RQ MISCELLANY

## THE GOTHIC QUEST

We ask: what relationship has the Gothic mode to fiction in general and, in particular, to s-f? The first question is addressed in this issue by Pat Hodgell, via an early Charles Dickens novel, and the second, by Brian Aldiss and David Wingrove in Trillion Year Spree:

The rise of industrialization fostered the growth of large manufacturing towns...Church bells were replaced by the more exacting railway timetable. The effect of these unprecedented changes...was far-reaching. The human psyche was not immune to them. The fiction that evolved to accommodate this situation--a middle class fiction, somewhere between romance and realism, as it was between science and myth--was the Gothic fantasy. Backward looking and nostalgic at first, it developed rapidly during the 19th century to confront more closely the conditions which nurtured it. The archetypal figures of cruel father and seducing monk were transformed into those of scientist and alien.

(p. 16)

In the Gothic mode, emphasis was placed on the distant and unearthly, while suspense entered literature for the first time--Mrs. Radcliffe was praised by Scott for her expertise in suspense...The methods of the Gothic writers are those of many s-f and horror writers today...Other planets make ideal settings for brooding landscapes, isolated castles, dismal towns, and mysterious alien figures.. The gothic novel was part of the great Romantic movement. Its vogue declined early in the 19th century. But terror, mystery, and that delightful horror which Burke connected with the sublime--all of them have remained popular with a great body of readers, and may be discovered in s-f to this day.

(pp. 35-6)

It's unnecessary to ask for correlations between Gothic and those H.G. Wells novels discussed here by Colin Manlove, since Wells is a particular instance of s-f. But it's obligatory to note that The Chronic Argonauts (an earlier magazine version of The Time Machine) easily qualifies as High Gothic, with its symbols of progress, in Jack Williamson's terminology, "submerged behind contrasting symbols of decay, terror, and death."

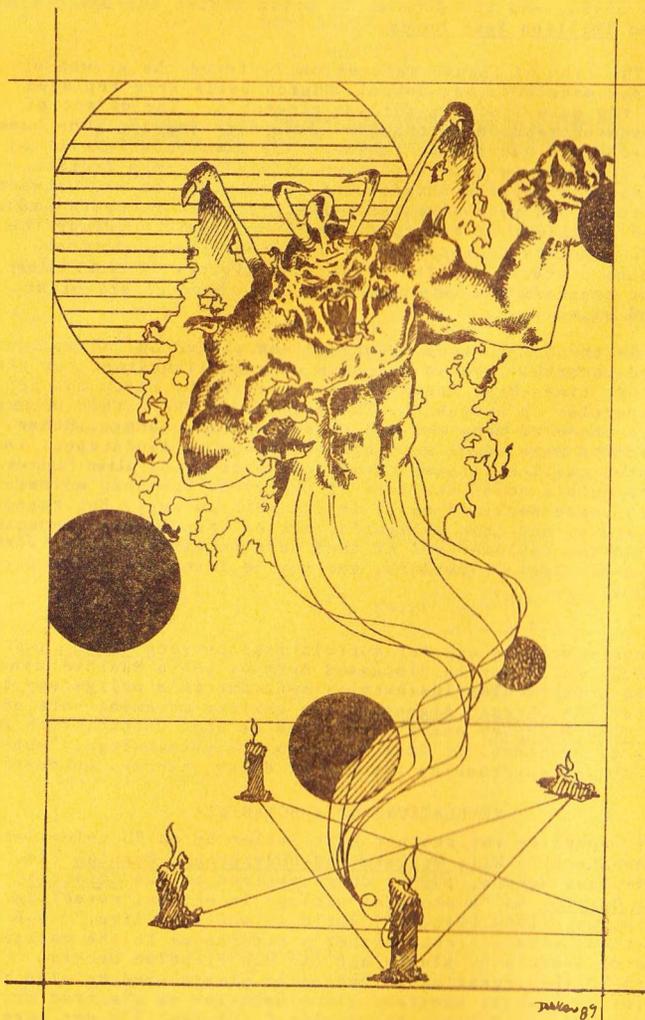
## REVELATIONS OF A BOTANIST

A happy report on yet another Best Seller by an RQ columnist: Peter Bernhardt's Wily Violets and Underground Orchids (New York: William Morrow, 1989), characterized by the Christian Science Monitor as "a story of biology in action, revealing the quiet marvelous [natural] world in which we live." S-F implications exist in this author's references to the manipulations of insects by plants and (in his Fiendish Orchids chapter) to the ingestion of humans by plants--and he also recalls for us equally aberrant plant behavior as observed by writers like J.G. Ballard and Arthur C. Clarke. I'm not sure when the second printing is scheduled, but RQ fans, regardless of particular interests, should run out and buy (or at least phone up and reserve) whatever edition is currently available.

## Charles Dickens' Old Curiosity Shop:

### The Gothic Novel In Transition

by  
Pat Hodgell



#### Editor's preface:

In '77 Pat mentioned a Gothic essay she was doing for a University of Minnesota graduate seminar -- so I asked her to send me a copy. Her manuscript was accompanied by a note saying, "Well, you asked for it, so here it is...[although] this sounds [like] I'd just delivered a cream pie to you, face-first." But this paper caused more disturbance than a pie delivered in any fashion -- since it made me reshuffle all my earlier notions of the Gothic story. In '89, assuming a general ignorance equal to my own, I told Pat I wanted to reprint her paper--or at least this revision of it -- so that maybe some RQ readers would get zapped also. So to those readers I'll just say, "You didn't ask for it, but here it is anyway."

#### #1 PREMATURE BURIAL

When The Old Curiosity Shop first appeared in the fourth number of Master Humphrey's Clock in 1840, the last giant of the Gothic era, Charles Maturin's Melmoth the Wanderer, was twenty years in the past. Mid-nineteenth-century critics may well have thought that the genre was dead. Since many of them had been trying to stick their pens stake-like through its heart for decades, they were probably even glad. This death notice, however, was premature. Various writers including Charles Dickens were still developing the techniques that the Gothic story had taught them, thus preserving the Gothic strain for use in such novels as Jane Eyre and Moby Dick, respectively seven and eleven years in the future.

First, a definition: what is meant by Gothic in this context? When the word was introduced into the critical vocabulary of the eighteenth century, it was associated with ignorance, savagery, and cruelty--in short, with those barbarous qualities attributed to the Germanic tribe of Goths who overran the Roman Empire from the third to the fifth centuries, A.D. As the emphasis in literature swung from the decorous to the imaginative, Gothic lost many of its pejorative connotations and became primarily a synonym for the mediaeval, as when Horace Walpole in 1764 subtitled his Castle of Otranto "A Gothic Story." By the end of the century, Alfred Longueil tells us, it had come simply to mean the supernatural in as ghastly a form as possible, since in the opinion of its readers that was the main aspect of the Gothic novel. Thus Gothic evolved over a century "from a race-term to a sneering word, from a sneering word to a cool adjective, from a cool adjective to a cliché in criticism."<sup>1</sup>

Walpole's Otranto was the first of its line. It was written partly as a reaction to the restrictions of an age that had insisted, Walpole said, on damming up "the great resources of fantasy...by a strict adherence to common life" and partly as an attempt to combine the best qualities of modern and ancient romance. Desiring to leave the imagination unfettered so as to create more interesting situations, Walpole

wished to conduct the mortal agents in his drama according to the rules of probability; in short, to make them think, speak and act, as it might be supposed mere men and women would do in extraordinary positions.<sup>2</sup>

Hence his portrait of the Middle Ages reflected an effort "...to draw such a picture of domestic life and manners, during feudal times, as might actually have existed," as Sir Walter Scott put it, "and to print it chequered and agitated by the action of supernatural machinery, such as the superstition of the period received as matter of devout credulity."<sup>3</sup> In this case, Walpole's characters and readers are asked to give credence to such "supernatural machinery" as an enormous sable-plumed helmet crashing to earth out of nowhere, a bleeding statue, and a giant apparition with the habit of turning up piece-meal around the castle for the express purpose, apparently, of throwing the servants into fits.

Despite such manifest silliness, the story had a certain charm that quickly drew imitators. Most subsequent Gothicists tried to follow Walpole's ideal of historical accuracy combined with psychological realism. *Otranto* also bequeathed to its descendants many of the themes that they so overworked -- the persecuted maiden, the aristocratic villain, the disguised heir, the family curse. After Walpole, however, the Gothic novel began to move in three directions.

First, there were the historical Gothics as exemplified in Clara Reeve's *An Old English Baron*. These stressed the setting and played down or abolished the supernatural element. There was a strong tendency to glorify the past (found in all Gothics, but especially here) either as an age more stable than the present, with its revolutionary tremors, or simply as a more interesting one. Sir Walter Scott took his clue from these earlier novels.

Then there was the school of terror, with Ann Radcliffe as its finest writer. Mrs. Radcliffe kept the eerie castle and convent settings, adding to them an air of obscurity and majesty lacking in Walpole's more substantial ruins and apparitions. Through suspense and suggestion she usually compounded a dense atmosphere of the supernatural, only to explain it all away in the last few chapters. We may find this irritating to-day, but readers of the time seem to have preferred it, since it allowed them to

indulge in romantic sensibility without "hoodwinking their reason"; and since sensibility had taught them to disassociate the value of an emotion from the validity of its cause, they did not resent being cheated of their tremors.<sup>4</sup>

It also provided an intellectual challenge, as Arthur Cooke points out, in that it forced unsuperstitious readers to try to solve such mysteries as the identity of the seemingly omniscient monk in the ruins, or the origin of the bloody clothes in the corner, or the reason for Signora Bianchi's unpleasant death. The movement here is clearly away from the ghost story and toward detective fiction.<sup>5</sup>

The school of horror, exemplified by M.G. Lewis's *The Monk* (1794), swung the emphasis back to the supernatural with a frontal attack on the senses. The difference between terror and horror, as Devendra Varma puts it, is "the difference between awful apprehension and sickening realization; between the small of death and stumbling against a corpse."<sup>6</sup> Terror creates "an intangible atmosphere of spiritual psychic dread, a certain superstitious shudder at the other world" (*ibid.*, 130); horror occurs when the source of terror suddenly reveals itself in all its uncompromising hideousness, no longer a theme for the romantic sensibility but a ghastly reality that must be dealt with somehow, if only by going mad. Crude and sensational as these later Gothic novels were, they opened serious discussion, continuing to the present day, on human psychological response under stress.



## #2 AGE OF TRANSITION

Besides Gothicism's reverence for the Middle Ages, some of its principal motifs were absorbed by Romanticism, sometimes so successfully that they are often associated with the latter rather than the former. One of these shared themes, growing from a mutual interest in the thoughts and emotions of the individual, was that of the so-called "Byronic" hero, who first appeared as various moody, guilt-ridden villains in the works of Mrs. Radcliffe.

Like the Romantics, nineteenth-century novelists benefitted from the Gothic movement. Charles Dickens clearly did. In his later books, Gothic elements are so much a part of the symbolic and moral texture that they almost defy separate analysis. In his apprentice works, however, the "kinship with older patterns of romance lies on the surface."<sup>7</sup> *Oliver Twist* and *Barnaby Rudge* are often singled out as being especially rich in that sort of sensationalism so basic to the Gothic novels, but I choose his third novel, *The Old Curiosity Shop*, because it uses not only this aspect of the genre but also several of its most typical motifs and techniques. By examining Dickens' use of them, I hope to inquire into the essential Gothic impulse, stripped of its mechanical devices.

It is difficult to say exactly how Dickens picked up his knowledge of the Gothic. Only one critic (Harry Stone) states positively that Dickens was familiar with Walpole, Lewis, and Radcliffe,<sup>8</sup> while another (Archibald Coolidge, Jr.) claims that he had "loved Gothic stories from childhood" and that *The Old Curiosity Shop* "seems to be influenced by a study of Mrs. Radcliffe's work."<sup>9</sup>

Actually, Dickens didn't need a first-hand knowledge of the primary works for a strong sense of the Gothic to have crept into his life: his childhood was saturated with it from at least three sources, only one of them literary.

First, there was his nurse Mary Weller who "took his imagination on...horrifying journeys...of bloody vengeance and supernatural hauntings."<sup>10</sup> "She had a fiendish enjoyment of my terror," he recalled later, "and used to begin, I remember -- as a sort of introductory overtone -- by clawing the with both hands, and uttering a long low hollow groan."<sup>11</sup>

Then there were the melodramas of the day, "spectacular productions" heavily influenced by the Gothic romance, "gloomy and mysterious, sometimes introducing the supernatural, infused strongly with sentimental morality, and ending in accordance with a 'poetic justice.'"<sup>12</sup>

Finally, we have a dubious little magazine called the Terrific Register, full of such Gothic sensationalism as "torture, incest, the devouring of decayed human bodies, physical details of various horrible methods of execution, and a variety of other such pleasant and profitable subjects,"<sup>13</sup> that Dickens read while at Wellington House Academy (1824), thereby making himself, he tells us,

unspeakably miserable, and frightening my very wits out of my head, for the small charge of a penny weekly; which considering there was an illustration to every number, in which there was always a pool of blood, and at least one body, was cheap. (*ibid.* p.18)

In short, Gothicism was "the predominant literary fashion of the 'nineties,'" according to J.M.S. Tompkins, "and extended, amid the outcries of critics, well into the next century" (*op. cit.* 243). Given this continuing prevalence on all levels of literature and society all the way down to the nursery, it would be strange indeed if Dickens were not aware of it.

The Old Curiosity Shop grew out of the plan for a short story which, even in Dickens' brief description in the Preface to the first cheap edition of 1848, shows remarkable Gothic potential. "I had it always in my fancy," he writes here,

to surround the lonely figure of the child with grotesque and wild, but not impossible companions, and to gather about her innocent face and pure intentions, associates as strange and uncongenial as the grim objects that are about her bed when her history is first foreshadowed.<sup>14</sup>

One of the things that first strikes us here is Dickens' proposal to use contrasts of the most vivid possible sort, which is in itself a practice much favoured by Gothicism. Walpole used light and shade (beams of light falling into a dark dungeon) and size (the small prince crushed under the gigantic helmet), while Mrs. Radcliffe was especially fond of juxtaposing sound and silence. "Everything in our lives, whether of good or evil, affects us most by contrast" (Chap. LIII), Dickens says himself in the course of the novel.

His primary choice of contrast in his first story idea is significant too since it is the very one most favoured by Gothicism: a pure young woman (or child in this case), seen against a sinister dark house, menaced by strange shapes. This is perhaps the archetypal Gothic image, to this day the one seen on the cover of virtually every modern paperback "Gothic" on the newsstands.

The novel starts out much in the spirit of the preface's description. Nell is presented to us largely in terms of this contrast, with the old curio shop as her first backdrop. The shop itself has a noticeably Gothic caste, its contents including

suits of mail standing like ghosts in armour here and there, fantastic carving brought from monkish cloisters, rusty weapons of various kinds, distorted figures of china and wood and iron and ivory; tapestry and strange furnitures that might have been designed in dreams.

--in short, a collection of which Walpole would have approved, except that it is all thrown together in a nightmare jumble, displaced from the "old churches and tombs and deserted houses" where it would normally belong.



Master Humphrey's fascination with the image of Nell asleep and smiling in the midst of "...the dust and rust, and the worm that lies in wood" is meant to mirror Dickens' response and hopefully that of the reader. The story relies on contrasts of this sort, its source of power being our concern for Nell as she makes her way "among a crowd of wild grotesque companions; the only pure, fresh youthful object in the throng."

The tableau of the sleeping Nell, a wholly static image, is rendered all the more startling by her smile, an atypical, non-Gothic response to her bizarre environment. We quickly realize, however, that the detail is either a fantasy of Master Humphrey or a stage of Nell's

life that is already passing away. Left to herself, she would probably be happy, but circumstances are already turning against her in the form of her grandfather's mysterious nightly absences and the presence of Daniel Quilp. When we see her in the shop again she is nervous and obsessed with thoughts of death. The tableau has been destroyed, but not the contrast.

With Quilp's help, the plot is stirred into motion, and this movement, forced and alien as it is to Nell, will be the keynote of her life until the end, as it is for Lewis' Antonia, Mrs. Radcliffe's Ellena, and many other naturally passive heroines of the genre.

With the flight of Nell and her grandfather from the shop and Quilp's growing desire to track them down, we see another classic Gothic motif: the pursuit and persecution of the innocent maiden. "The Gothic novel of sensibility," as Montague Summers points out, "draws its emotionalism and psychology from...Samuel Richardson."<sup>15</sup> Richardson certainly gave this particular theme, which was not unknown in Jacobean drama, new popularity with his Pamela and Clarissa, but "his sense of inner forces was so overlaid by the moralistic that his followers ran after him only when he ran the wrong way."<sup>16</sup> It was left to the Gothicismists to ring all possible changes on the motif and in so doing, stir up an even greater variety of psychological response. Dickens showed his appreciation of this device when he wrote to Wilkie Collins that evil can be shown to the Victorian public only "by the help of interest in some innocent person [thereby] placed in peril, and that person a young woman."<sup>17</sup> This motif makes the heroine more visible, a great accomplishment when one considers how colourless she is under normal circumstances. Nell or any of her Gothic sisters would be no more than a pleasing part of the scenery if shown to us by the common light of day. Dark backgrounds are required to show them off to advantage, since we normally cannot be induced to share either the author's or the hero's enthusiasm for mere beauty and virtue. The tradition of persecution and pursuit--or kidnapping if the lady can't be induced to move by any other way--enlists our sympathy in the intrinsically least interesting because normally passive person of the Gothic triangle.

At the second vertex of this configuration is the traditional hero--more energetic, but often no more effective--who frequently needs help, supernatural or otherwise, to extricate himself and the heroine. Usually an innocent himself, he is fair game for any fiendish machinations and often finds himself just when he is needed most in the dungeons of the Spanish Inquisition or some place equally inconvenient. Besides this vulnerability to persecution, he often shares with the heroine an unfortunate element of insipidity. "Mrs. Radcliffe's heroes and lovers," says William Hazlitt,

...are perfect of their kind: nobody can find any fault with them, for nobody knows anything about them. They are described as very handsome, and quite unmeaning and inoffensive.<sup>18</sup>

One thing that keeps The Old Curiosity Shop from being a traditional Gothic is its lack of a functioning hero. Kit Nubbles plays this role for a time, even to the extent of being persecuted by Quilp for his loyalty to Nell, but he can't keep up the pace. Whereas the early Gothic hero is often a nobleman in disguise as a peasant, Kit can never be anything but a peasant and a servant to Nell, with a life of his own to lead. The hero exists in the Gothic novel largely as a worldly goal for the heroine. While he is still in the picture, she can't withdraw from life comfortably, i.e., enter a convent, although she can get herself murdered, which seems to be the Gothicism's favourite way to dispose of any young woman who won't fit into the approved social patterns. Well has no one but Kit, and he just won't do. The problem is that there simply is no one in the novel good enough for her. In such a situation the author has a choice of letting her grow up and marry Quilp or killing her off, which is what Walpole or Lewis or Maturin probably would have done.

The last member of the triad is usually more important than the others. The Gothic novel owes most of its energy and action to the villain. Without him to set things moving, nothing would probably move at all or at least not in any way that would interest us. The Gothic villain comes in three varieties, with some overlapping among them. The earliest and perhaps least significant is to be found in Walpole's Otranto. Manfred is

not one of those savage tyrants, who wanton in cruelty unprovoked. The circumstances of his fortune had given an asperity to his temper, which was naturally humane and his virtues were always ready to operate when his passions did not obscure his reason. (Walpole, p.40)

Unfortunately for him, his passions obscure his reason for most of the novel as he desperately tries to find a way to perpetuate his line in the face of an ancestral curse, and only succeeds in getting both of his children killed.



Mrs. Radcliffe's villains are less innocent. Schedoni (The Italian), generally considered her finest specimen of the kind, is an ambitious monk who was driven to the church after killing his elder brother for the sake of that brother's wife and then stabbing her after their marriage. He plots against the innocent Ellena, unaware that she is his niece, turns her suitor Vivaldi over to the Inquisition, and finally, after his crimes are discovered, ends up in its dungeons, where he poisons himself to avoid the flames. All Mrs. Radcliffe's villains bear this ruffian stamp and are, as Walter Phillips points out (p. 159), to a certain extent vulgarized by the definiteness of their crimes--but they still have a familiar aura composed of something almost supernatural, an aristocratic hauteur, and the psychic scars of old passions and crimes burned on their faces.

These traits are intensified in the last class of villain such as Melmoth and Lewis's Ambrosio, with their heightened sense of good and evil and their great potential for virtue twisted, with their consent, to the service of vice. Demonic forces are loose here both in the external universe and in the soul, which still tries to make its own terms and create some sort of dignity in damnation if nothing else is left. Such villain/heroes became "an experience in the sublime" to many eighteenth century critics, who might have been tempted to say of them as Corneille did of his Cleopatra that

All her crimes carry a spiritual grandeur, something noble, so that even while detesting the actions, we admire their agent.

From here it is only a short step to Byron's Manfred, Lara, and The Giaour.

At first glance, Daniel Quilp seems much out of place in this company. His crimes both real and would-be are beneath contempt by virtue of their sheer meanness. But if we say that beneath the trappings, the typical Gothic villain is for the most part "all melodrama and extravagant emotion, designed to excite the last possible twinge of sensation" (Varma, p. 216), that begins to sound more like Quilp.

In order to fulfil his responsibility as a Gothic villain, a character must have a goal, be it knowledge or pleasure, that he is willing to overthrow every moral law to obtain--and he must have the energy to obtain it. In the process he often suffers from pangs of guilt, and tries to forget them by inflicting even greater torments on his victims and ultimately on himself. Quilp has the desire and the energy, but no sense of guilt whatever. This, however, is optional. While contributing to the villain's character development, it has little effect on the Gothic nature of the plot. Quilp makes up for any shortcomings by the fiendish delight he takes in his various acts of malice. Here he is perhaps a throwback to the comic-devil tradition of playing Richard III and Iago as "monstrous intruders from the infernal regions, cackling with delight and rubbing their hands at the torments they inflict."<sup>20</sup> At any rate, Quilp's goblinish glee and vitality go a long way toward providing him with the supernatural aura so valued by the Gothicismists. His bizarre and often sadomasochistic exercises (drinking boiling rum and Schiedam-like liquid fire, hanging over the side of a coach at the risk of his life for the sake of scaring Mrs. Nubbles, etc.) make virtually every major character in the book wonder at one time or another if he's human at all.

In a sense, it is this demonic image more than Quilp himself that pursues Nell across England. Dickens even treats him as Mrs. Radcliffe does the seemingly supernatural elements in her stories by letting him pop in and out of the plot three times at the most unlikely moments, as though conjured out of nowhere, and then keeping us waiting (nearly two hundred pages in one case) before explaining how. On the whole, Quilp fulfils admirably the primary duties of a Gothic villain, making up for lack of efficiency by a wealth of bad intention.

It would be a mistake, however, to regard the Gothic villain as an isolated figure, transplantable into any age without modification. As that master of sexual Gothicism, the Marquis de Sade, said at the time, the Gothic genre was

...the inevitable fruits of the revolutionary shocks felt by all of Europe...For those who know all the miseries with which scoundrels can oppress man, the novel became as difficult to write as it was monotonous to read...it was necessary to call hell to the rescue...and to find in the world of nightmare [symbols adequate to express] the history of man in the Iron Age.<sup>21</sup>

The primary figure the Gothicists developed, or rather turned to their specific needs, was the villain/hero. Trapped between his passionate nature and the "unnatural restraints" of contemporary society, he became, as William Axton tells us, the paradoxical symbol of the age, the personification of "the moral rebellion of his times against a stifling authoritarian tradition" and at the same time the perpetuator of that tradition's worst aspects:

Equally a victim of despotism and an exploiter of it, he has been perverted by an authoritative environment so that he both turns it to the gratification of his will for power and is twisted by his efforts to break away from it or undermine it. (Axton, x)

Because his personality is constantly threatened by this conflict, he asserts it in acts of tyranny and so becomes the embodiment of those aspects of the age that are most dangerous both to himself and to his perennial victim, the maiden, usually an old-fashioned uncomplicated character who only wants to live her life according to the old standard of happiness. Between them, these two may be said to represent

...two facets of the human spirit's sense of imprisonment and perversion by an old, tyrannical order: its awareness that it has been bound from without by absolutist institutions, and twisted within by the attitudes these same institutions engendered. (Axton, x)

Quilp also draws his essential qualities from his era. His is the energy of the modern foundry--Vulcan's forge--full of beating hammers, roaring furnaces, hissing red-hot metal where men move about like demons in the flame and smoke. Such is the vision of life in an industrial age that greets Nell and her grandfather in Birmingham.

In terms of power and the will to abuse it, Quilp is one of the new aristocrats, a grotesque caricature of the old, scaled down to fit the mean but exuberant commercial spirit of his times. Elderly himself but exulting over the dawn of his world as the classic Gothic villains brooded over the ruins of theirs, he is a fantastic figure escaped from a child's nightmare to haunt the New Age.



### #3 THE SECOND INTERMENT

However, the Gothic novel is sensitive to more than just the pressures of the society that spawned it, as when Walpole announced his intention to make "the mortal agents in his drama according to the rules of probability," in short, as psychologically realistic as possible. If it was to avoid slipping back into the patterns of old romance, the new genre must present as realistic a picture of human nature as possible to give the reader something familiar in the midst of its marvels. We can temporarily believe in "the strangest of things," says Coleridge in his review of *The Monk*. "But that situation once conceived, how beings like ourselves would feel and act in it, our own feelings sufficiently instruct us; and we instantly reject the clumsy fiction that does not harmonize with them."<sup>22</sup> In many cases the authors did a better job than they knew:

By its insistence on singularity and exotic setting, the gothic novel seems to have freed the minds of readers from direct involvement of their superegos and allowed them to pursue daydreams and wish fulfillment in regions where inhibitions and guilt could be suspended.<sup>23</sup>

A similar statement, one should add, applies to the minds of the writers themselves.

Possibly by accident the Gothicists had stumbled on the best possible way to show their dislike of prevailing "social patterns...and institutionally approved emotions" (Heilman, 84). Perhaps here more than any other place we feel Dickens' debt to the Gothic or at least to the mode of expression it opened up to the writer. Fantasy has always been a tool for breaking into levels of the mind normally blocked off by social restrictions imposed on the way one perceives things and the sort of thing that one consciously allows oneself to perceive. Through its use, archetypes, subconscious symbolism, and other sorts of suppressed knowledge are most easily brought to the surface. This is especially true when one is composing rapidly as Dickens was in the case of *The Old Curiosity Shop*, moreover putting into it, as Forster tells us, "...less direct consciousness of design on his own part than I can remember in any other instance throughout his career."<sup>24</sup>

To say that Dickens was "possibly not himself fully conscious of what he was putting into his books"<sup>25</sup> is probably too conservative. There are things that very few writers, especially in such an age as the Victorian, would admit to their work if they completely recognized them for what they were. Writing is to a large extent an exhibitionist exercise, given that every idea and image has to come from some part of the creator's mind, but there are areas few of us can plunder open-eyed without being stricken with a paralyzing sense of self-consciousness or the impulse to reject and suppress. There are strange currents in The Old Curiosity Shop, running beneath the surface. It seems very unlikely that Dickens consciously understood everything that he was putting into the Nell/Quilp relationship, despite his skill at presenting the clues to its substructure. Poor, long-suffering Mrs. Quilp goes to the heart of the problem when she tells her friends that

"Quilp has such a way with him when he likes, that the best-looking woman here couldn't refuse him if I was dead, and she was free, and he chose to make love to her."

We instinctively flinch away from applying this to little Nell, but Quilp doesn't. From the moment that he first notices her sexually and proposes to make her his "number two," his "little cherry-cheeked red-lipped wife," the question is always whether Quilp will be able to get Nell under his thumb until she comes of age and the present Mrs. Quilp most conveniently dies. One doesn't know how seriously to take this at first, since Quilp has such a talent for saying the unacceptable, but from the point where Nell and Mr. Trent flee the house, leaving Quilp "gasping and growling" in his sleep in the child's usurped bed, there isn't any real doubt.

Nor is this all on Quilp's part. Mrs. Quilp, the "pretty, little, mild spoken, blue eyed" older version of Nell, wed of her own free will, in "one of those strange infatuations of which examples are by no means scarce," drawn, as Steven Marcus puts it, by "her need to be violated."<sup>26</sup> This too might have been extended to Nell, if she were allowed to grow and mature instead of being frozen in time and in our imaginations by her early death. Here Dickens is dealing with

...the truth of a dilemma which it seems in the nature of society to disregard: that the passion for purity becomes urgently felt only in proportion to the intensity of the passion for defiling it. (Marcus, p.154)

Dickens may have been partially aware of this; however, there are other potential personal applications that he probably would have suppressed instantly if he had been aware of them at all. If Nell is an idealized version of Mary Hogarth, as most critics agree, then Quilp is "in a sense...Dickens himself as seen by the eyes of Mrs. Hogarth."<sup>27</sup> It would be "much too simple and simply too wrong"<sup>28</sup> to accuse Dickens of entertaining consciously any Quilp-like thoughts about his beloved sister-in-law, but unconsciously something does seem to be going on, detectable in Dickens' instinctive understanding of the Quilp/Nell situation and his willingness, even eagerness, to kill the girl off rather than let her suffer eventually the traditional fate worse than death. Whatever the truth, it is certain that he chose the motif best suited to bring out anyone's worst impulses along this line, the persecution of the maiden being at heart an erotic and often incestuous feature, the favourite of a genre obsessed with pleasure gained through sadistic or masochistic means.



#4 TECHNIQUE AS DISCOVERY

In studying the Gothic genre, we must discuss technique as well as motifs. The use of contrast, fantasy, and the exotic to gain access to personal and mythic patterns has already been mentioned. These are techniques needed for a novel's substructure, that hidden scaffolding that gives it endurance as a work of art. But other qualities also deserve attention because they contribute to the novel's initial impact and so constitute much of its immediate appeal.

In his study of Dickens, Collins, and Reade as novelists, Walter Phillips summarizes the literary theory implied in their critical writings as a combination of "intensity for its own sake and externality of method" (p. 188). The latter is defined as the "avoidance of psychological dissection, in favor of a representation of persons in an unusual degree by means of gestures, words, and acts." This is exemplified in The Old Curiosity Shop and many of Dickens' other novels. It implies that we are going to be shown things and not just be told about them.

For example, almost our entire sense of Quilp comes from "that taste for doing something fantastic and monkey-like, which on all occasions had strong possession of him"(chapt.IX). He is all animation and vitality, the picture of Chesterton's mediaeval devil not only in the sense of belonging to "that amazingly healthy period when even lost spirits were hilarious"<sup>29</sup> but also in his almost allegorical singleness of drive and frequent psychological flatness. The only real insight we get concerning his sexual attraction comes from his wife; when we overhear him ourselves—for example, when he gives his reasons for hating Kit--the information is superficial, as though he were deliberately refusing to look into his own motives. But then his appeal is largely one of the surface, of gesture and grimace, and that's probably just as well: if we were to know him more intimately, we would not be charmed but disgusted.

Another technique, perhaps originating in the Gothics, is also implied by the "Show, don't tell" formula, i.e., the use of architecture to reflect character. It was Gothic architecture that inspired Walpole to decorate his cottage at Strawberry Hill with mediaeval artifacts and cardboard battlements before a dream prompted him to make up a set of characters who might have lived there in the Middle Ages if the house had been a real castle.

The most typical buildings in the Gothic novel soon came to be large rambling half-ruined citadels along the lines of Otranto, sometimes alternating with convents and monasteries of a suitably gloomy complexion. All these "[combined] in their architecture the attraction of tyrannous strength and of melancholy," and provided contemporary readers with a "gentle thrill of complacency" (Tomkins, p. 267), born of the thought that this was a part of a past already replaced by a more temperate, secure present. Soon these buildings began to take on "a malignant personality" of their own and the ability to haunt as well as be haunted, if only by the power of suggestion.<sup>30</sup> It was the beginning of the movement to see the castle as an extension or reflection of its owner's personality (or the owner as an extension of the castle's personality). The theory here, as in the pseudo-science of physiognomy--also a favourite of the Gothicists--was that the essence of things could be read on their surfaces by one who knew the code. It became a way to build the psychology of a character by an agreed on set of external clues (e.g., "hard" features, full lips, haughty expression) without having to go beneath the surface at all.

Dickens also uses this device. Most of the houses in The Old Curiosity Shop symbolize the characters of their owners. The good people, no matter how poor, all live in "cleanliness and order," like the Nubbles, if not in miniature Edens' (the Garlands) or fairy-tale caravens (Mrs. Jarley). Mr. Trent, on the other hand, with his haggard, graverobber air is "wonderfully suited" to his shop in sharp contrast to Nell's "perfect neatness." Quilp's two favourite haunts, the counting house and the Wilderness, are both surrounded by "rain, mud, dirt, damp, fog, and rats" and have a tendency either toward burrowing themselves into the ground or sliding down into the river mud.

However, the most Gothic structure in the novel, Nell's old church, is not so much the symbol of an individual as of the religious sense that Dickens wished to dominate the last part of the story. Here we see the novel come full circle as Forster (pp. 149-50) points out, and all the pieces fall into a coherent pattern:

...from the opening of the tale to that undesigned ending; from the image of little Nell asleep amid the quaint grotesque figures of the old curiosity warehouse, to that other final sleep she takes among the grim forms and carvings of the old church aisle; the main purpose seems to be always present. The characters and incidents that at first appear most foreign to it, are found to have had with it a close relation. The hideous lumber and rotteness that surround the child in her grandfather's home, take shape again in Quilp and his filthy gang. In the first still picture of Nell's innocence in the midst of strange and alien forms, we have the forecast of her after-wanderings, her patient miseries, her staid maturity of experience before its time...and when, at last, Nell sits within the quiet old church where all her wanderings end, and gazes on those silent monumental groups of warriors... the associations among which her life had opened seem to be present at its close. But, stripped of their strangeness...gently fusing every feeling of a life past into hopeful and familiar anticipation of a life to come...

Here all the Gothic elements--the effigies and old weapons, ruin and decay, ancient legends and the glamour of the past--combine to create the effect of agelessness and Christian hope in surroundings where even earth and mould seem "purified by time of all [their] grosser particles." If Devendra Varma is correct that "the Gothic novel arose out of a quest for the numinous" and is characterized by "an awestruck apprehension of Divine immanence penetrating diurnal reality" (p. 211), then these last scenes come very close to the spirit of the original Gothics, in intention if not in tone.

Lewis, Maturin and others in the horror school of Gothicism were looking for God, but were glad enough to settle for the Devil rather than find nothing at all. Dickens on the other hand tries to find assurances on the less spectacular level of humanistic Christianity. But many of his most fervent speeches have a hollow and strained note to them as though even as he wrote, he was trying to "preach to [himself] the schoolmaster's consolation, and failing" (Foster, p. 147). The impulse is there, bolstered as it is in most of the Gothics by the physical signs of its desired goal (Christian symbolism and the emblems of sanctified mortality), but so is that dry, deep well, under the church belfry, that is like the mouth of an open grave, a grim reminder of the terrible mystery and finality of death whose horror not even its blessed surroundings can exorcise.

In all of these cases, a certain "externality of method" is present in one form or another. The overall effect is that of a sort of short-hand that cuts down on the need for psychological discussions or detailed descriptions beyond the accepted code words or images, and so lets the plot move along at whatever pace the author chooses, usually slow for sentimental sections and fast when action is involved. This process appeals to the intellect through the senses: we receive our impressions directly from the environment, as though we were another character in the story, and then decide, often on an unconscious level, what they mean, according to our understanding of the author's symbolic code.

Intensity, the second element of the dramatic, probably has a still greater effect on the general development of the novel. Phillips defines this term as "the extraction of the last possible emotional thrill" (p. 188), and under its heading we find suspense, mystery, and dramatic incident. Structural dramaticism and systematic suspense were largely the invention of the Gothicists, although anticipated by Smollett. Walpole made the first step in this direction with such supernatural shock tactics as helmets falling out of the sky and dead hermits invading the chapel, but it was Mrs. Radcliffe who brought the practice to a state of a fine art. Her mysteries were less unbelievable (except in some of their explanations) and so more effective. In general, she worked by introducing something mysterious such as a veiled portrait or unexplained moans in the middle of the night, and then teased her heroines and readers into imagining all sorts of frightening explanation. With her, the nerves were to be kept constantly on edge by "the very vagueness and uncertain origin" of the terror in question, which suggested "an indefinable presence which might manifest itself suddenly" (Varma, p.130). The idea was always to make the strongest possible impression on the senses of the reader rather than on his or her intellect, though this often became involved as well. To increase dramatic intensity she had a habit of always breaking off the story when it was "most interesting," as Sir Walter Scott notes in his Lives of the Novelists. The overall effect was that "chapter after chapter and incident after incident, [she] maintained the thrilling attraction of awaked curiosity and suspended interest."<sup>31</sup> Her fiction provided all the thrills and challenge of a horror story crossed with a detective novel. For the first time books were to be read with bated breath. It was for this reason that Coleridge referred to The Mysteries of Udolpho as "the most interesting novel in the English language."<sup>32</sup>

In serial writing, Dickens found a special incentive to keep his readers' interest high by piquing their curiosity as often as possible, especially at the end of an issue, and to keep enough tension in the general plot line to prevent them from losing interest in mid-magazine. If the Gothicists hadn't prepared the ground for this sort of fiction, he and his colleagues would have had to do it themselves, since it's hard to see how their sort of writing could have flourished without the techniques created by these earlier authors.

Phillips (p. 188) links Dickens to the Gothic especially through his "preference for strong passions because they are strong passion," and states (p. 11) that

Dickens the plot-maker as opposed to Dickens the delineator of human oddities, brought down to date the essential appeal of [Radcliffe's] The Romance of the Forest, and adapted it to the prejudices, credulity, and taste of the audience for which he wrote. In the works of his 'prentice hand...this kinship with older patterns of romance lies on the surface. But...[from] the scene in which Sikes brutally murders his mistress through the opium-tainted atmosphere of Edwin Drood, there is no full-length story of his without its generous reliance upon the brutal stimulants to fear.

"Stimulants to fear," brutal or otherwise, generally call for the sharpness of focus on psychological reactions, physical details, or both, and this in turn makes the scenes in which they occur stand out vividly in our minds. In The Old Curiosity Shop the scene that springs to mind is that of the robbery at the Valiant Soldier. If we were to judge the novel as H.P. Lovecraft says we should weird tales, "not by the author's intent, or by the mere mechanics of the plot, but by the emotional level which it attains at its least mundane point,"<sup>33</sup> then this episode would be enough to mark the entire work as High Gothic. The inn where it occurs, in the midst of a terrible storm, is "a great rambling house, with dull corridors and wide staircases which the flaring candles seemed to make more gloomy" (ch. xxx), exactly "that mysterious type of mansion...in which all manner of appropriately evil deeds might happen,"<sup>34</sup> whose fictional possibilities always fascinated Dickens. Nell, waking in the dark to find a dim figure "groping its way with noiseless hands, and stealing round the bed," is in precisely that position that seems to have most obsessed the Gothicists, especially the women writing in the genre, one assumes because of the sexual threat usually implied. Practically every major Gothic novel has at least one such scene: Ellena waking to find Schedoni standing over her with a dagger, Emily spending several bad nights at Udolpho with all sorts of people wandering through her bedroom, Antonia coming out of a drugged sleep in a crypt just in time to be raped by her brother Ambrosio. The list is endless. What makes Nell's situation different is that the intruder turns out to be her own grandfather.

In a way, this episode typifies the quality of the Gothic throughout the novel. The impact lies in Nell's realization that the old man she loves can become like

...another creature in his shape, a monstrous distortion of his image, a something to recoil from, and be the more afraid of, because it bore a likeness to him, and kept close about her as he did.

Ghosts can be exorcised, midnight assassins foiled, and even Quilp drowned, but her grandfather's gambling mania is a demon of the mind and no ceremony can appease it nor act of violence drive it out. The most terrible things of all have become an intimate part of life. Nell is only able to win a partial victory over it by matching her angelic nature against her grandfather's demonic one, in a reversal of the Valiant Soldier episode, by frightening the old man into the flight that leads them to the horrors of Birmingham and Nell eventually to her death.



#5 THE GOTHICISTS AND THE IRRATIONAL

The author's insight here, similar to those in such later Gothics as Frankenstein, is overlaid by Dickens' almost obsessive drive to reaffirm the intrinsic value of purity and virtue in a darkling world, even if they can be preserved only by removal from it. His goals and the means he used to reach them were sometimes strained, but the techniques and motifs that he borrowed from the older genre were capable of delving deeper than he or his predecessors realized. The Gothic impulse, stripped of all its claptrap, shows itself in his willingness to respond to the worst pressures of the age and to the darkest psychological tensions in symbolic mythic language that draws its primary power from the subconscious. The Gothicists opened the way to hitherto unsuspected levels of the mind. With them began the exploration of what Lowry Nelson (p.249) calls "the subnatural, that is, the irrational, and the impulse to evil, the uncontrollable unconscious," and the acknowledgment of contradictory impulses at work in even the most normal mind.

Dickens may not have been aware of all he was doing, but by helping to free the intrinsic Gothic spirit from its earlier stereotypes and showing that it could adapt to new social pressures, while at the same time reaffirming the potency of some common Gothic situations and motifs in psychological terms, he was lighting the way for later psycho-sensitive writers like the Bronte sisters, Melville, Conrad, and Henry James. With the help of transitional authors like Charles Dickens, his friend Wilkie Collins, and their predecessor Sir Walter Scott, the Gothic novel was able to make the leap from Melmoth to subsequent works like The Heart of Darkness and Turn of the Screw. After such novels and subsequent great works that have shared their qualities, it seems unlikely that the Gothic impulse will ever be buried again.

## FOOTNOTES

- 1) Alfred E. Longueil, "The Word 'Gothic' in Eighteenth Century Criticism," Modern Language Notes 38 (Dec. 1923), p. 460.
- 2) Horace Walpole, The Castle of Otranto in Three Gothic Novels, ed. E.F. Bleiler (New York: Dover, 1966), p. 21.
- 3) Sir Walter Scott, "Introduction," The Castle of Otranto, p.8.
- 4) J.M.S. Tompkins, The Popular Novel in England, 1770-1800 (Lincoln; U. of Nebraska Press, 1961), p. 291.
- 5) Arthur L. Cooke, "Some Side Lights on the Theory of the Gothic Romance," Modern Language Quarterly 12 (1951), p. 433.
- 6) Devendra Varma, The Gothic Flame (New York: Russell and Russell, 1966), p. 130.
- 7) Walter C. Phillips, Dickens, Reade, and Collins: Sensation Novelists (New York: Columbia U. Press, 1919), p. 11.
- 8) Harry Stone, "Dark Corners of the Mind: Dickens' Childhood Reading," The Horn Book, 34 (June 1963), p. 320.
- 9) Archibald Coolidge, Jr., Charles Dickens as Serial Novelist (Ames, Iowa: Iowa State U. Press, 1967), pp. 106-7.
- 10) Edgar Johnson, Charles Dickens: His Tragedy and Triumph (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1952), 1, p. 12.
- 11) Charles Dickens, The Uncommercial Traveller and Reprinted Pieces (London: Oxford U. Press, 1958), p. 153.
- 12) Samuel Chew, quoted by Archibald Coolidge, Jr. in "Charles Dickens and Mrs. Radcliffe: A Farewell to Wilkie Collins," Dickensian 58, (1962), p. 113.
- 13) R.D. McMaster, "Dickens and the Horrific," Dalhousie Review 38 (Spring 1968), p. 18.
- 14) Charles Dickens, The Old Curiosity Shop (Hammondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin, 1972), p. 42.
- 15) Montague Summers, The Gothic Quest (London: Fortune Press, 1938), p. 111.
- 16) Robert Heilman, "Charlotte Bronte's 'New' Gothic," Victorian Literature: Modern Essays in Criticism, ed. Austin Wright (New York: Oxford U. Press, 1961), p. 84.
- 17) Letter from Dickens to Collins, quoted by Archibald Coolidge in "Charles Dickens and Mrs. Radcliffe," p. 115.
- 18) William Hazlitt, "Why the Heroes of Romances are Inspid," Sketches and Essays and Winterslow, ed. W. Carew Hazlitt (London: G. Bell & Son, Ltd., 1912), pp. 185-6.
- 19) "...tous ses crimes sont accompagnés d'une grandeur, d'une âme qui a quelque chose de si haut, qu'en même temps qu'on déteste ses actions, on admire la source dont elles partent." Corneille, quoted by Marlies H. Danzigen in "Heroic Villains of the 18th Century," Comparative Literature, 11 (Winter 1959), p. 37.
- 20) Malcolm Andrews, Intro. to The Old Curiosity Shop, p. 21.
- 21) Marquis de Sade, quoted by William F. Axton, "Introduction" Melmoth the Wanderer (Lincoln: U. of Nebraska Press, 1961), p. x.
- 22) Samuel T. Coleridge, Coleridge's Miscellaneous Criticism, ed. Thomas Middleton Raysor (Harvard U. Press, 1936), p. 373.
- 23) Lowry Nelson, Jr., "Night Thoughts on the Gothic Novel," Yale Review, 52 (Dec. 1962), p. 238.
- 24) John Forster, Life of Charles Dickens (New York: Bigelow, Brown, & Co., Inc., 1876), 1, pp. 140-141.
- 25) Humphrey House, "The Macabre Dickens," in All in Due Time (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1955), p. 154.
- 26) Steven Marcus, Dickens: From Pickwick to Dombey (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1965), p. 154.
- 27) Thomas Wright, quoted by Edgar Johnson, p. 232.
- 28) Arthur Washburn Brown, Sexual Analysis of Dickens' Props (New York: Emerson Books, Inc., 1971), p. 38.
- 29) G.H. Chesterton, quoted by A.E. Dyson in The Inimitable Dickens (London: MacMillan & Co. Ltd., 1970), p. 25.
- 30) Dorothy Scarborough, The Supernatural in Modern English Fiction (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1917), p. 10.
- 31) Sir Walter Scott, quoted by Archibald Coolidge, p.105.
- 32) Coleridge, quoted by Varma, p. 105.
- 33) H.P. Lovecraft, Supernatural Horror in Literature (New York: Dover Publications, 1973), p. 16.
- 34) Earle Davis, The Flint and the Flame (Columbia, Missouri: U. of Missouri Press, 1963), p. 86.

## BLACK STEEDS OF MIDNIGHT

swing sable manes  
 across late winter's dark.  
 Galloping, they neigh loudly,  
 halt near my garden,  
 rouse me from slumber--  
 that Cimmerian valley  
 of lethargic dreams.  
 Careening into dawn  
 on drumbeat hoofs,  
 they speed yesterday,  
 chaos lingering,  
 into tomorrow.

-- Virginia Smith --

## ALDOUS HUXLEYING

He's falling backward  
 in slow motion. He's  
 one piece in a puzzle  
 of fallen leaves. His  
 backbone sprouts roots,  
 his hands decay with  
 the leaves, his eyes  
 grow monolithic brown  
 trunks, project upward  
 to the bright yellow.  
 His teeth are now stars.  
 Chipmunks run below  
 his crooked ochre roots.  
 He rides the trunks up  
 to the yellow corona,  
 looks down at where he  
 is.

-- Hal J. Daniel III --

## MEMORY

You asked for nothing  
 in your urgent hymn  
 of love and humming time  
 when the cadence of your brogue  
 danced the lipping vessel  
 drained green  
 to the muse of staggered rhyme,  
 flinging down its theme  
 from the bloody sun  
 which fired to burn the ocean breeze;  
 sandy orphan Sunday proud  
 torn denim bleached yellow  
 to a cowgirl's ride  
 you were, of waves that crested  
 in an arch of impatience  
 for Atlantic thunder; you were palm  
 softness gathering everlasting plunder  
 of the senses, when you were mine.

-- Malcolm Scott MacKenzie --

## Dualism in Wells's The Time Machine and The War of the Worlds

by  
 Colln Manlove

Of H.G. Wells's "scientific romances," The Time Machine (1895) and The War of the Worlds (1898) have arguably the most in common and the most in contrast. First, these are the two works in which Wells dealt with large social issues directly: both are in a way epic in their purview. In The Invisible Man (1896) and The Island of Dr. Moreau (1897), quite apart from The First Men in the Moon (1901), we deal with stories about eccentric individuals whose experience does not directly relate to that of the rest of humanity. Griffin of The Invisible Man suffers from a sense of having been passed over in life, and is able by chemical means to turn himself into a symbol of his supposed neglect by rendering himself invisible. Moreau, in The Island of Dr. Moreau, is similarly a mad dog living outside society, conducting literally bestial experiments. Cavor in The First Men in the Moon is a mere adventurer who is prevented by the Selenites of the Moon from ever returning to Earth. But in The Time Machine (hereafter denoted as TM) we have a man who is able to travel through time to see the state to which human life has come by A.D. 802,701: the story is in large part a reflection on the nature of humanity in general and where it may be going; more specifically TM has often been seen to be a Fabian satire and warning for Victorian society on the ultimate possibilities of the social divide between idle upper and labouring lower classes. And in The War of the Worlds (denoted hereafter as WW), where the waning civilisation of Mars seeks to ensure its survival by an invasion of the Earth, the involvement of all humanity in the struggle is the consequence.

One should perhaps dim the contrast here a little. All Wells's romances have a measure of "localism." They are told by individual narrators and we see all events through that narrator's eyes. And apart from The First Men in the Moon, there is not much in the way of spatial travel: the time machine may move in time, but remains in more or less the same space, as, bar a few short excursions, does the Time Traveller; the invisible Griffin wanders in a small area; all events of The Island of Dr. Moreau are confined to the small island; and in WW action is kept to the Home Counties and to the narrator's wanderings from Woking to London. (Even in The First Men in the Moon the actual journey to the Moon is scantily described and the moment of departure from Earth scarcely felt: we simply deal with journey's beginning and end. It may be that Wells was not one for the Verne-type travelogue.) Nevertheless, in terms of social involvement and width of purview, TM and WW stand out. Both are, in their way, predictive of possibility where the others are more nearly plays of fancy. Both, too, concern themselves with the topic of ~~evolution~~ evolution—although here one might equally include The Island of Dr. Moreau, where Moreau seeks to graft intelligence on to beasts. But in The Island the attempt to turn beasts to men is unsuccessful. In TM and WW evolutionary distinctions are finally less certain. Humans are to Martians as rabbits or rats are to humans. It is not just a case of "little fleas have lesser fleas..." but of seeing humanity itself in a larger cosmic context, as potentially to be demoted on a larger evolutionary scale to the brute. And in TM humanity has itself over time degenerated to the brute, whether in the form of the ape-like Morlocks who live below earth's surface or in that of the gentle, sylphid Eloi, who turn out to be probably the cattle of the carnivorous Morlocks.



humanity of the Martian invasion--indeed the book ends with what amounts to a paean in praise of the endurance of human civil structures as symbolised in London.<sup>2</sup> And there is also a contrast between centrifugal and centripetal movements: the Time Traveller journeys outwards in the medium of time, further and further away from the familiar and into the alien; but in *WW* the alien comes in to meet the familiar, the Martians come in to our world from the outside and there is for a time a joining rather than a separation.

A larger contrast lies in the attitude of the two books towards the workings of mind. The future that the Time Traveller discovers in 802,701 is one peopled with folk he is at first inclined to regard as the summit of human progress, gods in diminutive human form. His opinion of them changes, however, as he realises that they are not the makers, but the parasitic and ignorant inheritors of the beautiful world and its constructs that he finds. The Morlocks, who tend machines below the surface of the planet, seem to do so to no purpose, since nothing is evidently produced, and they still apparently rely for their food supply on the flesh of the Eloi. The situation regarding the Morlocks is not far from that of Swift's Yahoos, and a certain ironic intent is present in the appearance of human-seeming figures which variously behave as brutes. (This may explain why, like Gulliver with the Yahoos, the Time Traveller feels so much revulsion from the Morlocks.<sup>3</sup>) The presumption of mind in these inhabitants of the future is steadily removed as the Time Traveller's perception grows. Mind is also "steadily removed" as the Traveller journeys yet further into the future, to find life shrivelled still more down to the crabs and to the obscure and anonymous lump jumping by the shore. It has often been said that the Time Traveller's journey into the future reveals to him not a world that has evolved, but one that has devolved:<sup>4</sup> indeed it could be said that he has gone forward to go back, that the future he finds is a reversal of the process of life up to humans from the lowest form of being.<sup>5</sup>

Certain other contrasts between these two novels may be made, almost suggesting that they are two halves of a larger unity. If the dimension of *TM* is time, that of *WW* is space: and in each case these dimensions belittle human cares. 802,701 is time enough to have broken all link or seeming memory with the present, and certainly we find the Eloi living on in the remains of great country houses created in some far-flung pastoral utopia; and even this colossal distance is itself reduced to insignificance as the Time Traveller hurls himself thirty million years further into the future to survey a world without humans, under a dying sun--a featureless and freezing world whose sole inhabitants are first large and hostile crustaceans, and then as he moves yet further forward, an obscure round object flopping by the shore of a bleak ocean. In *WW* we learn of a Martian civilisation, far older than ours, but facing extinction through the cooling of the sun, preparing to project itself 35 million miles through space to invade and colonise our planet; and we follow the onrush of that invasion through the vast interplanetary gulf as mankind continues unconcerned about its local and blinkered pursuits. Another contrast is that *TM* is set largely in a pastoral world of the future; *WW* is centrally about the impact on citified and technological

But if the Time Traveller finds a future progressively less filled by mind, we cannot forget that it is his mind that has discovered it. From the start of the book we are strongly aware of the potency and daring of his intellect, as he tries out the idea of a time machine on several of his acquaintances gathered at dinner, to be greeted with various forms of disbelief from those whose intellects and spirits have never thought to transgress the familiar and self-indulgent world of the here and now. The Time Traveller is a mental adventurer, colonising whole new empires of existence with his mind. It is fitting that he should not remain in this present world at the end but should leave once more into some unknown region of the past or the future. It is true that he is often far from an Olympian figure in his behavior in the future: he panics at the loss of the time machine, he feels a cruel pleasure in killing Morlocks when they threaten him, nor is it his efforts but the schemes of the Morlocks that open to him the place where the time machine has been hidden, beneath the statue of a Sphinx-like figure (symbol perhaps of the mind-defying riddle). He is very much a man of hopes and fears as much as he is the great mind symbolised in the machine. As great mind his presence makes the future seem even more dualistic in character than it already is: for to the dichotomy of pastoral Eloi and mechanist Morlocks, or that between the upper world of light and the lower (unconscious) one of dark, we can add the split between the mind of the Traveller and the progressively more mindless worlds he beholds.

The view of mind in *WW* is somewhat different. The Martians are certainly brilliant, their technology far beyond anything that human pride can put against them: and they have made the first interplanetary journey. Beside the Martians humans are no more in stature than rats and rabbits: indeed the Martians treat human beings as cattle on which to feed. During the story Wells himself draws analogy between the brutal treatment of the natives of Tasmania by European colonisers and that of the Martians to Home Counties people.<sup>6</sup> But here, while pouring some scorn on human arrogance, Wells has little sympathy for the cold intellects of the aliens.

No one would have believed, in the last years of the nineteenth century, that human affairs were being watched by intelligences greater than man's and yet as mortal as his own; that as men busied themselves about their affairs they were scrutinised and studied, perhaps almost as narrowly as a man with a microscope might scrutinise the transient creatures that swarm and multiply in a drop of water. With infinite complacency men went to and fro over the globe about their little affairs, serene in the assurance of their empire over matter.

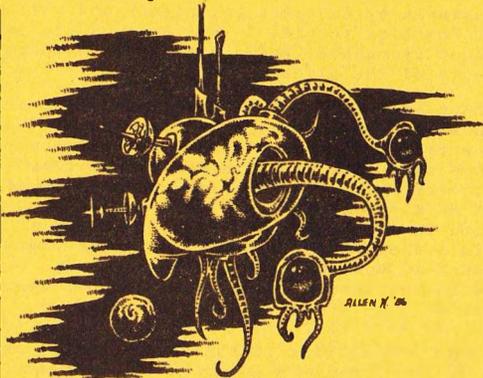
The same complacency was evident in the acquaintances who turned deaf ears to the Time Traveller's account of his experience, and certainly again humans are indicted for narrowness of mind. "No one gave a thought to the older worlds of space as sources of human danger." Yet the minds set against humanity are seen as cold and pitiless, largely because they are only mind. There is some frozen admiration for "minds that are to our minds as ours are to those of the beasts that perish, intellects vast and cool and unsympathetic, [who] regarded this earth with envious eyes"; but when we actually see the Martians, who resemble something like the bodies of squid with vestigial tentacles, we realize they represent a form of life in which all links apart from "hands," and almost all bodily organs, have been stripped away, leaving only the brain.

As such, disengaged from the viscera of a normal body, they are devoid of passion, so that "in the Martians we have beyond dispute the actual accomplishment of...[the] suppression of the animal side of the organism by the intelligence," and thus, "Without the body the brain would of course become a mere selfish intelligence, without any of the emotional substratum of the human being" (135-6). The ruthlessness with which the Martians cut down the first human attempt to communicate with them, and thereafter destroy all in sight or who oppose them, testifies sufficiently to the coldness of this pure intellect, symbolised perhaps in the terrible steel war machines that the Martians, far removed from contact with the earth, use to stride the fire-blasted terrain they create. The Martians, then, represent in themselves a living dualism: they have cut themselves off as far as they may from dependence on the body.

The irony is that when we see them, it is their gross physicality that is emphasised:

A big greyish rounded bulk, the size, perhaps, of a bear, was rising slowly and painfully out of the cylinder. As it bulged up and caught the light, it glistened like wet leather. Two large dark-coloured eyes were regarding me steadfastly. It was rounded, and had, one might say, a face. There was a mouth under the eyes, the brim of which quivered and parted, and dropped saliva. The body heaved and pulsed convulsively. A lank tentacular appendage gripped the edge of the cylinder, another swayed in the air. (24)

We hear of "the incessant quivering" of the mouth, "the tumultuous breathing of the lungs in a strange atmosphere, the evident heaviness and painfulness of movement, due to the greater gravitational energy of the earth"; and see the creature suddenly vanish because "It had toppled over the brim of the cylinder and fallen into the pit, with a thud like the fall of a great mass of leather." These great brains are burdened by the flesh in which they are still locked: mind has to sprawl and slobber through the unwieldy mass that sustains it.



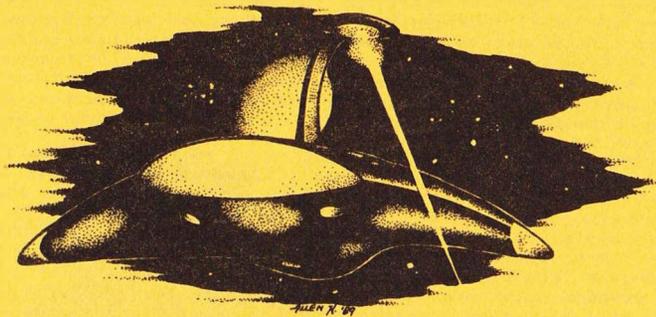
The Martians more than make up for their physical limitations by their use of machines which they operate as the directing brains: and were they themselves as mighty as their machines, there would have been no stopping them. Indeed for a time the Martians become their great machines as they themselves are invisible once within them; up to the end of the story, when the last Martian is heard hooting its dying "Ulla, ulla" in London's Regent's Park, we still think of the creature as the whole colossal machine standing still on the skyline. But then the being becomes once more divided from the products of its mind, reduced to helpless flapping brown shreds of blubber as the birds attack and devour the corpse as it trails out of the hood of its vehicle.

The largest irony of all perhaps is in the vast intelligence of the Martians being destroyed not by humans but by the meanest form of life on earth—the bacteria. There being no disease on Mars, the Martians have no immune system and hence are utterly at the mercy of Earth's myriad disease-causing inhabitants. The greatest is overthrown by the least; that which sought to live beyond the body is destroyed by it. Thus the furthest advance of evolution falls victim to the most primitive, in a collapse inwards, a kind of reversal of Darwinism, that we also see in the end of life portrayed in TM. Insofar as the Martians are defeated not by others but by their own weakness, what the book portrays is not the survival of the fittest, but the survival, in human disease-inured form, of the sickest.

Thus in both novels is depicted some form of a duality between "body" and "mind." So far as mind on its own goes, TM validates it, WW does not. TM shows a plan working: a machine is built for a definite purpose, and that purpose is fulfilled. But the plans of the Martians are wrecked. Indeed the whole of WW operates by the fortuitous. No human action avails against the Martians. The activity of the Martians as invaders seem from time to time haphazard, as haphazard as the people left breathing or the houses left standing after they have passed. When they are destroyed, it is by an action that no-one could have foreseen. In TM, however, we are constantly aware of the intelligence of the Time Traveller probing at the new data with which he is presented, trying out one theory after another until he discovers the truth about the Eloi and the Morlocks. One might say that TM is a *priori*, WW a *posteriori*, in the one the mind imposes itself on phenomena, in the other the mind can only draw conclusions after it has experienced the phenomena. The true nature of the Martians is not known until they are dead. They leave their machines as an unintended legacy, a product of mind what will extend the future of human intelligence enormously. In TM there is nothing left, not even the main actor: the machine is taken away and humanity is left as ignorant as before. For all the emphasis on the future in TM, there is much more future left for humanity at the close of WW.

Thus far the different treatments of mind in these two books: and we may gloss them as we will. If we are moral we will say that the minds of the Martians are condemned because they are divorced from feeling. Certainly Wells does seem to have created a similar critique of mind in *The Invisible Man*, where Griffin uses his intelligence to make his body invisible, but none the less cumbersome for all that, and where Griffin's mind is devoted only to cold hatred for his fellows. Morally, like all good Victorian Christians, Wells liked a sound mind in a healthy body, as with the Time Traveller. This of course is to belittle the moral, and perhaps there is another and less banal way of putting it. Wells seems to be attacking the scientific mind where it puts its workings above all other values or where it harms other forms of life to achieve its ends. Thus the Invisible Man Griffin furthers his research by stealing from and thereby bringing about the death of his father, for which act he has no remorse; and the equally arrogant and ambitious Dr. Moreau cares nothing for the pain he causes to the brutes on to which he attempts to graft intelligence. The Time Traveller, however isolated, is so not by his own wish but by others' indifference. His journey is effectively a warning to nineteenth-century humanity about any complacent and unexamined trust it may have in the inevitability of human progress. In the future is found not expansion but ultimate shrinkage, in part symbolised by the very shrinking figures of the year 802,701: men turned beasts, living on the wreckage of collapsed achievement, and a world rapidly spiralling down to maximum entropy in the death of the sun, analogous to the final extinction of the light of the mind.

The Time Traveller, unlike the minds in the other books, is not selfish; where they seek only to maim and destroy, he goes out to meet and communicate with others. It is not his pride but that of humanity which is satirised. In the Invisible Man, in Moreau, in the Martians, we see the dangers of the wholly isolated intelligence, its severance from the world symbolised by invisibility, an island, or a protective machine. "You cannot imagine the strange colourless delight of these intellectual desires," says Moreau. The Time Traveller, as we have suggested, is the only protagonist of Wells's before Cavor in The First Men in the Moon to travel outwards, rather than stay locked in the self. The Martians come in, and the Invisible Man and Moreau scarcely move at all. The Time Traveller is not obsessed with one aim, whether it be the invasion of Earth or the inversion of natural law. The time machine is for him, however much an achievement in itself, to be a means for investigation of the future. Neither Griffin nor Moreau knows what to do with his wonderful discovery, or for what purpose it is made, except to play tricks with life. Prendick, the narrator in The Island of Dr. Moreau, says, "had Moreau had any intelligible object I could have sympathised at least a little with him...But he was so irresponsible, so utterly careless. His curiosity, his mad, aimless investigations, drove him on." Only the Time Traveller is perhaps the true scientist, for he uses his researches to try to benefit others.



In all these early novels, criticism is directed at the dangers of narrowness of intellect. Both TM and WW portray the expansion of awareness. It is those with an idée fixe who lose their way, whether the Martians, who, intent on the invasion of Earth, knew nothing of the invisible agencies that, entering them with their first labouring breaths, began their deaths, or Moreau who goes on turning out mutated animals without purpose for that is all he can do, or Griffin who having gained invisibility learns all too late its inconveniences.

In contrast to such stasis, TM shows continual movement, not just of the Traveller himself, but of his views. His mind is throughout having to change. At first he sees the Eloi as part of a pastoral idyll; then, perceiving their simplicity, he begins to think of them as children; then he sees them as part of a utopian communist state in which the differentiation of occupation or even of sexual character has disappeared, leaving them uniform in appearance. After this he comes to think of those "people" as humanity on the wane, living in static enjoyment of the achievements of the past, as the last languid remnants of the artistic impulse. But he is puzzled at the fact that there are no old among them, no sign of graves, and that their clothing, always in good repair, could not be kept so by such idle folk. He becomes aware of the Morlocks, and formulates the idea of future humanity as having become two separate species; he assumes that the Morlocks who live in the underworld make the things necessary for the welfare of the daylight folk, and sees the division of Eloi and Morlocks as the ultimate projection of the contemporary one of Capitalist and Labourer. Given the degeneracy of the Eloi, however, he has to theorise that the Morlocks continue this service to the daylight people out of force of habit. Later, growing aware of the great fear the Eloi have for the Morlocks, and having in an exploration of the underworld seen a piece of meat of faintly familiar outline in the places of the Morlocks, the Time Traveller begins to feel a fearful suspicion growing in him; and eventually he is brought up against the stark conclusion that the Eloi are cattle, reared and fattened by the Morlocks as their food. Even this conclusion is left in some doubt. "It may be as wrong an explanation as mortal wit could invent. It is how the thing shaped itself to me" (89). What we have in all this process is a mind that is never allowed to come to rest, any more than the Traveller does in his journeying. And the travel is towards truth, whether about the Eloi through the investigations of his mind, or about life itself through his journey to the end of the world. The Eloi are static, happy to live on the superficialities of things, protecting themselves through illusion from the dreadful truths that surround them. And, through all the book, stasis is the enemy, from the stasis of the complacent well-fed figures who will not move from their facile scepticism towards the Time Traveller, to the final apotheosis of stasis in the vision of life run down to all but absolute zero that the Traveller beholds on his furthest journey into the future.

In WW there is an equivalent mental journey, if more in the direction of human awareness of its own true nature and position. The process again is again a stripping away of illusions. First to go is human complacency that it is the sole intelligence in the universe and that the Martians are mere brutes. Throughout there is the steady erosion of men's trust that the ordinary things of life will somehow keep going, and the assurance that the Martians are merely a little local difficulty. Then men's best efforts in the form of the army and the navy, fail to halt the Martians. After this disaster the fleeing narrator encounters a curate who regards the Martians as a divine punishment visited on humanity: he cannot allow that they violate his little patterns of sin and redemption. Next, the narrator meets an artilleryman, who plans to fight back against the Martians through guerilla warfare, eventually using the Martians' own weapons against them: yet when it comes to it, this man actually does nothing, remaining inert. Through each stage, human pride and folly are progressively exposed, till man is reduced by the artilleryman to the status of a mere scurrying ant. And yet, even while this is happening, the outlook of the human race is being altered in such a way that when it is saved, it is far more alert and adaptable in mind than it could otherwise have been. The Martians, in retrospect, become the stimulus for shaking humanity loose from the stasis of its complacency and insularity.

We have learned now that we cannot regard this planet as being fenced in and a secure abiding-place for Man...this invasion... has robbed us of that serene confidence in the future which is the most fruitful source of decadence. The broadening of men's views that has resulted can scarcely be exaggerated (191).

The narrator goes on to imagine a future in which humanity will learn to travel to other planets, and perhaps eventually beyond the solar system--an expansion that will mirror that of its own mind.

The Time Traveller had come to a similar conclusion concerning the intimate relation of mind and adaptability:

"It is a law of nature we overlook, that intellectual versatility is the compensation for change, danger, and trouble. An animal perfectly in harmony with its environment is a perfect mechanism. Nature never appeals to intelligence until habit and instinct are useless. There is no intelligence where there is no change and no need of change. Only those animals partake of intelligence that have to meet a huge variety of needs and dangers."<sup>9</sup>

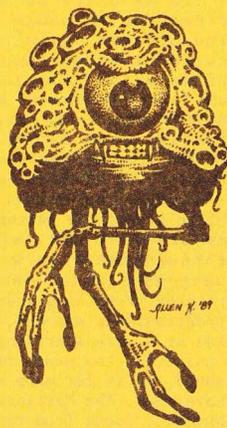
TM, with its frequent imagery of sunset, culminating in the death of the sun, is partly an image of the poison of the fin de siècle mentality Wells felt to be paralysing his contemporaries; WW prefigures the dawn of a new era. The dominant artifact in the future world of TM is the building, of which the one most explored is the museum; that of WW is the great mobile machine, with every stride first threatening but ultimately advancing humankind. Humanity, in Wells's view, is kept keen only "on the grindstone of pain and necessity," however hateful that grindstone may be.

With this sense of the importance of change and mobility, Wells's books are full of a feeling of the contingency of the world we take for granted, the firm lines of which often seem to shimmer and fade, ever capable of becoming something other in the next moment. The Time Traveller's very journey depicts this, as the environment about his machine alters as it moves through time: "I saw trees growing and changing like puffs of vapour, now brown, now green; they grew spread, shivered, and passed away. I saw huge buildings rise up faint and fair, and pass like dreams. The whole surface of the earth seemed changed--melting and flowing under my eyes" (22). In The Invisible Man this contingency of being is seen in the invisibility of the protagonist, whose body is both present and absent. In The Island of Dr. Moreau the firmness of evolutionary categories is worn away as brute bodies become instinct with faltering intelligence. At the end of WW the outlines of the world seem no longer certain:

I must confess the stress and danger of the time have left an abiding sense of doubt and insecurity in my mind. I sit in my study writing by lamplight, and suddenly I see again the healing valley below set with writhing flames and feel the houses behind and about me empty and desolate...

I go to London and see the busy multitudes in Fleet Street and the Strand and it comes across my mind that they are but the ghosts of the past, haunting the streets that I have seen silent and wretched, going to and fro, phantasms in a dead city, the mockery of life in a galvanised body...

(192)



It is an insecurity that, looking towards the past, is a source of terror; but for the future, in its refusal of comfort and assurance for the mind, is an essential release. And it is an awareness that has, if anything, sharpened in WW; in TM it was the world of the future, the "other" world he had visited that the Traveller came to doubt as he conversed once more with his friends in his own time; but by this last book the lineaments of this familiar world have become insecure to all thinking people.

#### FOOTNOTES

- 1) For a more recent account of a similar failure, see Bernard Malamud's God's Grace (1982).
- 2) I would take issue here with the contention of David Y. Hughes, "The Garden in Wells's Early Science Fiction," in Darko Suvin and Robert B. Philmus, eds., H. G. Wells and Modern Science Fiction (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1977), p. 61 that the context of WW is 'pastoral' or that of a garden; nor is its being set like TM in the Thames Valley a guarantee of rurality.
- 3) Robert Crossley, H.G. Wells (Mercer Island, Washington: Starport House, 1986) maintains that the Time Traveller's dislike of the Morlocks is an extension of his revulsion for their Victorian ancestors, the urban proletariat; but extends this by arguing that the intensity of the Traveller's feeling derives from his own behavior in the future showing him to be more Morlock than Eloi, despite his refusal to admit it (pp. 24-6).
- 4) Perhaps the best recent portrayal of this, and Wells's inverted debt to T.H. Huxley's notions of evolution, is Darko Suvin's "A Grammar of Form and a Criticism of Fact: The Time Machine as a Structural Model for Science Fiction," in Suvin and Philmus, pp. 90-115.
- 5) Or as John Huntington puts it, in his The Logic of Fantasy: H.G. Wells and Science Fiction (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), p. 45, "the future is represented by a monument [the statue of a sphinx the Traveller finds near his machine] that we associate with early civilisation. Thus the future is a return to the past."
- 6) The approach to WW as a satire has been the dominant one in criticism: just as has been the idea of TM as a warning, an extrapolation from present conditions. Not enough attention has been paid to the limitations of the alien creatures themselves, or to the extent that humanity comes out well by comparison.
- 7) H.G. Wells, The War of the Worlds (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books, 1963), p. 9. Page references in the text are to this edition.
- 8) It is just such a tentacled, polyp-like creature with which life seems to meet its end in the last glimpse of the Time Traveller.
- 9) H.G. Wells, The Time Machine (London: Dent, Everyman's Library, 1969), p. 89. Page references in the text are to this edition.

## SYNTHESIZER SUZIE

Synthesizer Suzie  
 Plays in a band  
 Of new wave post punks  
 On a keyboard with one hand  
 Churning out a masterpiece  
 3-chord melody  
 With chicken-fried hairdos  
 A '60s parody

Suzie knows but three notes  
 The guys maybe know four  
 Considering their repertoire  
 Why should they know more?

Acknowledging no structure  
 They rigidly replay  
 With repeated high precision  
 Their hit of yesterday

Suzie seems unconscious  
 But no one seems to care  
 The audience of self-made clones  
 Isn't really there

-- B. Ware --

## THE SMOKED-VELVET FEATHERS OF AESTHETIC PIGEONS

Dusk thickens on Missouri sands  
 Until this page is under water.  
 I sit above the tracks and read,  
 Like the trains, with my yellow eyes. I turn  
 Another page. Your room, the summer mist  
 and moths steam in dampness.  
 Raw weeks breed in smoky weather,  
 The moon sulks in Omaha.

-- Patrick Worth Gray --

## ERROR BY BAD KING LITERATE

"Why are you here exiled on Demos Isle,  
Where tears even drop from teeth in smile?"

"While praying,  
I sang: 'Invisible Lightning, Silent Thunder' ."

"But that's good deep way, saying--  
Our God, we do fear and love pledge under."

"Not the king's thought;  
in all libraries earth standing,  
he has read everything:

And Nonsense Subversive To Time

Well Spent, he stamped all I sing.

I did reply--'Sire, you only prove (May you have only sons),  
There be more ignorant books than wise ones.' "

-- Stanley Fellman --

## Harmony

by  
Jim Harmon

Live your fantasy.

That was a line I saw in an advertisement for a night course on how to become a private detective. That certainly is the fantasy of millions of men and women. Not a phone-tapping divorce hound but a Dashiell Hammett sleuth, tailing gorgeous blondes and flattening flatnoses.

Other men and women want to be cowboys (or cowgirls). We live in horse country in once rural Burbank-Glendale and we see cowboys ride by every day--in Western clothes and hats. Almost every rider. Once in a while you see somebody in a nondescript bill cap, but not many. I've yet to see anybody in formal English garb. These are Westerners.

Some people want to be spacemen--astronauts. That takes a bit more hardware of the expensive kind. You couldn't use to really do it at all, but now you can, with great help from the U.S. government. But for a fantasy life, one can put on Mr. Spock ears or a shirt like Flash Gordon's.

There was an earlier romantic figure we only hear of occasionally, one that anticipated the astronaut--the aviator.

Almost any man born in the thirties has thought of being an aviator, many of us wishing to be a World War I ace like Rickenbacker, Von Richtoven, or G-8, flying a bi-plane in gallant duels. Or perhaps a barnstormer of the thirties, wing-walking, deliberately crashing into a barn, walking away, scarf tossed over shoulder.

A few weeks ago, August 1989, a small part of that day-dream came true for me.

On a hot Summer Saturday, I was piloting a 1932 airplane over the Queen Mary. The clean air washed over my face through the vents of the semi-open cockpit and below me on a gray sea lay the great passenger liner. I was at the controls of a 1932 Ford tri-motor plane.

I only had a five to eight minute turn at the controls during a one hour flight contracted for at an air show, but it was a thrill.

We signed on--Barbara and I--for \$30 each at the Hawthorne Air Show. I think we got a turn at the controls because there were so many pilots there who wanted to fly the historic plane and actually take the wheel (not a stick). There were four pilot-passengers on our flight (nine seats in all). So since they were giving them all a turn, I guess they figured they had to give the other paying passengers the same treat. Somebody could have panicked and put the ship in a death dive, frozen at the controls, but nothing of the sort happened. Still I suspect this was perhaps not in accord with every regulation in the book. Even these latter-day aviators, some rather greying daring young men, didn't seem to like to have regulations for breakfast every morning.

I had no great trouble with the controls, for a total amateur, I think, although the pilot had to slightly lift the nose twice during my stint at the controls, with his own wheel. It was great to actually feel the outside air rushing against your skin and see out, without window glass between you and the outside--through the tiny passenger vents and the larger pilot vents. It was an experience I'll never forget. Not many such experiences you can have in life for a mere sixty dollars. I know Barbara loved it too.

For a brief moment, a Walter Mitty fantasy came true for me. For others, fantasy and reality become more subtly entwined.

I'm writing still another book on old-time radio dramas, and I needed one piece of cast information, about an aviation show. The Air Adventures of Jimmie Allen. I knew the lead character, Jimmie was played by Murray Maclean. I had met him a few times in the company of my good buddy, Curley Bradley ("Tom Mix" on radio). But I had never heard the true name of the second most important character on the show, teen-age Jimmie's adult mentor, Speed Robertson. It was in none of the standard references. I had a ten-year old phone number on "Jimmie." I didn't know if he was still there, or even if perhaps he had flown off this planet entirely. But I tried it and he answered.

I found out the older actor's real name was Robert Fiske. And I learned something more of his and "Jimmie's" life, one where reality and fantasy blended into a Hollywood fairy tale. But in Hollywood, they strike the set after the final shot.

Jimmie is retired from his job working at the Inglewood airport now. Used to do a bit of everything. Taught lessons. worked on engines, maybe swept up. It wasn't like the old days. He and Speed Robertson had gone to Hollywood to make it big. Jimmie did all right for a time, even starred in his first picture, Sky Parade. But the glory days didn't last for long.

Speed never did make it. He wasn't good-looking enough. They cast him as a heavy. In his own picture. A Hollywood face --William Gargan--played Speed Robertson. With a start like that, there were only more minor villain roles ahead for him, and not many of those.

Jimmie Allen doesn't go by that name anymore -- it was his only name, public or private, for a while, but he has reverted to Murray Maclean for a number of years. When I called him up to get Speed Robertson's real name, he couldn't remember it right off. he phoned back the next day and told me it was Robert Fiske. Bob or Speed has been gone a long time --died just after the end of World War Two. Though Jimmie -- Murray-- has some health problems he sounded a lot more clear on a number of things than he did a few years ago. The minor memory glitch was as nothing to some of the confusion he generated in a late middle age career move to become a stand-up comedian. Perhaps Martians could have appreciated some of the jokes he told. But not warm-blooded mammals of the Earthling variety.

Sounds like boredom is Jimmie's biggest problem, as with most of us senior citizens. He's 72. And his pal, Speed, has been gone so long he can't remember his real name very easily. And the airport doesn't have a job for Jimmie Allen, not even cleaning up. But once he used to fly that trim little monoplane from Shanghai to Hong Kong, or was it only Glendale to San Diego? Was it only at a radio microphone, or was it real?

And what is "real"?

#### THE INVENTION OF THE FRISBEE

We had the Messiah on seventy-eights,  
huge thick discs we stacked and scratched.  
The singers laboured as if struck  
in tin boxes, voices worse each time  
my father laid the needle down.  
The bass made my arm hairs  
rise for sins or the plain horror  
of sound when he sang so darkly.  
When the chorus was inspired,  
music broke in vinyl splinters  
and I clapped my hands up  
over my ears. Violins rang  
along my teeth. The windows  
felt for one vibration to crack panes,  
spin harmony in shards of light  
along the floor. Later, when moons  
swelled on the tune of wind out back  
in the pasture, we sailed them.  
We got the records burning  
and sailed them into the love of crickets.  
We watched them glide, level as the sounds  
of childhood, dripping fire.

-- Philip Lee Williams --

## REGRET

It's 3:30 on a gray afternoon  
 late in November.  
 Winter is homicidal in the air,  
 a knife-blade at my cheek.  
 At the apartment door I reach  
 for the familiar key-string on my neck  
 and know at once it's gone.  
 I frisk my school-books, my gym clothes,  
 my shoes, imagining luck  
 tricky as an acrobat's timing.  
 My memory interrogates the day  
 like a white light in an empty white room,  
 but won't surprise me with the key,  
 asleep in a forgotten pocket.  
 What I recall--like pictures of the dead--  
 is the knot,  
 only double-tied.

There is nothing to do but sit  
 in the dingy hall, lost in revery  
 over the key. It lay like a talisman  
 on my chest bone, where I am hollow now.  
 I would give anything for its good weight.  
 There is nothing to do but think  
 of past joy. Cannily  
 it slipped into the lock  
 and was made for the lock;  
 beautifully the tumblers turned,  
 the bolt obeyed.

-- Judy Kronenfeld --

## STRANGER TO MYSELF

I lie here  
 watch  
 as the wind whirls  
 the first white flakes  
 through the trees  
 wonder  
 what I'm doing  
 in this room  
 where the door locks  
 on the outside.

I begin to look for myself  
 find, instead, the wind  
 with its many voices:  
 the gentle hum of a lullaby,  
 the voice of fury roaring  
 through the long gray throats  
 of the steeples across the street,  
 seizing the oaks  
 as if to choke them.

What are the secrets of the wind,  
 the trees?

Then the sky is clear.  
 It has no secrets.

Only I do.

-- Sue Sanial Elkind --

## Communion

by  
Lance Robinson

Matthew Rogers hated being caught away from his colony during solar flare activity. Back at Lagrangia he would have been able to wander anywhere in the colony--its hull was thick and radiation safe. Here at U.N. station Unity, however, solar flares meant staying in specially designed compartments. To make things worse, more than a hundred statesmen, diplomats, and their staffs were visiting Unity for the summit talks. The presence of these extra bodies had transformed the shielded rooms into a series of sardine cans. The summit, which this flare activity had delayed, was unprecedented. The leaders of all eight colonies met to find a way to stop the world's escalating violence from cracking their fragile peace. The summit had attracted the attention of politicians, journalists, generals, terrorists, everyone. Media people were naturally in attendance.

Luckily, the radiation dropped to a safe level in only three days. Soon Matthew and several other workers would be outside the station in pressure suits, checking spaceships and doing routine maintenance for Unity, while the summit went on inside. But it was Sunday, and Matthew decided to attend a worship service before he went out to work--he felt guilty about not having been to church in a while. There was an inter-denominational Christian service conducted by a minister who was part of the Unity crew. The crew of Unity was international, so Jewish and Moslem services were also conducted. The hall was packed, but many chairs remained unoccupied while visiting politicians milled about, shaking hands. As Matt understood it, their meetings would deal with two main problems: the increasing militarization of Space by the superpowers and the use of American facilities by private corporations, which many colonists feared gave terrorists and extremist governments a chance to operate in Space.

Looking around, Matt spotted Ismail Iqbal, who had trained with him in flight school. Ismail had later moved from Lagrangia, Matthew's home and the first colony that the United States built, to Stanford, which was more independent. Like Matt, he had flown his colony leaders to the summit meeting.

Why is he attending this service? Matt wondered. They'll have Moslem prayers here, later. Ismail was devout and always vocal about his religion. Matt could not stand him. Then he realized the answer to his question. All the visitors from Stanford--government officials, secretaries, and ship crew--were standing together, using the pre-worship socializing as an opportunity for a show of Stanford's solidarity. "P.R.," Matt whispered in disgust. As the organ prelude began, the worshippers went to sit down and Ismail made a discreet exit.

Matthew was a religious man, but he found it difficult to remain attentive during the service that morning. While the minister gave his sermon, Matt skimmed through a pamphlet he had picked up from the floor. It discussed the eucharist.

"Bread--Christ's body broken for us. Wine--Christ's blood which seals the new covenant--"

"Five aspects of the eucharist: (1) Thanksgiving to the Father...The eucharist is the great sacrifice of praise--"

"(2) Memorial of Christ. --'Do this in memory of me.' --"

"(3) Communion..."

Matt put down the pamphlet, wondering that Ismail had even come near a Christian worship service. He's probably trying to kiss up to his superiors by going along with their 'united front church visit.' Then Matt recognized his emotions: distrust, hate, jealousy. The main reason Ismail repelled him, he knew, was that he had gotten higher grades than him in flight and maintenance training. Hearing the minister's voice made Matt-hew's guilt more acute, and he reminded himself of other sins. As everyone stood for a hymn, he considered the non-existent work hours he had claimed and been paid for. And he remembered his rudeness to others during the past three days of isolation. He felt inadequate. He sinned gratuitously and often enjoyed it. He was not worthy of God's grace. Then with a start, Matt realized that the church service was finished. He hurried to one of the four "spokes" and waited for an elevator, not speaking to or looking at anyone.

Unity, like most permanent Space-stations, was wheel-shaped and spinning to provide artificial gravity. He ascended in the elevator toward the hub, going from one half Earth-normal gravity into nearly complete weightlessness. Barb Watson, who had co-piloted the flight from Lagrangia with him, was waiting there with the assistant they had asked for.

"Matt, this is Liem Tsu. He's stationed here at Unity and he'll be helping us."

"Hello," said Matt.

"How do you do?" There was silence as Matthew said nothing. "Shall we go?" Liem finally suggested.

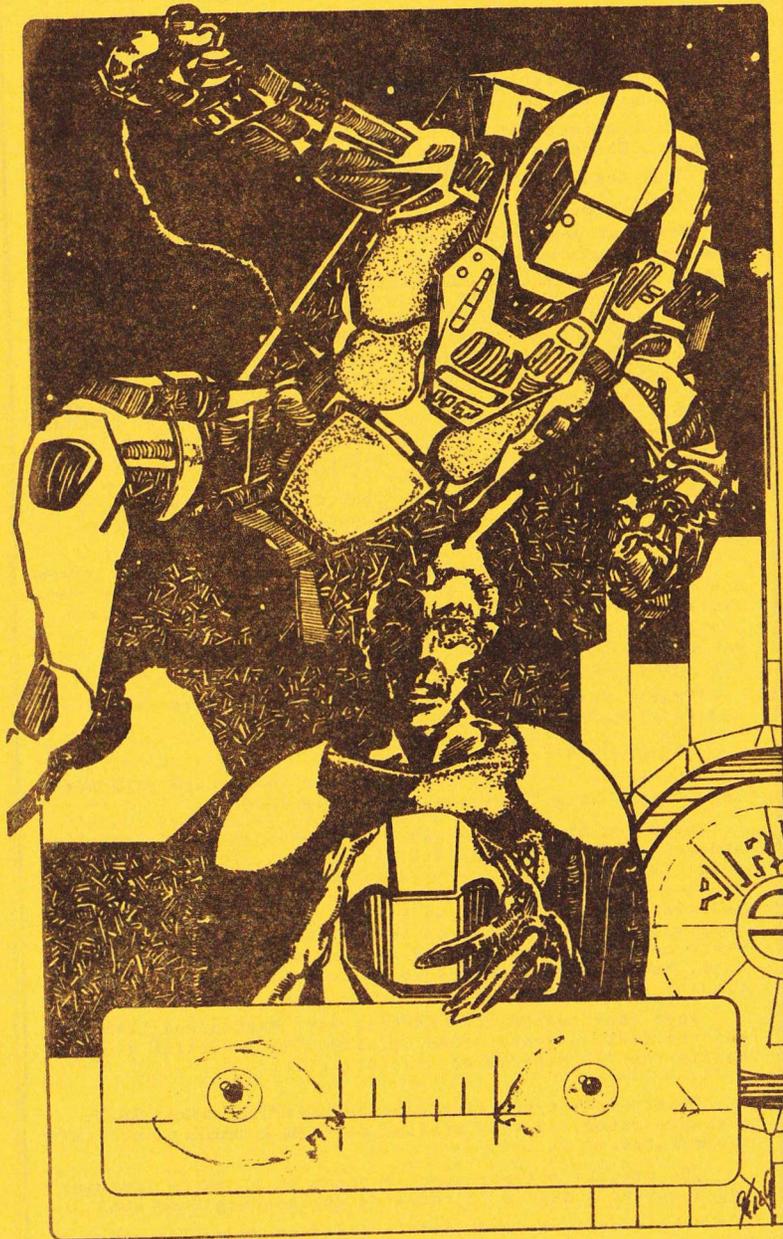
Barb led the way through a stem that extended from the station's hub along the axis of rotation. They pulled themselves by the ladder, travelling head first, toward the ship docking bays at the other end of the stem. Matthew and Barb had their pressure suits waiting in the ship; Liem carried his suit with him. Matt started to tell Liem what tools they would need, but Liem was having some trouble handling his suit. Matt and Barb waited as he captured a glove that had floated away from him.

When they reached the docking bay, Matt asked Liem to get the tools and meet them outside. "Do you think you can handle that?" Matt asked sarcastically.

"What kind of training does he have?" he asked Barb, a minute later, as they crawled through a small tunnel into their ferry.

"He has the primary space-systems maintenance training and a master's degree in rocketry engineering from UCLA."

Matt's acrimony was quickly replaced by guilt, again. He had treated Liem Tsu badly, never suspecting that he would have anything near a master's degree.



Matt and Barb began to don the pressure suits. They stayed in separate compartments of the ship while they removed their casual clothes and put on the water cooled underwear of the pressure suit, then they helped each other with the outer-garment. Even though the liquid cooled, grey longjohns with its web of plastic tubing was not very attractive, Matthew could not help noticing Barb's enticing shape. Then he reminded himself that she was married. Guilt again.

Matt tucked a nourishment bar into the cavity at the chin of his helmet and made sure he had enough drinking water. And when, after a few minutes, the helmets and gloves were on, he and Barb checked that their suits were functioning properly. Water was circulating and being cooled. Radios worked. Oxygen pressure good. Waste gases being absorbed. They put down their helmet visors and went outside. Barb tethered herself to a rail on the outside of the ship and helped Matt to strap the jetpack to his back. Barb and Liem would not need to be moving around, so only Matt had the "manned maneuvering unit." (Everyone just called it a jetpack.) On the way to Unity they had had trouble with the radiator panels of their ship, and on the other side of the docking bay there were some new ones ready and waiting for him. Matt would replace the old ones so they could be inspected and repaired carefully. He fired the oxygen jets and flew off to get the spare parts. Originally jetpacks had used nitrogen as a propellant, but lunar mining had made oxygen the cheapest gas anywhere off the Earth.

Matthew looked around. He could see the Earth and recognized two constellations: the Southern Cross and Scorpio. The moon was hidden from sight behind the docking bay. He hadn't been "outside," as Space dwellers referred to the vacuum of outer-space, for two weeks. The eight Space-colonies each had parks and ponds and birds and fresh air, but that was all still inside. There were always walls, a floor, and a ceiling holding the air in. Only here, fully exposed to the cosmic rays, the sun's ultraviolet radiation, and total vacuum could Matthew be said to be "outside." He had been outside dozens of times, but still once in a while he thought about the emptiness of Space and would shiver with anxiety. In almost any direction he could point, he knew, there was nothing but occasional hydrogen atoms. But it still felt good to be outside after being squashed in that shielded room for three days.

Matt looked at the ships radiating out from the spherical docking bay, and the crews buzzing around them. There appeared to be nine "ferry" class ships, two "tugs," and one shuttle plane. From a greater distance, he knew, the docking bay would look like a flower, with the ships as petals. Matthew had seen a dozen paintings of such structures. But these thoughts were cut short when he and all the others outside in pressure suits heard a startling announcement on the common emergency frequency. "Attention all crew members. We may be in danger of a terrorist bomb strike. Please suspend all maintenance and repair operations and return to the station. I repeat. There is a possibility of a terrorist bomb aboard the station. Please suspend all EVAs."

Already Matt could see the crews scurrying around. "Barb, you go on in. It'll take me a minute to get back there."

"Hey, you!" an excited voice called, apparently having switched his transmissions to the common emergency frequency. "You with the jetpack, come in over here. It's closer."



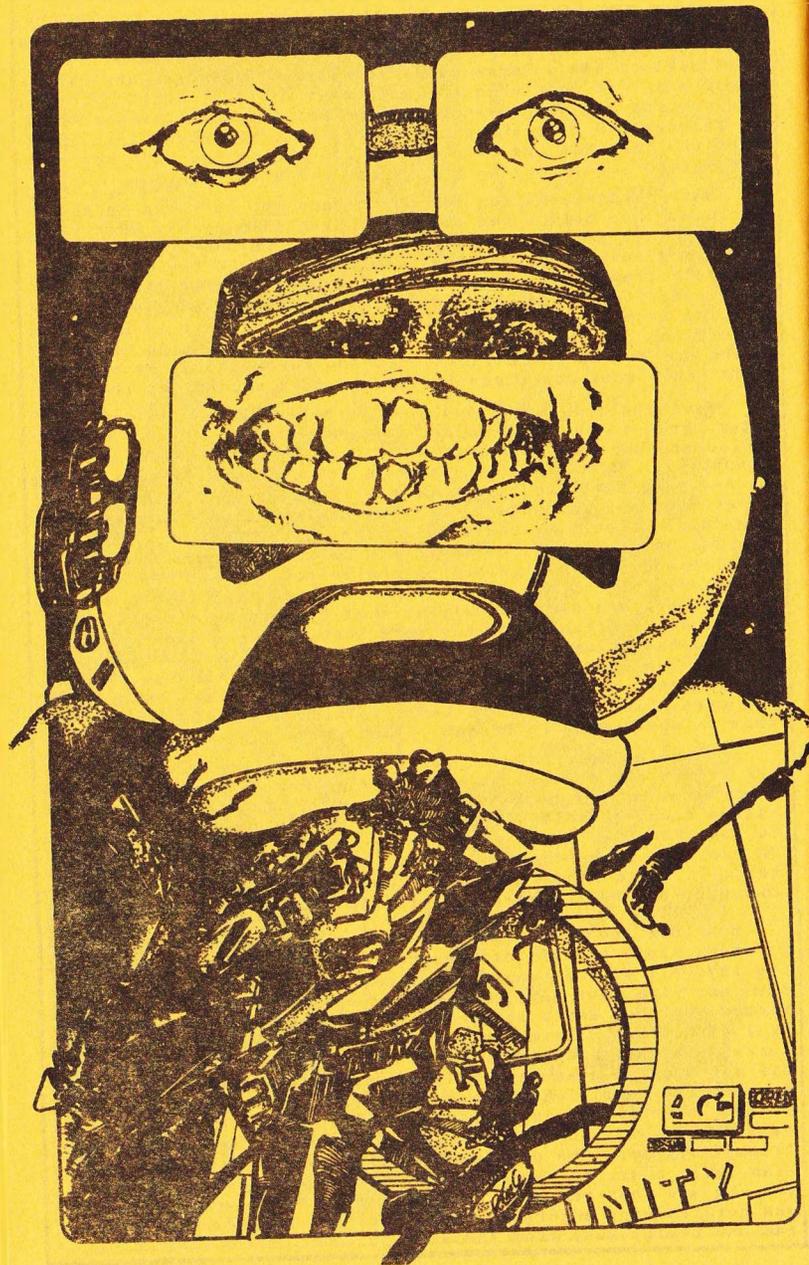
Matt saw whose voice it must have been. He was down at an airlock, hanging on to a handrail, in the shadow of the docking bay. Matt rotated until he was facing the airlock and applied a bit of thrust. Just as Matt's jets brought him to the airlock, the other fellow slipped the emergency entry lever--an override mechanism required because of safety regulations. Apparently, he did not want to waste time waiting for the air to be sucked from the room. The doors jerked open and the air rushed out. This airlock was a large room with a small door, so anything loose near the door when it was opened would be swept out with the rushing air. A pressure suit helmet and then the astronaut it belonged to were among the debris that was blown into Space when the door was opened. The man who had called Matt had not checked to see if anyone was inside the airlock.

Matt recognized Liem Tsu as the one who had been in the airlock. His helmet was the only thing that he had left to put on. Matt saw Liem grasp for it. But the helmet was out of reach and moving farther away. Matt thought he could see the moisture from Liem's final exhaled breath crystalizing on his face. Matt shivered, knowing that the heat must have been rushing from Liem's body. He tried to aim himself in Liem's direction, but the tools that Liem had been bringing had been blown out out of the airlock too, and were getting in the way. Liem could stay conscious for ninety more seconds at the most.

Matt applied thrust and started moving toward Liem. But then Liem threw a small arc-welder from his belt at him. Then he threw another tool and another. Liem was trying to propel himself toward his helmet by flinging mass in the opposite direction, but he had made Matt the target of the flying tools, in the meantime. Matt had to dodge the flying tools and this was slowing him down. If only he could call Liem on the radio. But of course, he couldn't: the radio was in Liem's helmet. He gained on Liem and Liem had gained on the helmet. Now it was just out of reach. Suddenly it shone with reflected light. Matt did not understand. Was someone helping them by shining a spotlight? He did not realize that they were leaving the shadow of the docking bay. Liem was only half a second behind his helmet in leaving the shadow, and he looked directly at the sun. The sun, not screened by an atmosphere or a helmet's visor, burned into his eyes. Liem cringed and tried to hide his head, and Matt knew that he was trying to scream. Then Liem stopped moving.

In a few seconds Matt was able to grab Liem. Then he reached the helmet and slammed it onto Liem's head. Slamming was a mistake, because it sent Matt spinning in the opposite direction. He calmed down, and clipped the helmet into place, then checked to see that Liem's air was flowing and the suit pressurizing. He took the tether from Liem's waist, and clipped it to his own belt. It would be awkward using the jetpack while carrying another man, but Matt turned and started back to the station.

But then the terrorist bomb exploded--bombs--a whole string of them. Along the rim of the station, in the hub, in the docking bay. All within two seconds of each other. The structures ripped open and fire shot out, only to be immediately quenched by the vacuum. Matthew saw a space-suited body flying out in his general direction. He aimed himself toward it and turned on the forward thrust, dragging Liem at his hip. Then the speaker at his ear started speaking with four different voices at once. Some of the people who were working outside had not gone back in and had not been injured by the explosions. They were all yelling over the common emergency frequency. Matt turned his transmitter from the private frequency, which only Barb and Liem could hear, to the emergency frequency so he could yell, too. He saw that the body he was flying toward was moving; he was not rescuing a corpse. "Hey, you!" he called. "You there, the one flying away from the station."



"We're all flying from the station, wise-guy," a voice said.

"No, we're not," said another. "I'm still attached to my ship."

Then the one Matt was actually talking to turned his head toward him. But he didn't say anything. Matt caught the astronaut with a thump and their velocities combined to aim them in a different direction.

"Are you all right?"

"Is that you, Rogers?" It was Ismail Iqbal. He could make out the face underneath the visor.

Then Liem started screaming in Matt's ear.

"Shut up!"

"No one said anything."

Matthew realized that only he could hear Liem and he changed his transmission frequency back again. "Shut up! We're okay. We're safe."

"I can't see! I can't see!" Liem kept screaming.

"Close your eyes, we'll get you back to a doctor. You'll be okay."

Someone else started talking. "No one answers inside. If there's anyone alive in there, they can't help us. They--they won't have much air." This voice started crying.

Once Ismail had fastened himself to Liem and Matthew, making a small triangular unit, they saw that they were moving away from the station rather quickly. Matt turned them so he was at the back, facing Unity, and Liem and Ismail had their backs turned to it. When he turned, he saw a corpse float by. She had no pressure suit on--had been flung from the station when it ripped open. Already, her body was swelling as the liquid vapourized under her skin. Freeze dried coffee, he thought. Then he almost threw up.

"Rogers, look!" said Ismail, kicking the body aside.

Another astronaut was flailing arms and legs frantically, head turned toward the island of three men. Matthew flew them in the right direction. Before they reached the astronaut, there was another explosion. The rocket fuel and liquid oxygen stored in separate tanks at the docking bay had been leaking out and mixing. The explosion ripped through the entire docking bay and through all the ships and human bodies nearby. Matthew and the others were now far enough away from Unity to be safe from the explosion.

In a moment they reached the astronaut, but the arms kept flailing. There was only silence on the radio. Ismail flipped up the visor. The woman's lips were blue, her head jerking up and down. They searched over her suit and found a rip through the outer layers above her right hip. Underneath was an oxygen hose with a small puncture. She was getting some air but not much. Matthew covered the hole with his gloved hand. Ismail attached an auxiliary hose protruding from his suit to the same hose on hers. The hose was designed for just such a hook-up.

"Liem, do you have any putty cement or string or anything with the tools you still have?"

"I got some tape." Matt found the tape and covered the puncture.

Again he aimed for Unity and turned on the thrust. The Space-station was farther away than ever and it would be slow going with three passengers.

"Attach yourself to him -- uh?"

"Denise," she gasped, still catching her breath. She hooked her tether to Ismail on one side and Liem on the other, forming a spaceship of sorts with their four bodies.

"What's been happening?" Liem asked.

"Turn your transmissions to emergency, Liem. The station was bombed. We didn't have more than a minute or two of warning."

"I looked straight into the sun. I can't see."

"We'll get some help soon enough."

"How?" snapped Denise. She turned her head to look at the station. The wheel was still rolling but now the entire station was also slowly toppling around a new axis. It was as if it were a bicycle wheel that had come loose on a way down a hill and now the wheel was spinning and tumbling and bouncing in slow-motion toward the bottom. The docking bay was now on the far side with the wheel facing them. It looked like the old symbol for Earth, with the cross-shape of the four spokes within the circle.

"Come on, Matthew, take us back to it. We can get some sort of help there."

"I am. The thrust is full." But he saw that the station looked smaller than it had a moment ago.

"We're going away from it!"

Matt turned off the thrust. "I'd better save the oxygen."

"What do you mean, 'Save it'? Get us back there." Denise, like the others, was scared.

Matthew yelled. "The jetpack would run out of oxygen before we were half way there, and then we would run out of oxygen." He paused a moment and then said, "We've got too much momentum going the wrong way. And besides, there's not much left there to get back to. We're probably the only ones alive."

"By yourself with the jetpack you could make it," offered Ismail.

Matthew said nothing. He just bent to read everyone's oxygen gauge. Both Liem and Denise were running low. Matthew removed the jetpack from his back and began to examine it. The valve for filling the tanks was the right size to attach to the auxiliary hose on any of the pressure suits. Thank God for standard sizes and for mass production. He strapped the jetpack loosely to Liem's chest and connected the hose. When Liem's air was gone, he could be fed oxygen from the jetpack.

"Matthew," asked Ismail, "do you think you could use that jetpack to rotate us again? I want to be facing Earth."

"Why?"

"It's about time for my prayers."

Matt was shocked. "Does your stupid religion tell you that you have to do your daily prayers, even in a situation like this? Damn it, don't you know what's happening to us?"

"It is not a sin to miss one prayer. And of course it would be silly to pray when your life depended upon your doing something else. But there is nothing we can do now, but wait."

They now knew that they were going to die.

Matt rotated the communion of four astronauts, attached with wire tethers, air hoses, and interlocked arms and legs, until Ismail was facing, if not exactly Mecca, at least Earth. Ismail shut off his transmitter and started his prayers. Several minutes passed in silence, then Liem began to scream. He's probably not even sure we're still here, thought Matt. Blind. No one talking. Nothing to even touch or feel. Matt took Liem's hand and squeezed it tight. He stopped screaming.

Matt looked back at the tiny Space-station. He could still see the cross of the spokes. The cross reminded him of his guilt. Freeze dried coffee--a terrible, evil thought to think about another human being. But although he remembered his sins and his feelings of guilt, he felt no guilt now. Somehow, guilt seemed to have no place here. Regretfully, but resigned to it nevertheless, Matt realized something else: he still hated Ismail. And to hate is a sin. I wish I didn't feel that way, but I do.

Matt took the nourishment bar that was tucked in his helmet within reach of his lips, and a few sips of water from the tube that came up to his mouth -- his final meal before he died.



## ERROR &amp; UNINTELLIGIBILITY

It wasn't the first war  
 It was a fine time  
 Not yet the second  
 Everyone launching primary  
 We sang  
 But you resisted  
 You peeled &  
 touched the land of death  
 Forests hung thick  
 tricked with the bones of the  
 dead  
 Captioning  
 the sky wept  
 Everyone could read  
 & the Tradition  
 & the valleys & the  
 plains  
 Burnt up  
 Doors opened in the  
 Earth  
 Whole walls grew from single stones  
 The thin roof was ash  
 & smoke  
 Nothing was kept out  
 It rained  
 the corpses sang  
 Began again  
 The second time

-- Joel Ward --

 LATE FLIGHT ACROSS NEVADA  
 for Miranda

Are you down there, Miranda,  
 in our backyard, playing your puzzles?

Can you find the way for the train  
 through these spider-web tracks?  
 Can you arrange the skyscrapers right  
 and keep beasts off the streets?  
 Can you trace the secret trail to your  
 great Grandpa's Peach Flower Valley  
 which enticed the poet Tao Chuan?  
 Can you gather more pinetrees, crown them  
 with eagles tiny as white sesame seeds?  
 Can you make the temples and school roofs  
 shine like golden coins? Can you build  
 bridges for the gulf between East and West?

It's now 7 p.m. All's quiet.  
 Are you still down there, in our backyard?  
 A final look at your works: see if the boats  
 enter the harbour, sheep the fold, horses  
 the stable; see if the harvesters go home  
 from the hillside, under a dark-going sky.

Yet your hand quivers on the board.  
 Your hair flutters in the wind.

Great mountains shift by like quicksand;  
 cities decompose, rivers shrivel, roads blur,  
 deserts and cliffs twist and tilt, while  
 the winter sun consumes itself in flames,  
 sinking into the furrows of the sea.

-- Stephen Liu --

## EPILOGUE

No lessons will take  
 in this season; trees bend in obeisance  
 to departing deity, wildflowers  
 are husks, dust is washed from stone  
 and wind beats wider  
 view to faltering workings  
 and we dry and separate and fly  
 to catch on fence and stiff bramble  
 and light fades in the south  
 and evening sits bitter  
 and those few with flesh to bone  
 walk with lantern  
 in silence and it may be snowing,  
 it is snowing, and we have forgotten  
 what we knew.

-- Mark Rich --

# Theatre of the Fantastic

by  
 Peter Bernhardt

Well, where were the Coneheads? Advertisements, interviews, and articles leading up to the fifteenth anniversary show of Saturday Night Live seemed to promise a veritable return to Remulak. There were stills of the Coneheads competing on Fami-ly Feud and excerpts of Connie explaining the Earth custom of apple-bobbing to her mother. The anniversary show made no attempt to play any of the best routines all the way through to represent 15 years of inspired silliness. Instead, they chopped up some of the better skits and ran them all together in 20 minute intervals. Viewers who followed this marathon were not invited to laugh as much as they were tested to see how many bits they could remember. The Coneheads received less than 30 seconds in which they were questioned about how they had filed their income tax.

For the benefit of the generation that grew up after the first three or four years of SNL (or have never seen the original shows in syndication), some plot exposition is required. Beldar (Dan Aykroyd) and Primatt (Jane Curtin) represent the elite scouting force of planet Remulak. Their mission is to convert our world into a fueling station for the great Conehead fleet. The versions of Beldar and Primatt tend to differ, but one of them appears to have sunk their scoutship in the East River. They have remained unhappy residents of the New York megalopolis long enough to produce a daughter, Connie (Laraine Newman), who has grown into a troublesome teen. Although Beldar runs his own driver's school and Primatt has settled into a homemaker's role (she offers "mass quantities" of beer and fried eggs), the Coneheads continue to wear their robes and capes in public, and make no effort to conceal their hairless, pointy skulls. A conehead's cone may have mysterious power but it seems to function best as a sex organ, so foreplay tends to resemble a game of quoits.

Why devote further space to a popular skit of the mid-seventies? Television has been too generous in its attempt to amuse us with shows featuring creatures passing for human. I would argue that the Coneheads have been the best of their breed. The high quality of the scripts and the deliberate tackiness of the special effects repeatedly transcended the simple parody of sit-coms and s-f cinema. Who can forget how a cardboard cut-out of the World Trade Center blasted off from the New York skyline for the return flight to Remulak? The Coneheads are less interested in fulfilling their mission or protecting their identity than they are with satisfying their immediate animal needs. Any idle human chatter about extra-terrestrials is met with guilty, hasty looks followed by nervous falsetto laughter.

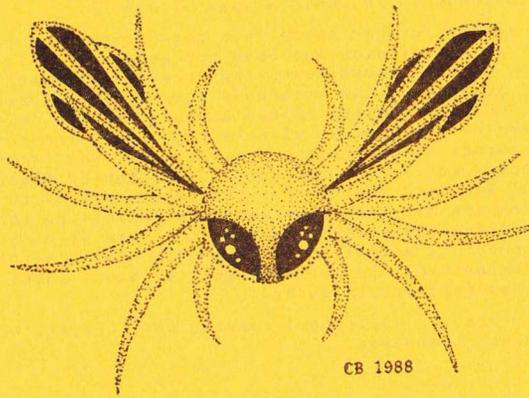
There are two additional reasons why I treat the Coneheads as personal treasures.

People forget how Saturday Night Live drew so much of its material from daily life in New York City. Gilda Radner's beloved character, Roseanne Roseannadana (a "news commentator" who could digress on any pertinent issue and start talking about pubic hair on used shower soap) was derived from a live TV reporter (Roseanne Scamardella) complete with frizzy hair and thick lipstick. The Olympia Cafe was only a slight exaggeration of any Greek-owned luncheonette in Brooklyn or lower Manhattan.

Therefore, when people fail to recognize the Coneheads as humanoids they are not being stupid straight-men (in the vaudevillean sense): they are behaving like typical New Yorkers. From an early age we middle class gothamites have been trained to ignore the ways of foreigners. It's all right to lose your temper if they cut in front of you or do their jobs poorly. However, calling attention to a Conehead's cone or emblem on his chest would display a tasteless lack of "urban propriety" comparable to pointing out a Sikh's turban. Of course, the average New Yorker accepts the Coneheads' ritualized refrain, "France, we come from France." To be cool is to be incurious, and the average New Yorker (alas!) has no better sense of world geography than the majority of Americans.

Also, as someone who lived nine years in Central America and Australia, I am touched by how the Coneheads recapitulate unintentionally so many of the self-delusions expressed by expatriates (myself included). One comes to a new country with a mighty mental agenda but soon settles for just a comfortable life requiring the least major effort. The inhabitants are obviously inferior and lack a "real" culture, but you can't help gobbling their food or accepting their invitations to bed. There is the shock and disappointment of producing a child in the wilderness that accepts neither your mores nor your sense of identification. Connie even had her head honed at an early age, making her unacceptable as genetic mate for the High Conehead (John Belushi).

The Coneheads followed me to Melbourne. I saw their poster in the window of an s-f bookshop. Australians never received SNL, so what did customers make of the three garishly costumed actors with their mouth cuffed in the Conehead expression of extreme disapproval ("Eeeennhhhh")? Damned if I know, as my one response was to walk to the nearest pub.



CB 1988

## SELECTED LETTERS

1105 Skyline Drive  
Laguna Beach, CA 92651

Dear Leland:

I much appreciated Dennis Kratz's article on heroes in s-f, comparing my Timescape to Solaris. He makes points that had never occurred to me, and yes, he's right about my notion of what is in fact heroic. I take a more open view of science and human capabilities than does Lem--mostly, I suspect because Lem is still mired in the reflexive Humean and eastern European scepticism. Neither has learned much from the paradigm-breaking aspects of quantum mechanics.

Actually Timescape has had diverse critical responses. Perhaps the lit'ry establishment likes Lem's message more than mine; his makes humanists feel much more comfortable. But other aspects of the book continue to surprise me. I finished the manuscript of Timescape in the spring of 1979, quite sure that I had written a novel which was quirky, self-indulgent and bound to have a marginal audience. After all, in it I had simply let go, pouring in detail about scientists, the way they think, how they live, and that hardest of subjects--the way it feels to do science, the oddly incommunicable sensation of discovering something strange and true and utterly new.

The novel began as a short story, "3:02 P.M., Oxford," published in If, September 1970. I've never had the courage to reread this fledgling effort, concerned with an English laboratory where a time communicator is built. I never consulted it while writing the novel, but the notions are there--time and England. I tried another tack with "Cambridge, 1:58 A.M.," published in Epoch in 1975. Here major characters appeared and the English motif of the novel sprang fullblown into my mind as I wrote the story (by dictation; I was building an addition to my house and had little time). Only then did I have the scheme in full, and slugged away at the book for four more years.

The underpinning of it all was a scientific paper on tachyons, particles which can travel faster than light, which I wrote with William Newcomb and David Book in 1970 ("The Tachyonic Antitelephone," Physical Review D 2, page 263). This idea and its causal problems intrigued me greatly and still does.

Still, when I finished the manuscript it seemed to me a dense work, filled with knotty philosophical problems and lots of observed facets of the scientific mind. Not a fast-moving, gripping thriller, no. It played on the Snow-called Two Cultures--the abyss that separates the scientific and humanist persuasions. I used my sabbatical leave time at Cambridge for colour, and my years as a graduate student in La Jolla. In fact, my identical twin and I appear as characters in the novel at just the point where we began graduate work. I also used a lot of my own life history in constructing Gregory Markham, who sometimes reflects my views in the text itself.

In the years of labour I had layered several other themes into the novel, lapidary imagery such as the varied use of waves in time, in oceans, in human affairs. I jockeyed the chapters about to achieve a symmetry: the action cycles between 1962 and 1998, and the novel was published in 1980, half way between these two worlds. That was because I felt we were already halfway between these contrasting lands of light and darkness, but also for a further effect-- the present acts like a lens in the novel, focusing events at the opposite time in a different fashion. And as with a true lens, the image is inverted from the original.

But I wonder if readers truly care about such matters; these are authors' satisfactions, after all. Do you think so? I've gotten many letters about the book, often asking me to write a similar novel. Someday I shall, though I did write a similar one in Artifact, whose interests are archaeology and physics. In Timescape I discovered how easily the realistic novelist can construct his realm. You simply observe closely and report back; much of the real-world context does your work for you in overcoming the reader's disbelief. But few s-f works can so rigorously make use of this method, and even fewer have enough science in them to invoke the power of deep scientific imagery.

Finally, the characters in Timescape seem to stay with me, like people you knew in college and every now and then wonder how they turned out. My subconscious has already supplied detailed stories of what happened after the novel, and in fact I cut from the manuscript an alternative ending which continued their lives further. So to me Timescape is a continuing story, given life as well by the fact that people still encounter it and bring their own freshness to that world. I'm quite grateful for that, and for Dr. Kratz's analysis.

Sincerely,  
Gregory Benford

Critics (i.e., astute readers) often observe things in a story that were unnoticed by its author, so they certainly would interest themselves in anything that results from the author's conscious design.// What I personally derived from Timescape was an insight into the unprofessional behavior of professional scientists--plus the chance to imagine a time-line in which American folly has fewer disastrous results than in this one.

4740 North Mesa #111  
El Paso, TX 79912

LS:

Dennis Kratz might consider that the relative scarcity of critical attention paid Timescape (vs. Solaris) has less to do with the attitudes of the two authors than with the fact that Benford is marketed as a genre writer and is therefore beneath most critics' notice.

In case Walt [Willis] is too modest to bring it up himself, that fellow from the Celtic mists had an Ace paperback commissioned by Terry Carr--The Improbable Irish, a collection of anecdotes under the pen-name Walter Bryan (Ace, 1969). There was even a hardcover reprint--shades of Warhoon 28!

Ta ta, Richard Brandt

Naturally, critical recognition is difficult for any writer of this science-fiction trash. Observe the word order here: the phrase "trash s-f" would imply the existence of non-trash s-f, which is impossible.

5911 North Isabell  
Peoria, IL 61614

Dear Leland:

Thanks very much for the latest RQ. Much enjoyable and informative here, but I particularly was delighted by Batory's "The Climax of When the World Screamed," because I had no idea that Doyle was, unconsciously, of course, writing an erotic story. I'm glad that, when I first read the story at the age of thirteen (1931), my parents did not know that I was reading pornographic literature any more than I did. Thanks to Batory for illuminating me (though I should have thought of the symbolism long ago). I'll be sending a copy of the article to Sam Rosenberg, author of Naked is the Best Disguise, the book that upset so many Sherlockians. He'll be delighted, too.

Best,  
Philip José Farmer

I think one can only say that this Challenger story exhibits --to quote from Lloyd Penny's letter (p. 212)--"that...sexuality [missing from] the rather asexual Holmes saga." In an essay once sent to RQ, there was quoted a definition of pornography as fiction "of little or no artistic value" that contains "gratuitous episodes for the sole purpose of arousal." In the rejection letter it was noted that P.J. Farmer (the writer this critic cited most often) satisfied neither criterion and so [despite Leslie Fiedler] couldn't be discussed under the porn category. And I think Conan Doyle fits this classification no better than our present correspondent.

Post Office Box 483  
Norwood SA 5067 Australia

Dear Leland,

Ursula K. Le Guin remarked in RQ 30 that The Left Hand of Darkness represented "the paradox of a male view of an androgynous culture presented by a female." I felt when I first read this book that Le Guin was worried that she might presume too far, and that this was partly why Genly Ai gave such confused and evasive answers to Estraven's request for a man's opinion of what women are like--although it is also true that even an author will sometimes shy away from contemplating what another gender really seems to think. These impressions were intensified by Nora Gallagher's report in the January 1984 Mother Jones: that Le Guin did not know whether the Gethenian sexual state "was actually physically possible in humans until she gave the completed manuscript to her pediatrician, a Frenchman, to read. It is perfectly possible," he told her, "but it is disgusting."

Also in RQ 30 was Connie Willis's opinion, given in 1986, that " 'All My Darling Daughters' is the most powerful thing I've written." To me, this seems a story where a female presents what purports to be "the male view"--not by adopting a male persona but by positing how men would act in circumstances that the author invents for the purpose of demonstration. Although I have read "All My Darling Daughters" only once, three years ago, and have no access to a copy now, its power is such that I am willing to describe the plot just as my memory retains it.

The female viewpoint-character of the story has returned after vacation to what I remember as resembling a co-educational College, but scaled down, and isolated (like a space-station). She finds herself with a new female room-mate, whom she treats as far less worldly and rule-breaking than herself. But until she left home, this room-mate was habitually raped by her father, and she knows that the sisters who remained behind will be victimized in the same way. To spare them this, she is prepared to make available illegally to her father an unfortunate little creature whose conformation makes it powerless to resist human penile penetration of the tender pink orifice that is its most noticeable attribute, but which registers the utmost helplessness, terror, pain and emotional distress when so penetrated. It has no means of fleeing or of fending off such attacks. Explaining her sacrifice of this unfortunate little being, the room-mate is also explaining (the ostensible crux of the story) why she has always considered the viewpoint character amazingly innocent compared with herself.

If "All My Darling Daughters" contained only the elements I have described so far, then the viewpoint-character could be "innocent" both of the knowledge that such fathers could exist and of the ability even to imagine such a moral enormity as her room-mate is degraded enough to commit. The father in question is hinted to have the type of character imputed to Elizabeth Barrett Browning's father in the play, The Barretts of Wimpole Street. Both fathers are considered abnormal. But the conflicting and truly memorable message of Willis's story is that the father is not at all abnormal in receiving supreme sexual satisfaction from inflicting pain on an unwilling subject. The male students of the community (the world, in the story's terms) universally abandon their former sexual relationships with female students in favour of repeatedly abusing the unhappy little creature.

John Baxter is the only person I have discussed this story with, and it was clear in a very few words that we had independently assimilated the same message -- that what men enjoy most in the sexual act is to hurt and terrorize -- and that we were both outraged by it.

Yours sincerely, Yvonne Rousseau

More precision is wanted here. The existence of sexual components in sadism is made plausible, e.g., by one writer's reference to Electrocutation Night and the orgasm experienced by prison guards when the juice is turned on -- while Connie Willis's story does the same for the reverse inclusion, of sadistic elements in sex. But equality (as opposed to strict class inclusion) can't be established in either case, so you actually mean, "...what some men enjoy most..."

Dear Leland:

428 Sagamore Avenue  
Teaneck, NJ 07666

Thank you for a characteristically nice RQ. Unpretentious, mature, no trumpets blasting. And the ads should, happily, keep your costs down. (Note I do not say "make a profit.")

I enjoyed the articles. Dr. Kratz has a good point although his particular choices are minor league. Actually the entire world seems to be in need of heroes. We [had] a pair of non-entities vying for the presidency. Russia has a man working hard to seem to be a nice guy, your good-natured next-door neighbour. No one knows who is boss in any European country (well, I must except the redoubtable Iron Lady of Britain, I guess, although she is not quite my definition of "hero"); Israel [had] such trouble it elected two equal nebbishes to office. And the Palestinians can't even find someone better after several decades than Arafat, their perennial loser. Yes, the world needs heroes. And so does s-f. Curse the New Wave anyway, and the existentialists who started it. In some heaven, little Franz Kafka is laughing his head off, singing "I told you so."

Tucker's bit is funny--and true. Bernhardt is right that Beagle's Last Unicorn, however lovely, was hardly about to "change the face of adult fantasy." It was still light years ahead of his latest, the People of the Air (title?), which was simply dreadful. Anyone who has ever seen the peculiar antics of the SCA in their Salvation Army clothing could not take his premises seriously. I missed the Unicorn film, but I recall with ague and pain Beagle's screenplay for the execrable Bakshi film of JRRT, so, assuming he had something to do with this one I suffer no sense of loss. I was captivated, however, by the superb all-American (OK, some British too, I believe) work on Roger Rabbit. The screenplay was not especially endearing but I sat open-mouthed at the grand animation and tricky cinematography. Three cheers for our side! I recall a Japanese-animated Oz film in which Dorothy appeared several times with her eyes drawn in the slit-lines typical of the ladies of Japanese woodblock prints! Could Oz be in Japan?

Your editorial about Rejection Letters was good and sensible. I recall, many years ago, before I even had anything published professionally in the field, I received back from you an essay I had sent, with good justifiable criticism. (Later I revised a portion of it for inclusion in a book on M.P.Shiel. I am certain your words helped.) The cleverest--and most educational--rejection I ever received was from a magazine which printed, well, let's just say fictional material for use by school teachers. The editor was a very big man in publishing and edited a highly respected writer's journal. I had sold him a piece (which I had to revise considerably, much to my dislike). Flush with success, and the remuneration of a big thirtybucks, I sent him more, and received three or four polite rejections. I thereupon sent a very long, very angry blast, criticizing in no uncertain terms the quality of the material he was using. That it lacked any sense of poetry or imagery, qualities I felt younger school-children should receive in addition to didactic stuff, etc. Three pages I fumed, and he responded with a brief note thanking me for my letter. "We always enjoy hearing from our authors," he concluded.

Well, I realized what a fool I had been and what a neat put-down he had handed me. I respected him and his editorial judgement thereafter but when I tried again and got nowhere I knew my welcome had been worn out. I would still receive an annual Christmas Card, but I sent no more stuff.

Ben Indick

RQ never has accepted money for ads, which are either exchanged or donated. // In the political-military sense the only 20th century heroes I can think of are T.E. Lawrence (who refused all military decorations) and Ho-Chi-Minh, who for his people symbolized the fight against oppression by France, Japan, and the USA.

7234 Capps Avenue  
Reseda, CA 91335

Dear Leland,

An interesting observation by Dennis Kratz that the more intellectualized s-f has de-emphasized the hero. I can see why. If you think about it, nothing can be more important than your own personal survival. Also, there must be easier ways to get dates than by rescuing maidens from dragons. Generally, heroism involves putting other considerations ahead of your personal survival. It's easy to understand why societies would value such conduct. A society that valued self interest above all wouldn't last long. Over the centuries, lots of individuals have internalized society's idea of the hero, and the results have ranged from Horatio at the bridge to Sir Thomas More.

However, there seems to be a second type of hero. If the first type of hero is a societal hero, the second type is the individual hero. The individual hero has what it takes to survive under even the most difficult circumstances. Ulysses would be an example. He's not trying to benefit society. He's not putting other considerations ahead of his personal survival. He's trying to save his own posterior. In some cases, the acts of the individual hero may never be known by anyone. I'd use the character in "To Build a Fire" and Ivan Denisovich as examples. There are fewer intellectual problems with the individual hero. Given the situations, most people would hope that they have what it takes to survive.

Yours truly,  
Milt Stevens

-----  
Remember the protagonist of Gateway (Fred Pohl's first Heechee novel) who stays alive only by firing a rocket-load of passengers, his sweetheart among them, into a Black Hole. So I can't consider personal survival in itself as heroic behavior.

-----  
30 N. 19th Street  
Lafayette, IN 47914

Dear Lee:

Did you ever notice that a lot of fanzines have the policy of not publishing letters that comment on their letter columns? Either that, or their readers aren't getting interested in the letters. What, is some double entendre feared, writing letters about letters? That's right where some of the liveliest fanac gets going, letter column interchange.

Do you know whether "Jenny" is a name or a cargo in Pat Mueller's zine advertised on the back? I want to know before I send for it.

One almost wants to review the book Bob Tucker proposed and be added to the blurb list. It has the most unusual method for getting out of a building I believe I've ever seen.

Sincerely,  
John Thiel

-----  
One Hugo-nominated fanzine appeared to be almost nothing but letters commenting on letters--which was one reason why it was a nominee and not a winner. // For information about Pirate Jenny, see the letter that follows. // A jokester once suggested a more unusual escape from a prison building: just disguise yourself as garbage and get thrown out.

339 Vienna Street  
Newark, NEW YORK 14513

Dear Lee:

My first impression, when I got home from the office and looked at the mail, was Oboy, gore and goo (front cover)--I wonder if these guys are into War of the Worlds. Then I looked at the back cover and said to myself, "Pirate Jenny...I remember making a dress for her" (when SUNY Geneseo produced Threepenny Opera). Herewith a few thoughts:

My favourite poem was "Ymir's Mirror / Eiseley's Glass"--every word strikes a true note. Go get 'em, Ace.

It was a delightful surprise to see excerpts of the Connie Willis--Nancy Kress--Earl Ingersoll conversation. I was fortunate enough to be a student at the very exciting 1986 Brockport Writers' Forum, and Connie and Nancy were our teachers in the s-f class. I can still see the gleam in Connie's eye when she said, "Did you know that gorillas have kittens for pets?"

"Blurb Happy" by Bob Tucker was lots of fun. (Would Damon Knight really say a thing like that?)

I'd like to respond to Peter Bernhardt's comments on The Last Unicorn. Years before the movie, I found Peter Beagle's book touching and beautifully written. I loved Schmendrick, who didn't think he was a real magician; Molly Grue, who didn't think she could love any more; the Prince who didn't think he was a hero; and the unicorn, who thought her race was doomed. I even loved King Haggard, who thought he could suppress the magic; and Mommy Fortuna, who didn't think the truth would sell.

I never thought of it as a children's book.

When I heard that an animated film version had been made I thought, oh no, it's bound to be so watered-down and so obvious that the message will seem absolutely trite. (When I read a good story, I feel like I'm making some discoveries. When I see the story, especially in the flattened-out form of an animated film, I feel I'm seeing someone else's discoveries take place.)

My kids watched the video, and I decided to stay in the other room. But the soundtrack got to me. I looked. Then I began to like the art, and the voices, although I had imagined Schmendrick as older. I was surprised how involved I got. I agree with Peter Bernhardt that there are conflicts among the elements of the film: animators, writers, etc. And I kept telling myself that books are better, that animated films of books are to literature what the commercial is to the Epic Motion Picture. What is this, I asked, the One Minute Quest?

But maybe this story is too good to be just for grown-ups. Maybe "The real magic is in you" is a message kids should hear before they're ready for the book. I just hope seeing the film at age nine won't spoil the book for them at twenty-nine.

All the best --  
Barbara Mater

-----  
As Ian Covell observes--p. 215--Damon Knight has written many things like that, enough, in fact, to fill a book. // Unfortunately, it's the TV scenario, whether good or bad, that commands attention--so if works like Peter Beagle's aren't read by age twelve, they probably won't be read at all.

412-4 Lisa St., Brampton  
Ontario L6T-4B6

Dear Leland:

I am a former member of the SPWAO, and I heard about RQ frequently, but got the impression that it was a magazine about markets. I'm happy to see that it bridges the gap between the fanzine and the small press s-f magazine.

RQ Miscellany: The personal rejection slips I've received have always been helpful, especially those I received from Twilight Zone. I submitted one short story to TZ, and it came back with a few suggestions; a subsequent submission garnered a few more tips. Those tips got my story readily accepted by a local literary magazine.

Heroism in s-f: I hate anti-hero stories...a good number of them consist of the anti-hero in a pit or torture chamber, constantly bawling, "What's going on?" The villain constantly refuses to name the anti-hero's crimes or provide any clue why he [is] ready to boil him in oil, bury him in pig manure, reveal his childhood nickname, or [try] any other method of torture. This may aggravate the anti-hero; it certainly does that to me.

Bob Tucker's Blurbs: There's probably more truth to this article than we know. Selected sentences from scathing reviews are easily manipulated into glowing praise.

Theatre of the Fantastic: Some animated features are marvelous, others just plain stink. Many of the stinkers are drawn by Japanese animators who draw almost nothing but 7-foot, 86-pound androgynes with lavender hair and eyes the size of tennis balls. I wouldn't trust Rankin-Bass to produce high-quality animation; I'd rather assign such projects to companies like Nelvana or Don Bluth. Rankin-Bass productions usually consist of animation of little real action, drawn by Mad Magazine artists trying to pick up a few extra dollars.

World Screamed: I wasn't aware of much of Doyle's work outside of the rather asexual Holmes saga, but the Challenger tales appear to radiate that missing sexuality.

Letter from Kathy Gallagher: Indeed, the good old days of fandom are now. I can prate on and on about my thinking that fandom is like a smorgasbord, and it is quite enjoyable to sample here and there to find what you like in it. As Kathy said, we now have audio cassettes with books read, video cassettes of our favourite old s-f movies, and bulletin boards on which we can converse with fellow fans and readers.

Yours,  
Lloyd Penny

Anti-hero denotes either somebody punished for an un-named or non-existent crime (as in Franz Kafka) or a person who is rewarded for his acts of pure selfishness (see Gavin Waylock in Jack Vance's To Live Forever or Pete Fallow in Tom Wolfe's Bonfire of the Vanities). I'd prefer to reserve this word for people in this second category and to designate members of the first just as suspects -- but this term has been pre-empted by newspapers for "known" criminals who can't be called such until formal judgment.

4846 Derby Place  
Klamath Falls, OR 97603

Dear Leland:

RQ #30 was up to your usual standard of excellence. The size does make it easier to hide in a purse (though I think I could handle a volume of the Britannica in the suitcase I haul around). As far as the Miscellany is concerned, there have been cases of disappointed would-be authors sending Marion Zimmer Bradley some ill-considered letters in response to her personal rejections, one reason she goes to the printed slips when she is unfamiliar with the person submitting a manuscript.

As far as heroism in s-f/fantasy goes, I'm all for it. I can be depressed at a much cheaper price just by reading our local newspaper. Why should I pay good money for it, when I can choose something that will uplift me instead? If that makes me an old-fashioned American something-or-other -- well, hey, it's a rough job and somebody's got to do it. I do have some tolerance for tragedy, but very little for meaningless despair. One trend in some of the latest fantasy, though, can best be summarized as The Little Match Girl Joins the Free Amazons. This is exemplified by such characters as Lessa of Pern, Menolly of Pern, the Arrows trilogy by Lackey, any Mary Sue ST story, Aerin in The Hero and the Crown, Harry Crewe in The Blue Sword, and several other examples which I tend to devour greedily since I enjoy them as much as anybody. Given the male Luke Skywalker clones crowding the scene, perhaps it's only fair that the female counterparts have their day as well. [With respect to] the article, the only flaws I find in Benford is his inability to flesh out female characters.

I very much appreciated the Conversation with Connie Willis. Lincoln's Dreams was an excellent book despite its slightly misleading title and downer ending. (But then, given that half my family comes from Arkansas, I too have an abiding worship of Marse Robert. What can I say?) I agree with her advice about reading anything--you'd be surprised what you can steal from even the mainstream novels (with all the serial numbers carefully removed, of course. Note the stuff Marta Randall "borrowed" from the Lymond novels in Sword of Winter sometime. I recognized some of those names!).

"Blurb Happy" was great! So that's how they got the good reviews for some of those Hubbard novels...

I know this is not much of a recommendation, but the animated film version of The Last Unicorn is very popular with my children, as is The Secret of Nimh. Any animation purists, though, will just have to wait until Fantasia is out again--though Roger Rabbit in its own insane way is just as good. True, Rankin and Bass is not that great (unless one uses Saturday morning kidvid by comparison--shudder, gasp), but at least some animated versions of interesting stuff is coming out. As for Bakshi--I have a whole NSF Tolkien RR that would like to discuss his version of LotR with him, in private. I suggest kevlar for dress.

The Professor Challenger discussion reminded me of the indiscreet comment ["Virgin no more!"] made by an astronaut in Lucifer's Hammer during an American/Soviet docking manoeuvre. And who says that it's always the West that gets screwed in these mutual East/West things?

If Joe Christopher really wants to read a work influenced by syphilis, I must recommend Thomas M. Disch's Camp Concentration.

Sincerely,  
Jean Lamb

The rhythm in Connie Willis's title is altered if Lincoln's is replaced by the one-syllable Lee's--just as the rhythm in Edna St. Vincent's Millay's poem would disappear if she had said, "Euclid alone has seen [instead of looked on] beauty bare."// The general's dreams, filled with images of "death and dying," would have been less forcible portents of evil if their subject (Annie) had stayed alive -- so one might say that a downbeat ending was dictated by the logic of the story.

Dear Lee,

Post Office Box 42  
Worthington, OH 43085

RQ Miscellany: Personally I appreciate [your taking] time to answer queries personally and to critique the manuscripts sent to you. I was guilty of sending an inappropriate article last year. Your rejection of the same doesn't make me a bad writer or you a heartless editor. If material is inappropriate, no matter how well written it isn't going to be published.

If you interjected a few personal opinions into your letter, it certainly shows you took the time to read [the manuscript]. Maybe your anonymous writer needs to finish growing up a bit.

I was tickled by Bob Tucker's Blurb Happy. Such fun to read. I got a few dirty looks in the lunchroom as I giggled through it. I read fanzines on my lunch hour at work. At least I wasn't swearing at the sports page during lunch as so many of the male co-workers are wont to do.

RQ was a very enjoyable read. I look forward to more.

Regards,  
Kathleen Gallagher

My note to Un-named Author indicated that he must familiarize himself with the s-f field before trying to break into it. The theme of his story--the scientist's purported inability to understand the non-metric aspects of reality--was a plot cliché clear back in the 30s, so perhaps the shock of learning this was what prompted the nasty letter quoted last issue.

27 Borough Rd, Kingston on Thames  
Surrey KT2-6DB, Great Britain

Dear Leland,

The funniest piece was by Bob Tucker. The depressing thing is that this is in no way an exaggeration.

Poems: I liked "Midnight at Looking-Glass Pub" and "Asymmetree."

I have been aware for some time that new books get remaindered quickly these days but "after just six weeks" is ridiculous. A while back I saw a remaindered pb copy of one of Asimov's "Foundation" books; in the next shop was a reprinting of the same book, at an increased price.

I'm pleased to report that there are an increasing number of small press magazines and books over here now.

Vive le small press!

Sidney J. Bounds

I think that the Small Presses will turn out to be the only literary survivors from these days of corporate take-overs and book-distribution decisions by chain-store managers.

2 Copgrove Close, Berwick Hills  
Middlesbrough, Cleveland TS3-9BF  
Great Britain

Dear Leland,

What most amuses me about Bob Tucker's delightful Blurb Happy is the way he captures the precise style of Damon Knight; I only reread DK's In Search of Wonder the night before, and this looked like a page I'd missed (probably among "The Chuckleheads"). It also amused me to read the end where the book was purchased for millions, and will no doubt be in production this year--probably helmed by Spielberg.

The Last Unicorn, along with Le Guin's Lathe of Heaven and JDM's The Girl, the Gold Watch, and Everything, has never made it onto British TV, which is the only place I can afford to see it. (The sequel to the JDM film has been shown, inexplicably.) This review by Peter Bernhardt confirms my worst fears for Beagle's work. Everyone knows that Beagle's style and melancholy are almost internalised by each reader, and I'd have been astonished if the film captured even a percentage of the power of the book; it seems it didn't bother to attempt it.

I'm sure you're going to get a lot of comment on Dana Martin Batory's investigation of the Conan Doyle book, but it does bring back memories. Ten years or so ago I wrote a long in-depth study of Shaw's Orbitsville, "proving" it was sexually symbolic to an incredible degree. (It was published in Robert Whitaker's fanzine.) My theory definitely seemed to fit the facts: a huge enclosed sphere in space with a single opening (womb/vagina); outside the hole was an uncountable number of dead spaceships (unsuccessful sperm); the hero fought his way inside to find "a secret garden" (Nancy Friday's book of female sexual fantasies was called "My Secret Garden," referring to the womb); the interior was full of life, and when humanity moved into it, it was changed beyond belief (evolution in a safe environment--the womb). There were two or three secondary themes (that Shaw culminates his obsession with the poem "The Golden Journey to Samarkand" by expanding its theme into the plot; that the science is deliberately fudged despite Shaw's well-known determination to be completely accurate because the theme overpowered his intent--and if you're wondering what inaccuracy, how come an object that damps all electro-magnetic waves beyond a few kilometres still allows people to see the other side of the sphere two hundred million miles away), but overall I thought my theory made sense. Shaw disagreed, though he said I could read what I wanted into it.

[On] p. 137, what's wrong with "Everyone has their price"? --I've tried to use "hir" (since July 14th 1974) but "their" seems right to me; have I missed a basic fault in English?

Sunrise,

Ian Covell

Tucker reproduces not only Damon Knight's acerbic style but (among other things) the breathless tone of the fan-reviewer, the alliteration of Variety, and the painful identifications of the book company's publicity hack, who confuses the inner with the outer planets and the solar system itself with "the atomic world." // If the word everyone has suddenly turned plural, why do several correspondents this issue (including you) use the phrase "Everyone knows," which treats it as singular?

2962 Santa Ana Street  
Southgate, CA 90280

Dear Leland:

It has been a long time since I have heard from you, and probably even longer since you have heard from me. So I was surprised to receive a copy of RQ. That it came from Texas was also a surprise. I have been so out of touch with s-f fandom these last few years that I don't know what has been happening.

Tucker and Harmon were the only names I recognized, and did enjoy their items. I liked Jim's especially as I too am an old Carlton E. Morse fan. And, in one of those lucky accidents, I heard Morse on a late night talk show, telling about the book, and his plans for the series. It seemed almost as unlikely as L. Ron Hubbard going back to writing. It is hard to imagine how one man could have turned out so many radio scripts as he did. On [being reheard] they do not sound as great as memory paints them, but the times have changed as well, and some things get more dated than [others]. I certainly won't argue the influence Morse had on radio in his day, and it is wonderful to think he is still hale and hearty, and writing--for his sake, if not ours.

I was amused by your "Miscellany"--the poor man who complained of your "snotty" letter of rejection. It has been a long time since I have seen that word seriously used, and makes me wonder about Mr. Author.

Best wishes,  
Rick Sneary

I think Kathleen Gallagher put it most aptly in saying that Mr. Author "needs to finish growing up..." // Carleton Morse's achievements aren't minimized if we note that he had a staff of writers to help with those innumerable manuscripts. // I'm relieved to hear from yet another member of the old Los Angeles gang, since it reduces by one the number who have driven (or been driven) from the neighbourhood or (like our treasurer) have simply been gunned down.

2422 East Verde  
Holtville, CA 92250

Dear Mr. Sapiro,

I doubt whether "modestly well-published...unknown" has time to write much, seeing how he devotes so much time to composing acrimonious replies to rejection letters.

I agree with your comment about the expiration dates on bad s-f. It seems that, whether one's taste runs to horror or to s-f, one would look for more reading material. When I began reading s-f, I read first Norton, Heinlein, Clarke, Sturgeon, Herbert, Le Guin, Wells, Verne, and Asimov. But before any of those writers, I read Tolkien and Eddison. That was in the mid 60's, and I'd guess the stories I was reading were at least twenty years old.

Having received only two RQ's, and knowing nothing about you, I wonder, why do you "enjoin" British spelling?

Monica Sharp

If the Heritage dictionary had been known to your editor in '64, American spelling would've been used. But at that time no authoritative U.S. dictionary was available, so British spelling seemed the only logical choice.

323 Dodge Street  
East Providence, RI 02914

Dear Leland,

I was honoured to receive a surprise copy of RQ, and found it an interesting read--thank you for interspersing the serious with the amusing, such as Bob Tucker's tweak to the nose of publishing (you know, the world where it's called "sci-fi"), the libidinous analysis of Doyle, and Milt Stevens' letter. Okay, so they weren't all jokes, but they all made me laugh.

As many others would say to Mister Stevens, and many of them could say it much more authoritatively than I, it is only s-f that relies entirely on the gimmick in its plot or its idea (always assuming it has one!) that will date. I could go on to list authors whose plots may seem antiquated in worldly old 1988, such as Verne and Wells and many, many less famous examples, but why belabour the point?

Particularly since I owe a great debt to Milt Stevens. Until he wrote, "Everybody knows that musty old horror stories are the very best kind," I had no idea that I knew this! Really, it's true; certainly I liked the "musties" but I always ranked them with their descendants and valued each work on its own literary merits. However, before my ignorance was discovered and I was shamed before local fannish circles, I fed all of my Stephen King and Clive Barker tomes, plus a few selected highlights from Masterton and miscellaneous other horror titles written after 1929 into a large bonfire in my backyard. Then I lined up all of the musty old gothics, eldritch novels of old, and collections of ghost stories from the Victorian era on my most prominent bookshelf, by size, for the most effective presentation. With a relief, I saw that my reputation was saved.

I share many of Peter Bernhardt's feelings about the film version of The Last Unicorn. Full (and yes, expensive) animation has been missing for so long that his recent Who Framed Roger Rabbit? was literally a sight for sore eyes (my eyes sore from reading in the dim cinema light before the picture began). Hopefully, computer technology -- which makes shadowing and the blending of different figures easier and more effective--will restore some of the lost quality of the classic animation that even took grand-dad's breath away.

Yassassin. Dave D'Amassa

Another difficulty: what separates Old from New: with respect to boxing, 1919, when Jack Dempsey won the heavyweight title, is regarded as termination of Old Time and 1932, his formal retirement, the start of Modern. For literary horror, an equivalent dominant figure might be H.P. Lovecraft, whose pro career, incidentally, spanned an equally long interval--from his first sales to Home Brew in '22 until Haunter of the Dark, his "last work of original fiction," in '35. Beginning ineptitude is something else shared by (Marquis of Queensbury) boxing and the weird story. Just as so many Old Time stars couldn't box well enough to win a modern Golden Gloves tournament, so the first Gothicism Horace Walpole (to adapt Harlan Ellison's phrase) couldn't write his way into a pay toilet.

111 Albemarle Rd, South Bank  
York YO2-1EP, Great Britain

Dear Leland Sapiro,

On heroism in s-f--well, for a start, this depends on how you define "hero," doesn't it?

Oldest definitions are:

- 1) semi-divine man possessed of superhuman strength or attributes and favoured of the gods (which would do nicely for the Dorsai cycle),
- 2) man showing outstanding bravery and military prowess (which would also do for Dorsai).

But this covers only a very narrow range of possible human behaviors. Kratz has chosen to examine the idea of scientist-as-hero, and the "successful" hero [as] one who conforms to the macho "hard man" ideal, the unsentimental exploiter, manipulator, conqueror of "the natural world." I'd be most interested in a comparison between the "heroes" of *Timescape* and (say) Shevek the physicist (*The Dispossessed*), who provides another very different view of what "heroism" might mean.

Neither "Ymir's Mirror/ Eiseley's Glass" nor "Rearing Myth-Head" did much for me, and though I found a terrible power lurking within "The Hedge-Ring," I would have preferred it unobscured by grammatical strangeness. But that's just me.

The "Conversation with Connie Willis" -- I'm always uneasy about reading other people's reported conversations like this, because it's essentially overhearing a conversation not directed at me, and in which I wasn't included; I was brought up to believe this is rude and can't shake the habit.

I greatly enjoyed "Blurb Happy." And this is turning into one of those "I liked X, I didn't like Y" letters that zine editors are supposed to hate receiving [so] I will stop.

Sue Thomason

-----  
 Okay, call it an interview instead of a conversation.//  
 Write us letters any time -- but forget this Dorsai stuff and reserve praise for people like John Milton, Franklin Roosevelt, or Stephen Hawking -- who in spite of devastating physical losses did what had to be done -- or, if military models are preferred, those like Julius Caesar, Narses, and Boudicca-- winners despite respective handicaps of epilepsy, castration, and being female in a male-oriented society.

-----  
 20 Gillespie St  
 Dunedin, New Zealand

Dear Leland,

I was disappointed to see that [Ian Covell's letter] rejected Ballard because he didn't fit [his] view of what s-f was "about." Ballard himself doesn't see his work as dismal and hopeless, and he himself seems to have survived the various trials Ian enunciates. You can't read Ballard with any pleasure if you expect "conventional" imagery or a triumphant progression of the hero, but the pleasures are there to be found.

Gary Willis' article on *The Left Hand of Darkness* was fascinating, and persuaded me to re-read the book and find much more in it, particularly in the earlier sequences which I had remembered only as a rather involved prelude to the journey across the Gobrain Ice. The description of that winter journey remains one of the finest pieces of writing I have ever read, and leads me to wonder how Le Guin gained her knowledge of travels in the polar regions.

Regards,  
 Tim Jones

-----  
 It's agreed that Ballard's refusal to encourage the reader's own brand of "smirking optimism" doesn't make this author "dismal" or pessimistic. // Le Guin's knowledge of arctic ice journeys was obtained in the same way as, for example, Frank Herbert's knowledge of submarines: by extensive reading.

# The Mage

"... an attractive, classy magazine ..."

—Pat Cadigan

"Four out of five stars."

—*Chimera Connections Newsletter*

"... it ain't bad, kiddo, not bad at all."

—Harlan Ellison

"... a handsome publication ..."

—Michael Bishop

"Worthwhile, entertaining and recommended."

—*Scavenger's Newsletter*

## Can everyone be wrong?

### Science Fiction's best kept secret.

### *Fiction, Articles, Poetry, Art, Essays*

Sample copies \$3.50 ppd.

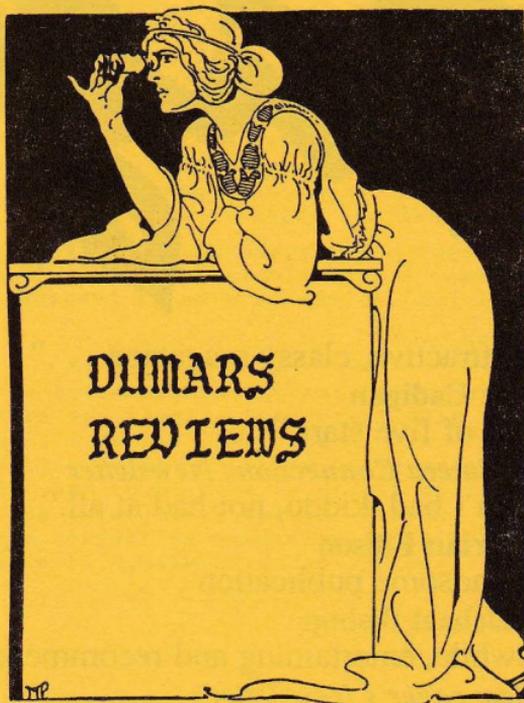
Yearly subscription (2 issues) \$6.00

*The Mage*, Subscriptions Dept.

Student Association Offices

Colgate University

Hamilton, New York 13346



The new quarterly review magazine  
by Denise Dumars.

Reviews of poetry books & periodicals,  
Science Fiction, Horror, obscure videos,  
unusual magazines, occult subjects, plus  
special LA-area reviews of restaurants,  
occult shops, etc.

Send \$1.50 for latest issue, \$6.00 for  
a four-issue subscription.

DUMARS REVIEWS  
c/o TERATA PUBLICATIONS  
P.O. Box 810  
Hawthorne, CA 90251

Please make checks payable to TERATA  
PUBLICATIONS.