Knights 17/18

Grant Carrington ★ Cy Chauvin ★ Charles L. Grant
★ Thomas F. Monteleone ★ Jerry Pournelle ★
John M. Robinson ★ Richard A. Wilber ★ $2.50

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Charles L. Grant
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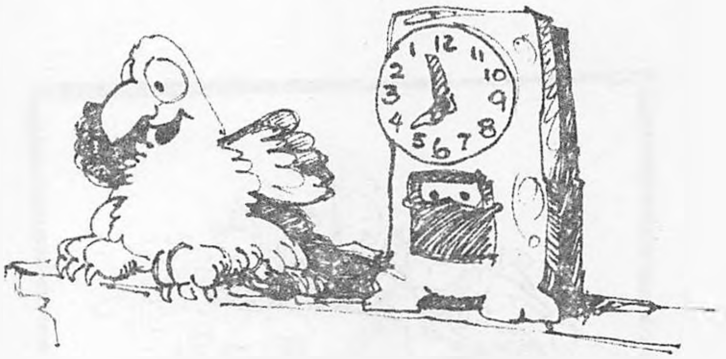

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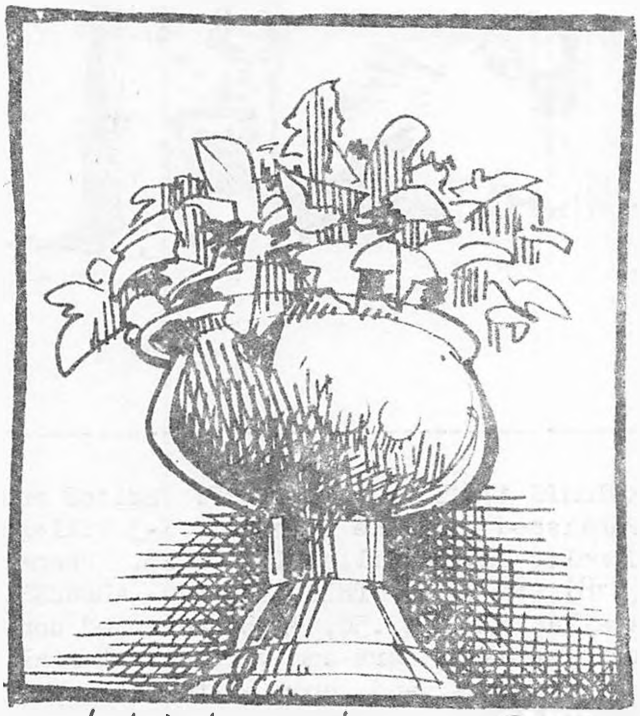


plant in brass pot GRANT

BRACKEN'S WORLD

It is 9:30 at night, March 20, 1977. Everything in this issue has been typed except the content page and this, the editorial.

It's taken too damn long to get to this point in this issue's production. Unfortunately, it'll probably be another month or longer before this issue is mailed out.

I've sat down a number of times trying to write this editorial. A handful of rough drafts sit on the table next to me. At the moment they go ignored, as I inevitably attempt to write a decent editorial first-draft.

The reasons this issue is late are many. The most important of them is that I have been, and still am, adjusting to a new life.

From the time I left high school and the dingy northern California town of Fort Bragg in May of 1975 until I left Tacoma,Washington in August 1976 to move here, I had only two basic goals. They were: (a) to transform Knights from just another mediocre genzine into one of the best around, and (b) to improve my writing to the point where I could sell it.

Thanks to a patient Grandmother, I was able to do little else but work on my two goals, both of which I have been able to accomplish.

I was, during that time, a full-time fanzine editor and a full-time writer. Unfortunately, neither of these things exactly thrilled the rest of my relatives. Looking at myself from their point of view, I guess I really was a "bum", or whatever other terms a non-breadwinner is given.

Like I said, I achieved my goals, but I wore out my welcome.

In early 1976 I was looking for alternatives--something to prove I could make it on my own and take care of myself.

At about the same time Rick Wilber, a free-lance writer and a journalism instructor at Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville, began encouraging me to ascend to greater heights, or some bullshit like that. We'd been trading letters since about the time issue twelve was published, and Rick's master's thesis on Robert Heinlein is being published in this issue.

With Rick's help and encouragement, I applied for admission at SIUE--and was accepted starting in Fall 1976. At the same time I had applied for financial aid, since I knew there was no possible way I could pay my own way through college. Some sort of computer foul-up delayed my learning that I was indeed eligible for a considerable amount of aid.

Things looked bleak as summer approached in 1976: I had not yet heard from the SIUE financial aid office, and I had promised myself that I would be out of my grandparents' house and on my own before the year was over.

I began to seriously consider joining an armed service--a step which means I was approaching the end of my alternatives, since, for whatever reasons, I consider the armed services to be one step better than jail.

I applied to the Army, thinking that, if I was to be killed by some maniac in a foreign land, at least I would be able to die on the ground. As a sailor I might have to drown or be eaten by a shark, and as a pilot I'd have God-knows-how-many feet to fall if my plane was shot down or disabled in some other way. On the ground I stood an even chance of living through a disaster.

I took the written test and passed with flying colors. I wasn't any fucking genius, but I'd managed to score high in every category the test had to offer. The sergeant who was attempting to recruit me told me I could have any job the Army had to offer. That's how good my scores were.

It scared the shit out of me. Here I was--the kid who hated sports, the kid who hating being around guns, the near epitome of a mother's boy--here I was being told I was "Army material--just what the Army wants".

I waffled. Using the fact that I'd had surgery in December 1974--within the five-year period the Army questioned--I was able to stall things. And stall them and stall them and stall them. The Army's red-tape helped as well. A letter went to the surgeon who performed the operation, and my local doctor had to examine me as well.

During this waiting period I finally received word from the SIUE financial aid office. I had been awarded a very large sum of money to attend school.

Since I had not yet taken an oath--in fact I hadn't even had a physical--I told the sergeant that I had to go to Illinois for a while and, uh, I didn't know when I'd be back.

I sold most of what I owned, and gave away a lot of the rest of my things. With the money from my stuff, and money from my Grandmother, I boarded a Greyhound bus in Tacoma.

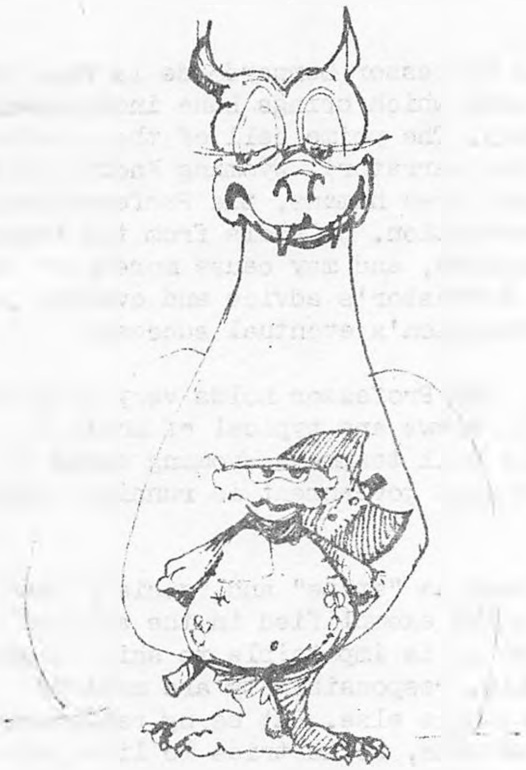
I was off to meet with my destiny, off to see if I could make my mark, however minor, on the world. (continued on page 111)

THE THEMES OF ROBERT A HEINLEIN

INTRODUCTION

From his earliest short stories in the late 1930's to his most recent novels, Robert Anson Heinlein has used his own particular techniques, characters, and plots to achieve a writing style that not only sells well, but consistently delivers a highly personal message. The message is that survival, for mankind as well as for the individual, is achieved through strength and that, in the end, only the truly strong can survive. Heinlein shows in story after story how the elite strong survive, leaving behind a trail of lesser beings. Importantly, their strength is cerebral as well as purely physical, for they are always competent, these survivors. That competency includes a ruggedly individualistic preparedness for action, and a willingness to use violence, that marks the cunning as well as the muscular and agile. Survival through violence is a basic trait of Future Man as Heinlein sees him. Using his characters to prove that thesis, Heinlein shows his readers time and time again that only through the preparation for, and the willingness to use, violence, mankind will survive.

The two major types of characters used to develope and promulgate this thesis by Heinlein are his mentor, and his protagonist. The mentor, teaching the



protagonist how and when to act, instills a sense of survival that both then carry through to its inevitably violent conclusion.

A discussion and definition of the mentor, the protagonist, and some minor characterizations which also serve important functions in Heinlein's work, will help show how this influential popular author has consistently developed and promulgated his theories on the survival of mankind.

Heinlein's best selling work is STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND, a novel that has been consistently misread by critics who have ignored the overall content of his work. By first defining and discussing the major and important minor characterizations in Heinlein's writing, and then showing how the same types are used for the similar purposes in STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND, this paper will also attempt to provide a more valid and complete critical appraisal of that novel. The novel is consistent with the basic structural patterns and characterizations the author has used in dozens of other major efforts.

CHAPTER ONE: THE MENTOR

Many of Robert Heinlein's basic storylines include the mentor figure. In most cases the character is an older man who simply provides the story's protagonist with sound advice to help the protagonist survive. In some cases there is actual physical assistance (GLORY ROAD). In other cases the mentor is himself the protagonist of the story (FARNHAM'S FREE-

RICHARD A WILBER

HOLD and TIME ENOUGH FOR LOVE) and the younger man is the more minor character of the two. There are even times when the mentor is an alien life-form assisting man in his struggle for survival (HAVE SPACE SUIT, WILL TRAVEL). No matter what the device, however, or the substitution used, the character appears consistently in Heinlein's fiction.

In THE MOON IS A HARSH MISTRESS the mentor is Professor Bernardo de la Paz. This novel deals with a successful revolution on the moon which brings Luna independence from Earth and its Earth-controlled Lunar Authority. The prime cell of the revolutionaries is composed of Manuel Garcia O'Kelly (the narrator), Wyoming Knott, Mike (a self-aware computer), and the Professor. Of the three humans, the Professor maintains the greatest emotional distance from the revolution. He feels from the beginning that the revolution has little chance for success, and may cause more harm than good. Yet, despite his rational disinterest, the Professor's advice and overall plan for the revolution is the prime factor in the revolution's eventual success.

Referring to himself as a rational anarchist, the Professor holds very definite views on the socio-political attitudes of man. His views are typical of most of Heinlein's primary characters. The Professor tells cell teammate Wyoming early in the revolution that he does not particularly care what government is running things on the moon.

> A rational anarchist believes that concepts such as "state" and "society" and "government" have no existence save as physically exemplified in the acts of self-responsible individuals. He believes that it is impossible to shift blame, share blame, distribute blame...as blame, guilt, responsibility are matters taking place inside human beings singly and nowhere else. But being rational, he knows that not all individuals hold his evaluations, so he tries to live perfectly in an imperfect world...aware that his effort will be less than perfect yet undismayed by self-knowledge of self-failure.[1]

For the Professor, the responsibility of the individual should be sufficient for a society to function. Yet, while each person, responsible only to himself strives for a society that has no governmental rules or regulations, he is willing, as the Professor says, to "accept any rules that you feel necessary." He tells Wyoming that "I am free, no matter what rules surround me. If I find them tolerable, I tolerate them; if I find them obnoxious, I break them. I am free because I know that I alone am morally responsible for everything I do."[2] This power of self, and responsibility of self, is one strong subcurrent of Heinlein's vision of man surviving.

The same sttitudes are found in the other novels and short stories. In FARNHAM'S FREEHOLD, for instance, Hugh Farnham, both the mentor and the protagonist of the story, is a survivor. The early moments of the story depict Farnham as the host of a family card party, which includes his wife, son, daughter, and his son's lady friend, with Farnham's black servant Joseph, in attendance.

Farnham is considered eccentric by his son, since the elder Farnham has constructed a fall-out and bomb shelter in his backyard. By page 17, however, the Russians have attacked, the missiles are dropping, and the bomb shelter is no longer an older man's eccentric whim, but a very real necessity for survival.

After the bombing ceases, Farnham and his son's lady friend become intimate while the others sleep through the aftermath of the holocaust. During the physical and

mental intimacies, Farnham gives an apt description of survival during the modern age, noting that:

> It seems to me that we have been breeding slaves--and I believe in freedom. This war may have turned the tide. This may be the first war in history which kills the stupid rather than the bright and able--where it makes any distinction.[3]

For Hugh Farnham, and for Heinlein, the soldiers who die in war are the "bright and able" of a given nation. Thus, only those who use violent means to survive are deserving of a future. The strong, those who are prepared to fight to survive, will continue; the weak, the non-violent, will be culled from the race. As Hugh Farnham explains to Barbara (his son's friend):

> This time the boys in service are as safe or safer than civilians. And of civilians those who used their heads and made preparations stand a far better chance. Not every case, but on the average, and that will improve the breed. When it's over, things will be tough, and that will improve the breed still more. For years the surest way of survival has been to be utterly worthless and breed a lot of worthless kids. All that will change.

Barbara notes that that is "standard genetics. But it seems cruel." And Farnham closes with "It <u>is</u> cruel.[4] But no government yet has been able to repeal natural laws, though they keep trying."

Farnham sees selection through depletion of the weak performed on a gross scale as an advantageous thing for the future of the race. Such selection means that the strong and the prepared will survive. The improvement of the breed should result.

This vision of survival is reiterated throughout the novel. After the holocaust has abated, the survivors in the shelter cautiously peek out to discover they are on a green and verdant hillside overlooking a stream, and not at the edge of the cratered city where they expected to be. The explosion, it turns out, has cast them through a time-warp of sorts and placed them in the future. Now they find they must survive in a primitive setting, fighting an indifferent nature for their food and shelter. Although the situation is relatively short-lived, it is an example of one type of ethos that Heinlein uses often to display survival techniques. As the mentor, Hugh Farnham's authoritarian governing of his companions is typical of the behavior of his counterparts in other Heinlein novels where the pioneering motif is used.

In this novel, however, primitive life does not last long. The struggling survivors find they are in the hands of a future society where the power is held by the blacks, and where whites are slaves. Some male slaves are kept temporarily for stud, while most are neutered and domesticated for house or field work. The initial irony is intriguing. Farnham had hoped that the nuclear war would end the social slavery he detested, where the social and governmental system had made slaves out of most, and outcasts out of those who refused to submit. Now, however, he discovers not an end to that slavery, but an even purer form, a form which does not allow Hugh Farnham to go his own way and thus avoid it. The color of his skin has determined his status.

Again, though, Farnham survives, rising to the top of his societal class. As a visitor from the past (a notion which his suprisingly capable master quickly learns to accept as a possibility) Farnham is given special treatment; and his ability to

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translate ancient records from English to the new tongue of future-man makes him a valuable slave. Taking advantage of his privileged position, Farnham eventually engineers an escape from the master's holdings for himself and Barbara. His son and wife have sold out to the master--with the son happily accepting castration as the price to be paid for complacent comfort. The escape fails, and they are caught. But again, through perseverance and skill, Farnham engineers an escape of sorts for himself, Barbara, and their twin daughters, using a time machine invented by the master's engineers. Farnham, seeing the opportunity, offers to use himself and his family if they can be sent back to their own time. Obligingly, the master agrees, and the machinery is set into motion. This time all goes as planned, and Farnham and his family are returned. Although they now face a repeat of the holocaust that sent them forward into time in the first place, Heinlein notes:

> They lived through the missiles, they lived through the bombs, they lived through the epidemics--which were not extreme and may not have been weapons; both sides disclaimed them--and they lived through the long period of disorders while civil government writhed like a snake with a broken back. They lived. They went on.[5]

Through it all they survived. And, according to Heinlein, their survival is good for the race, for it is through the survival of the Farnhams and those like the Farnhams that the race will grow and prosper.

In fulfilling two of Heinlein's major thematic roles (mentor and protagonist) Hugh Farnham is not unique. Other novels and short stories employ the technique. Only, some minor structural deviations from the usual thematic pattern are necessary for Heinlein to use the device in this way. The mentor, for instance, advises a secondary character rather than a primary character, as he does in the majority of the fictional works. Hugh Farnham is also not unique in his blatent preaching of social and personal philosophies. The preaching becomes more and more obvious in succeeding Heinlein novels. As Alexei Panshin notes, in the more recent novels Heinlein "has so concentrated on presenting his opinions with every narrative device he knows that he has neglected story construction, characterization, and plot as though they were completely subsidiary to the main business of his opinion-as-facts."[6]

While it is true that the preaching has become more blatant in Heinlein's more recent efforts, it has always been present to some extent. In the earlier novels, and especially in the earlier short stories, the overt preaching was held to a minimum, with charaterization, plot, and theme enticing the reader into sympathy with the author's viewpoint. In HAVE SPACE SUIT, WILL TRAVEL, a juvenile novel published in 1958, the mentor role is filled by an extraterrestrial being called the Mother Thing, who preaches in just such a fashion. The plot line, basically, follows a teen-age boy in the near future who wins a second-hand space suit in a soap contest. The boy is a typical Heinlein construct--he is ruggedly individual, extremely competent, and, above all, a survivor. After an abduction from Earth which places him on the Moon together with a young female friend, the boy (Kip) manages to escape once from the clutches of his abductors together with the girl and the already captured Mother Thing. In a heroic trek across the Moon toward a Moon camp where they will be safe, Kip keeps the three escapees alive; but they are all eventually recaptured just short of their goal. Having survived that ordeal, Kip, the young girl (Patricia Wynant Reisfield, called Peewee), and the Mother Thing go through various adventures until the abductors are annihilated through the powers of the Mother Thing and their entire planet is destroyed.

Here the adventure, with its covert preachment of survival through competency, begins to wane and the overt preaching begins. The Mother Thing is one of a highly refined group of sentient beings who are judging whether Earth will be allowed to continue to grow, or whether the planet will be destroyed. The Mother Thing, exempted from the voting procedure on Earth's future because of her involvement in the case, is an advisor to Kip and Peewee. After a Roman legionaire, brought to the judgement by the future court, has given his bellicose statements to the judges; and after Kip and Peewee have given their equally bellicose statements, the Mother Thing comes to the rescue with a statement of Earth's faults and potential.

> It is true that they are violent--especially the smaller one--but they are not more violent than is appropriate to their ages. Can we expect mature restraint in a race whose members all must die in early childhood? And are not we ourselves violent? Have we not this day killed our billions? Can any race survive without a willingness to fight? It is true that these creatures are often more violent than necessary or wise. But, my peers, they are so very young. Give them time to learn.[7]

This defense of man's violent ways proves adequate for the galactic judges. Earth is acquitted, subject to review, and the Mother Thing is assigned to keep an eye on Earth and to help the planet grow without consuming itself through war. Without the Mother Thing's impassioned defense, Earth would have been destroyed. And of course, without Kip's having saved the Mother Thing's life at least twice, that plea for the defense could not have been entered.

In this particular instance, Heinlein's doctrine of the necessity for violence to insure survival is integrated into the plot and dialogue, and the overt preaching is held to a minimum. This method of covert preaching is seen in other novels as well. In THE PUPPET MASTERS (1951), for instance, the mentor, who is also the protagonist's father, leads the attack against an invasion of Earth by parasitic slugs. The methods used by the mentor fully demonstrate Heinlein's survival through conflict doctrine; although the overt exposition of such a doctrine is rarely seen. The actions of the three principal characters; the protagonist, the mentor, and the protagonist's love interest, clearly display that survival of the race is the key factor, and only through violence can such survival be achieved.

In THE PUPPET MASTERS the Old Man is strongly patriotic. As his son says, "the Old Man would bury us alive too, if he thought that there was as a fifty-three percent probability that it was the Tree of Liberty he was nourishing."[8] That patriotism, however, is not strictly to the United States, or to the officials running the nation. It is patriotism directed to a more individual perception of what the United States should be--a perception that includes the liberty of the individual, the culling of the weak, and the competency and personal accountability that marks the typical Heinlein character.

Once the parasitic slugs are in control of the Midwest, it is the Old Man and his two cohorts who must handle the crisis and attempt to stop the invasion. As might be expected, mankind wins after a difficult struggle as the Old Man directs Earth's defenses.

There is no attempt to disguise the Old Man's importance. Once he is convinced that the slugs exist and are really attacking, he immediately arranges for a conference with the President, who puts Andrew (the Old Man) in charge of the operation to

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cleanse the Earth of the slugs. Throughout the entire sequence the Old Man's importance is stressed. His orders are obeyed, and his power is exceeded only by that of the President.

The Old Man becomes strongly survival oriented after early hesitation. Although he is at first resigned to mankind's fate, telling his son and friend, "I am going down to Florida and lie in the sun and wait for the world to go to hell. If you have any sense you'll do the same. There's damned little time"[9]; that feeling is quickly replaced by an urgent desire to stop the invasion before it becomes too advanced.

The first major step in the Old Man's plan is "Schedule Bare Back" of "Operation Parasite," where, "The idea was that everybody--everybody--was to peel to the waist and stay peeled, until all titans (parasites) were spotted and killed." Total government control follows, with the nation under martial law. As the Old Man directs the action, there is "a steady barrage of propaganda," and, "the country was being quartered and sectioned from the air," to insure humanity's survival.

Finally, of course, the invading force is defeated. But, following that defeat a new system of governance prevails in the United States, a system that includes rule by the military elite. The nation, and the world, is at war with the slugs. In the last few pages, although Earth has been cleansed of the titans, a counter-invasion of the titans' home is planned. The counter-invasion will occur because Earth must annihilate the titans. For mankind, "The race must go on, even if it doesn't know where." And, as the Old Man sees his son off for the counter-invasion, he tells him "You'll make it. You're too tough and mean to die. I've got a lot of confidence in the likes of you, son." Following that thought, the son concludes "Whether we make it or not, the human race has got to keep up its well earned reputation for ferocity. The price of freedom is the willingness to do sudden battle, anywhere, any time, and with utter recklessness. If we did not learn that from the slugs, well--'Dinosaurs, move over! We are ready to become extinct!"[10] The son, with a bellicosity engendered by his mentor, is ready to go out and do battle--to help the race survive. As he leaves, he says, "I feel exhilarated. Puppet masters--the free men are coming to kill you! Death and Destruction!"[11]

An even more outstanding example of the mentor character as a preacher of survival through conflict is Lieutenant-Colonel (in the novel's futuristic Marine Corps-styled Mobile Infantry), M.I., retired, Jean V. Dubois in STARSHIP TROOPERS. Dubois had served as the protagonist's instructor for a high school course entitled "History and Moral Philosophy." Each student is required to take the course (although passing is not required); and the course is taught by a citizen of the state. In this future society, only military veterans are able to become citizens.

As the instructor of a course that young protagonist Johnny Rico is required to take, Dubois is in the perfect position to exercise his powers as a mentor to guide Johnny Rico's future. As Rico looks back during the course of the novel we find that it is Dubois who points out to the class that a man's only moral obligation is to humanity's survival. Even personal survival must be sacrificed for the survival of the race. As Dubois points out in class, "survival can have stronger imperatives than that of your own personal survival. Survival of your family, for example." However, he adds that "A scientifically verifiable theory of morals must be rooted in the individual's instinct to survive--and nowhere else!--and must correctly describe the hierarchy of survival, note the motivations at each level, and resolve all conflicts."[12]

Survival, then, is an instinct nurtured and defined by society. And in this Heinlein-constructed society, that definition includes control of the government by a strong, elite military. So strong is this militaristic concept that there is no questioning when Dubois points out to the class that "The basis of all morality is duty, a concept with the same relation to group that self-interest has to individual." And duty, Dubois explains, "is an adult virtue--indeed a juvenile becomes an adult when, and only when, he acquires a knowledge of duty and embraces it as dearer than the self-love he was born with."[13] That duty is best shown, of course, when a young person tries to become a citizen--by joining the military. For Rico, that is made clear by Dubois in a letter sent to the young enlistee when Rico is at an emotional low point in his boot camp experience. Rico has just decided to resign from the M.I. when he fortuitously receives the letter. In it he is told by Dubois that he is over the hump and is certain of completing training. Dubois understands that Rico is now going through very difficult times mentally, and sympathizes. Spiritually, Rico is now undergoing "the deep, soul-turning readjustments and re-evaluations necessary to metamorphize a potential citizen into one in being..."[14] As Dubois tells him,

> The noblest fate that a man can endure is to place his own mortal body between his loved home and war's desolation. The words are not mine, of course, as you will recognize. Basic truths cannot change and once a man of insight expresses one of them it is never necessary, no matter how much the world changes, to reformulate them. This is an immutable, true everywhere, throughout all time, for all men and all nations.[15]

Rico is moved by the letter, so much so that he sets aside his plans to resign,[16] and instead admits that "I suddenly realized I felt good...I had passed my hump!"

Rico, aware now of Dubois' military record (as he had not been before when in class) falls back on his memory of the man's remarks for a spiritual uplift and the answer to moral questions throughout the remainder of the novel. At one point, for example, late in the novel, Rico is typically nervous before a drop into a war zone.

> I could hear Colonel Dubois in my mind "Citizenship is an attitude, a state of mind, an emotional conviction that the whole is greater than the part...and that the part should be humbly proud to sacrifice itself that the whole may live."[17]

Rico lives, and many of his companions die, by that message.

PODKAYNE OF MARS is, like HAVE SPACE SUIT, WILL TRAVEL, a juvenile novel in which the mentor fills an important role. Podkayne Fries, a young teenage girl, her little brother Clark, and their Uncle Tom, are on an ostensibly enjoyable trip to Earth. As second-generation Martian colonists, Poddy and Clark have never been to Earth. Uncle Tom is the mentor who provides the guidance for much of Podkayne's action; and his political troubles provide the impetus for her and her brother's actions.

Uncle Tom provides an excellent example of one important aspect of the mentor as yet undiscussed. In many casses the mentor is first seen as a lovable older man, a man of little present importance but who has a significant past. Then, as the story developes and the plot begins to demand more from the characters, the mentor is slowly revealed to be more powerful, more capable, and more important. In PODKAYNE OF MARS the kindly old man the reader has met in the first two chapters rapidly de-

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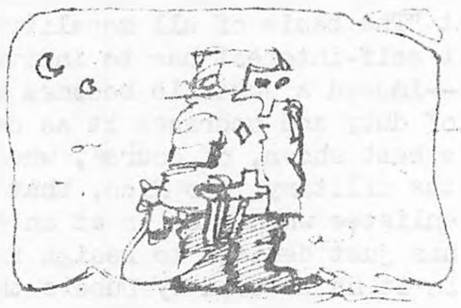

velopes into one of the most important men in the Solar System politics.

The first we hear of Uncle Tom is when Poddy says,

> Uncle Tom is a parasite. So he says. It is true that you don't see him work much, but he was an old man before I was born. He is a Revolutionary veteran, same as Daddy, and is a Past Grand Commander of the Martian Legion and a Senator-at-Large of the Republic, but he doesn't seem to spend much time on either sort of politics, Legion or public; instead he hangs out at the Elks Club and plays pinochle with other relics of the past.[18]

He seems, to the reader, to be a historically interesting but certainly minor character in the scheme of the novel. This seeming unimportance, however, rapidly begins to change.

On the spaceship Tricorn the traveling threesome is seated at the Captain's table because as Poddy notes,

> Uncle Tom, even though he is just my pinochle-playing, easy-going oldest relative, is nevertheless senior Senator-at-Large of the Republic, and it is certain that the Marsopolis General Agent for the Triangle Line knows this and no doubt the agent would see to it that the Purser of the Tricorn would know it if he didn't already.[19]

Upon arriving on Venus, the Senator's importance grows still more apparent. The three are given immediate diplomatic clearance, popped into a Rolls, and whisked to the Hilton Tannhauser in Venusburg. At this point, with Uncle Tom's importance looming ever larger, even Podkayne begins to realize his true stature. She discovers that for Uncle Tom the trip is not purely pleasure. The Three-Planets conference will soon take place on the Moon and Uncle Tom is Mars' representative. From that point on the plot thickens rapidly as kidnappings and escapes finally culminate in all three surviving and attending the conference.

Only in the last few paragraphs is there any overt preaching in this novel, but the mentor throughout the novel busily displays what ought to be done and how people ought to act. And in this novel the growth pattern on the mentor is important as Heinlein uses the character to present social and political comments. This growth from minor role to major role is seen in other mentor characters. It allows Heinlein an opportunity to show how people can rise to the occasion when necessary for survival. In each case where the technique is used the mentor is a uniquely talented individual who has temporarily set aside his importance to enjoy a life of lesser pursuits. When the need arises, however, he is there to help. This approach to the mentor character is clearly shown in GLORY ROAD. In this 1963 novel, the protagonist is a young Vietnam war veteran named Evelyn Cyril (Oscar) Gordon who is recruited by a beautiful alien queen (Star) to accompany her and her groom Rufo on a mission to rescue the Egg of the Phoenix, which is critical to the queen's continued rule over

much of the galaxy. Oscar is a disenchanted recent war veteran when he first encounters Rufo and Star. They offer what he has been seeking, a fresh challenge and adventure, and he joins them in the quest.

Rufo, when we first encounter him, is a rather interesting but unimportant groom who supplies Oscar with his equipment, some general advice, and a helping hand in a number of battles. As the novel proceeds through a series of contests and battles, however, Rufo's importance slowly grows. After each event Oscar realizes that Rufo is more complex than he had previously recognized. And, as Rufo and Oscar become acquianted, the importance of the mentor's advice becomes more apparent also. By the end of the novel, it is Rufo's advice that is the prime factor in Oscar's decisions concerning his own future.

One interesting element to the mentor character in this novel is the way in which Rufo developes as a character. Like Uncle Tom in PODKAYNE OF MARS, Rufo proceeds from lesser to greater importance as the plot developes. His true role is further hidden, however, by the aging processes of his race. Although actually quite an old man by Oscar's terms, Rufo looks young to Oscar, and is therefore treated as an equal in terms of fighting, general conversation, and general knowledge.

When the adventuresome trio is first formed after Oscar has been seductively inducted by Star, Oscar sizes Rufo up. He had met the mentor one time before, and considered him fat in that first meeting. Now, looking again, Oscar notices "He was pink all over and somewhat potbellied. However, he was amazingly well-muscled, which I had never suspected, else I would have been more cautious about taking that cannon away from him. I decided that if he wanted to Indian wrestle, I would cheat."[20] Then, in the first fight the trio encounters, Rufo quite adequately holds his own. Oscar begins to appreciate Rufo's many capabilities. Not only is the mentor an excellent barber, who gives Oscar a straight razor shave that first morning, but he is an excellent bowman, swordsman, and rifle shot as well. His capabilities and talents grow more evident from that point. In fight after fight, and in a few non-violent but nonetheless ticklish situations, Rufo always manages to produce what is needed when it is needed. He has, for instance, a black box that unfolds from the size of a portable typewriter to the size of a small moving van and holds in it most anything needed on such an adventure. He is able to shoot a Horned Ghost from better than a hundred feet with a bow and arrow. He is able to defend Oscar and Star when necessary, perform the corect actions at the correct time, and offer the right advice at the right time. He proves a capable and willing groom for Oscar and Star.

Finally, Rufo proves to be, when the adventure is over, the grandson of Star. On a planet where lives are extremely long, intrafamily relationships are prone to become rather confused. On Center, where the Empress of the Twenty Universes holds court, Oscar finds that Star is centuries old and that Rufo is her grandson, and quite old himself. Late in the novel, when the adventure is long over and Oscar is seeking advice, humble Rufo is found to be the top comparative culturist on Center. When Oscar comes to seek advice about what to do now that the adventure is over and the good life on Center is leaving him feeling bored and useless, it provides Rufo with the opportunity to finally begin preaching to Oscar that

> ...a democratic form of government is okay as long as it doesn't work. Any social organization does well enough if it isn't rigid. The framework doesn't matter as long as there is enough looseness to permit that one man in a multitude to display his genius.[21]

The overt preaching has been long in coming in this novel, but Heinlein, true to form, does at last sneak it in. Until now Rufo, as the mentor, has confined his preaching of social and personal philosophy to his actions and curt comments. Now, at Oscar's behest, he explains how democracy's great weakness is its reliance on the masses.

> To claim to 'respect' and even to 'love' the great mass with their yaps at one end and smelly feet at the other requires the fatuous, uncritical, saccharine, blind, sentimental slobbishness found in some nursery supervisors, most spaniel dogs, and all missionaries. It isn't a political system, it's a disease. But be of good cheer; your American polititions are immune to this disease...and your customs allow the non-zero elbow room.[22]

This preachment comes at an odd time, fitted uneasily into the novel just prior to a personal discussion of Star and Oscar and their relationship. To make it work, another compculturist must be invented to denigrate America and its system, and then Rufo is allowed time for a rebuttal of a sort. The rebuttal does not function well at any place in this type of picaresque adventure. But Heinlein seems to feel the need to fit the lesson in and does so; and at least in so doing gives the next-to-final rounding off of the edges on the characterization of Rufo.

There is one final step. Having survived his adventure and having given Oscar the advice to take leave from Center and return to Earth for a while, Rufo finally joins Oscar and the two decide to head out for another glory road. Oscar says about Rufo, "he'll be here tonight. He is quite agreeable to a change in planets and universes and says he has something in mind. A little risky perhaps, but not dull. I'm sure he's right both ways."[23]

Having come full circle, the two, as companions, are heading out for more adventure. The protagonist, basically unchanged from the person he was in the beginning of the novel and the mentor, as the same man he has been for centuries but now fully revealed and rounded as a character typical of Heinlein fiction head out on a road of adventure that will give them a chance to display ability to survive.

The mentor character is found less often in Heinlein's short stories, perhaps because the space and plot restrictions placed on short stories prohibit the extensive developement that Heinlein gives the characterization. There are, however, some stories in which the character can be found in one form or another.

"Delilah and the Space Rigger," is one of Heinlein's first fictive efforts, and the mentor is clearly seen in the story. An early effort at discussion of the liberation of women, "Delilah and the Space Rigger" is narrated by the mentor, and tells the story of a female who becomes an established workhand building a space station in Earth orbit.

The main characters in the story are Tiny Larsen, the construction supervisor; G. Brooks McNye, the new woman; and "Dad" Witherspoon, the mentor and narrator.

The plot line is simple. The woman comes to work under false pretenses with her first initial on the forms to avoid indicating sex; but she is eminently qualified and capable for the work and cannot be fired for incompetancy. Tiny wants to ship her back and get a man to do a man's job, but he is eventually convinced of the error of his ways and allows her to stay. The clincher is the improved work performance

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charts of the men since "Brooksie" McNye joined, and the threat of a general work slowdown and strike unless he retains her. Facing the inevitable, Tiny closes with a chuckling "Dad, tell them to send up a chaplain for the Station, as soon as possible. Under the new policy we may need one anytime."[24] While the plot is rather trivial, and the story is not one of Heinlein's best, it does serve as an important precursor to the later advent of the mentor in his more major efforts. It is mentor Dad Witherspoon who finally, as Tiny's confidant, convinces him that he has no choice but to continue to use McNye. And Dad is the one who Tiny consults about the possible ramifications of retaining her on the payroll.

Like all of the examples of the mentor discussed, Dad Witherspoon fits some of the characteristics of the chracter, but not all of them. In each case discussed, however, the mentor fulfilled a particular function in the novel or short story that was a key element in the story's development. This particular character usage is an important one to Heinlein. It allows him to use a sage figure to preach to those less wise; and thus also preach to the reader. By making the mentor a likeable figure with whom readers will readily identify, and then having that figure expound ideas and concepts that Heinlein hopes to inculcate in his readers, a sympathy for the philosophies expounded by the mentor is built in the reader. The technique, while not always successful, works well enough that Heinlein uses it repeatedly.

The basic characteristics of the mentor, then, might be capsuled as follows: he is a loner and a rational anarchist; he is responsible to self alone for his actions; he is competent, prepared, and has the ability to command; he is knowledgeable but violent; he has "hidden" talents and importantce; and he is a survivor through conflict, as well as a member of the author's elite group of survivors. Each mentor has all or most of these basic characteristics.

CHAPTER TWO: THE PROTAGONIST

The mentor, serving primarily as an intellectual and moral guide, focuses his efforts upon Heinlein's protagonist. The protagonist, normally a young person, acts upon, and grows more complete as a character, based upon his reception of the mentor's advice. In novel after novel, and in many short stories, the protagonist begins as a blank slate, a generally formless piece of malleable characterization, ready to be molded into a survivor by the skillful manipulations of the mentor. The protagonist, having accepted that molding, in turn dominates the other characters in a given story, and pays allegiance, in the end, to only his original mentor.

For Heinlein, then, the protagonist provides the physical action that the story needs for popular readability. Although the mentor may at times also provide action, his action is always secondary to the primary movement of the protagonist--and it is the protagonist's action, together with the mentor's homilies, that further promulgate Heinlein's survival ethic.

In PODKAYNE OF MARS, for example, where the complete protagonist is an amalgam of Podkayne and her brother Clark, the two together serve as the novel's focus of action. Podkayne narrates the story and supplies a center for reader interest, while brother Clark acts to insure the survival of the three main characters involved. Without both Podkayne and Clark the protagonist is incomplete, although it can be surmised that Clark could conceivably be reconstructed by Heinlein to serve as a single protagonist because of his ability to win through to survival against difficult odds. Podkayne and Clark together provide both the apt student of the mentor in Pod-

dy's listening to, admiring, and following the advice of Uncle Tom, and the action stimulated by that advice in Clark's helping Poddy and himself escape the clutches of a kidnapper.

Clark's actions are, not surprisingly, quite violent--for it is only through such action that the characters can survive. Heinlein's typically intimate connection between action and violence is once again demonstrated. Even in this juvenile novel, intended for a younger market than most of his works, Heinlein displays that connection. Action by itself, while interesting, does not help achieve survival. Only action with concomitant violence seems to suffice in a survival oriented context.

For Clark, then, such action as a viable solution to a given problem is not only a possibility, but a strong probability. As Clark says,

> ...I understand evil...Before I woke Poddy I took care of that late pseudo-simian that 'fairy', vicious little beast. I didn't have a gun...So, constructing a slingshot, I aimed almost three times as high as I would at home, to allow for local gravity, and got it right in the sternum, knocked it off its perch--crushed the skull with my heel and gave it an extra twist for the nasty bite on Poddy's arm.[25]

In order to survive Clark feels he must kill, and willingly and with a vengeance does so. His ability to kill with such coldblooded calculation is later lamented by Uncle Tom, who berates Clark and Poddy's parents for allowing Clark to become what he has become. The protestations are fairly modest, however, and are repudiated by Clark, who asks at the end of the novel:

> But what did Uncle Tom mean by that--trying to scare Dad about me? I wasn't hurt at all and he knows it. I just got a load of mud on me, not even a burn... whereas Poddy still looks like a corpse and they've got her piped and wired like a creche.
>
> I don't see what he was driving at.[26]

Although Clark's actions were, at least by Uncle Tom's standards, amoral, Clark sees nothing wrong with them. Those actions did, after all, provide for the survival of the three main characters. The young reader is left with a clear choice, to side with Uncle Tom, who says, "Your daughter will get well, no thanks to either of you. But I have my doubts about Clark. With him it may be too late. God may give you a second chance if you hurry."[27] Or the young reader can side with Clark, who has, through his own violent actions, insured the survival of the dual protagonist and the mentor. While Clark is busy with the action, Podkayne provides the preaching about survival with her comments on life in general for a young girl on Mars making a trip to Venus, the Moon, and Earth. The Martian society, she explains, is, like many Heinlein societal constructs, a revolutionary society based on the overthrow of colonial yoke and as yet too young to have evolved the faults found in modern America.

Uncle Tom, who claims to prefer dickering to fighting, admits to Podkayne (who has just called him "one of the bloodthirsty ones" from the revolution)[28]: "mankind didn't invent fighting; it was here long before we were. But we invented politics. Just think of it hon--Homo sapiens is the most cruel, the most vicious, the most predatory, and certainly the most deadly of all the animals in this solar system. Yet he invented politics!"[29] Moreover, the Martian society was begun as a penal col-

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ony, much like Australia, and as penal colonists the Martians on board the cruise ship are looked at somewhat askance by the passengers from Earth. As one elderly woman says to another,

> What I can't understand is why the Line permits them to mix with us. Perhaps they have to sell them passage--treaties or some such nonsense--but we shouldn't be forced to associate with them...and certainly not to eat with them![30]

The dialogue is handled sarcastically at this point, to paint a most unflattering picture of the women talking. The native Martians had previously been established as a proud, old race, dying now but with a history of past greatness, and the new young Martians (imported from Earth) as a proud young race, vital with the energies that had spawned a revolution and were now taming a planet to make it suitable for mankind. With this context, the statements by the women make the new Martians seem all the more attractive. The disparaging dialogue also precipitates Clark's first action. Poddy, having relayed the overheard conversation to Clark, admits that her telling it to Clark is the seed that germinates in Clark's practical joke. The youngster dips the ladies' washcloths in photographic dyes that, when mixed with water, produce vivid hues of yellow on the faces of the two older women. The two older women also provide Podkayne with the motivation for her political musings. The Martians, according to her, are, as revolutionaries, more vital and progressive than most of the other humans in the solar system. As Podkayne notes,

> I am of mixed races and I know that some people think that is bad, even though there is no bias against it on Mars. I do have 'convicts' among my ancestors--but I've never been ashamed of it. Or not much, although I suppose I'm inclined to dwell on the highly selected ones. But a 'convict' is not always a criminal. Admittedly there was that period in the early history of Mars when the commissars were running things on Earth, and Mars was used as a penal colony; everybody knows that and we don't try to hide it.
>
> But the vast majority of the transportees were political prisoners--'counter-revolutionists,' 'enimies of the people.' Is this bad?[31]

The answer must be no, this is good. And the sort of revolution that developes from such situations is also good by Heinlein's definition.

As further proof that such a society, born in violence and devoted to personal freedom, is better than Earth's Podkayne also mentions that:

> In any case there was the much longer period, involving fifty times as many colonists, when every new Marsman was selected as carefully as a bride selects her wedding gown--and much more scientifically. And, finally, there is the current period, since our Revolution and Independence, when we dropped all bars to immigration and welcome anyone who is healthy and has normal intelligence.[32]

For the Martian colonists, survival is all important. To that end, there was a significant period when only the best could immigrate. Now, however, since the success of Uncle Tom's revolution, almost anyone can come. The harsh Martian environment does away with the weaklings--much as Heinlein's harsh Lunar environment does away with the weak in THE MOON IS A HARSH MISTRESS. Survival of the fittest, and the culling of the weak, is again demonstrated. In this fashion the race improves and will survive. On Mars that culling first took place when the weak were not allowed to im-

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migrate to the planet. The feeble-minded, for instance, are still unable to immigrate even under what Podkayne calls the planet's "open door policy." Secondary to that culling, though, is the continued process of culling carried out on the planet itself.

Two young people are also involved in HAVE SPACE SUIT--WILL TRAVEL. In this case, however, Kip (the young man) best fits the role of protagonist. In this novel Kip's action again demonstrates the survival by violence doctrine.

The novel revolves around a boy's desire to obtain a trip to the moom. The motive for the novel's actions is established formally in the first few lines, when Kip simply tells his father, "Dad, I want to go to the moon."[33] Kip's father agrees, but in typical Heinlein fashion tells his son that he must earn the trip himself. As is the usual case with favorably portrayed Heinlein characters, the offered prize must be earned by the protagonist. In this case, the trip must be earned by Kip's perseverance in a contest which promises the winner a free trip to the Moon.

Kip does not win the trip to the Moon. But he does win, as a consolation prize, a retired space suit. The suit is the real thing, with the hardware stripped; and Kip, a talented, industrious young engineer, rigs it to be as realistic a suit as possible. By the time the novel is over Kip has demonstrated a number of elements of Heinlein's survival ethic through both verbal and through violently actice example. The primary ethic is survival through struggle. Kip mails thousands of slogans to the soap company in an effort to better the odds. The effort, at least partially, works; although Kip does not get an immediate return that is exactly what he wants, his efforts are rewarded on an immediate basis with the suit, and on a long-term basis with a trip to the Moon and far beyond.

A corollary to the Heinlein survival ethic is the success of man alone. Kip, like many Heinlein characters, is a loner. He has no close friends. His father loves, but does not work with him, and his efforts are almost entirely solitary. By working alone Kip demonstrates what one lone talented boy can do, much as Clark demonstrates the same idea in PODKAYNE OF MARS. Also, Kip demonstrates again that good things happen to those who are prepared for action and unafraid to use violent means to secure their desires. In Kip's case, even the great high tribunal of the galaxy finds itself agreeing that violent means to a good end are acceptable, even desirable, in certain circumstances. Kip provides most of his preaching about survival through action. His non-verbal examples include his constant preparedness, his violent actions and his technological bent.

It is true that Kip is far less violent in his actions than many Heinlein characters. In many cases Kip's actions, while exciting, are non-violent. Because he is prepared, for instance, he almost, despite tremendous odds, manages to escape his kidnappers. In his escape, surprisingly, he uses little force. He seeks survival through escape by fleeing, not by fighting. That non-violent action, unusual by Heinlein's standars is, however, more than negated by his later actions and statements which involve the death of a large number of living beings. Faced with the decision of the High Court of the Galaxy to extinguish the human race by removing Earth from the vicinity of the sun, Kip explodes with "All right, take away our star --You will if you can and I guess you can. Go ahead! We'll <u>make</u> a star! Then, someday, we'll come back and hunt you down--<u>all of you</u>!"[34]

The High Court, of course, is unimpressed, so Kip adds later, with great bravado,

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"Mr. Moderator--if the verdict is against us--can you hold off your hangmen long enough to let us go home? We know you can send us home in only a few minutes." The High Court is surprised by this death wish since Kip and his young friend's lives were not in the balance--but acquieses to Kip's wishes.

In the end, however, the High Court is merciful, and decides to withhold final judgement for a few half-lives of thorium. As a final bonus, the Mother Thing is appointed watcher over Earth to protect the youngsters of Earth from themselves. By this action Heinlein demonstrates that the highest court in the galaxy approves of Earth's method of growth, which is primarily growth through violent practicing of survival of the fittest. As one member of the court says,

> ...this race is young. The infants of my own noble race bite and scratch each other--some even die from it.... Even I behaved so at one time...But does anyone here deny that I am civilized. These are brutal savages and I don't see how anyone could ever like them--but I say: give them their chance![35]

And the High Court, seeing the light, does.

In other novels and stories we see the adult protagonist in much the same light. This adult protagonist is in many ways similar to the mentor, providing a complement to the doctrines of that other characterization. Where the mentor character is often involved in lectures to the reader, although ostensibly to the protagonist or perhaps to some other character; the adult protagonist is, like the young person protagonist, more often involved in either exemplary action (non-verbal), or, as is often the case, in musings to himself which constitute a suitable replacement for the direct lectures of the mentor.

In GLORY ROAD, for instance, the protagonist is a young adult, Evelyn Cyril Gordon. "Oscar" is a vagabond ex-soldier from the paddies of Vietnam who is looking for action. Oscar's actions throughout are typical of the combative vision of how man must act to survive individually and, by implication, as a race. Although he claims at first to be uninterested in war and fighting, his actions belie that stance. He finds himself unable to afford college when he loses his football scholarship because the school de-emphasizes the game, and joins the Army. There, although he claims to be trying to find a soft desk job, he winds up in the infantry and finds himself in Vietnam. As a warrior he discovers his niche in life. Although things do not seem to work out well in any other endeavor, as a fighting man he is quite competent. After being wounded in hand to hand combat with what he calls "little brown brother," he comments about such combat.

> A 'Military Advisor' can't afford to be afraid of knives, bayonets, and such; he must cope with them. I've never been afraid of them because I'm always sure I can do unto another what he is planning to do unto me.[36]

Like other Heinlein protagonists, Oscar is the ultimate competent man, equipped to servive. His combative skills are nothing short of amazing. When he first attempts to use a bow and arrow he states "The leather slipped on as if it had been made for me and perhaps it had...I raised and bent that bow and felt the power of it, I felt a surge of exultance--this tool was right for me! We fitted."[37] Needless to say, his first shot proved to be a bull's-eye, and subsequent shots were, in the heat of action against assorted monsters and villains, fully as accurate.

"Scar" Gordon is also an excellent example of Heinlein's protagonist's approach to sex, The competent man is, of course, as competent in sex as he is in combat and self-preservation--but somehow until quite recent novels the sex act never quite happens. The protagonist is always willing to talk about it; but rarely <u>does</u> it. In Gordon's case, there is usually something that gets in the way even when the right moment has arrived. For example, when he is fighting in Vietnam, he finds that he cannot bear to make love to the Vietnamese because the women are too small and delicate. Later he finds, with Star that.

> I couldn't do it. I couldn't even <u>start</u>.
>
> I don't know why. My intentions toward Star had oscillated from dishonorable to honorable and back again, but had always been practical from the moment I laid eyes on her. No, let me put it this way: My intentions were strictly dishonorable always, but with utter willingness to convert them to honorable, later, as soon as we could dig up a justice of the peace.[38]

In another situation, where the morals of his home planet are not in effect, and where sexual relations are necessary way of gratifying a host by showing by deed that his wife and daughters are desirable. Oscar again fails, this time with results that are almost disastrous. After a night of revelry at the estate of a friend of Star's, Oscar tiredly foregoes intercourse with the host's daughters and wife. That, Rufo explains to Oscar, is a mistake.

> I figure you've insulted the Doral the worst he has ever been hurt in the course of a long and touchy life. So it's about ninety to ten that, two shakes after we turn off the road, we are all going to be sprouting more arrows that Saint Sebastian.[39]

Of Course they don't sprout the arrows, and they do make amends. For Oscar, the amends constitute one of the few times he makes his actions speak as loud as his words in the novel. Again and again, when the actual moment arrives Oscar backs down. Only after Only after he and Star are married does he share his bed with her.

There is some adequate reason for such sexual peculiarities. They do, for instance, serve as an excellent basis for discussion between Oscar and Star, and Oscar and Rufo, on the foibles of society of Earth, and particularly the United States. Oscar, as the representative of American Society, is found wanting in terms of sexual/social mores. The deficiency is indicative of a general deficiency in American society since the other worlds are portrayed as better places to be. However, such sexual quirks as the constant discussion of virility and open sexual relations, without the concommitant action, persist in other stories and novels without such adequate thematic excuse of purpose.

Hamilton Felix, the protagonist in BEYOND THIS HORIZON (an early novel, 1942) is worthy of note because he, more blatantly than most Heinlein protagonists, is the superior man. Felix is the born leader and survivor, and he has been bred to have those traits. In the constructed future where Heinlein has placed Felix, genetic planning is the rule rather than a rare exception, and Felix, as the culmination of a particularly good combination of genetic strains, is an exremely capable, and genetically quite important, person. As his geneticist tells him fairly early in the novel, "Yours is a star line...Every cell in your body contains in its chromosomes the blueprint of a stronger, sounder, more adaptable, more resistant race. I'm ask-

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ing you not to waste it."[40]

In this novel, the use of genetic planning to actually produce a better future race is a prime factor in the plot structure. BEYOND THIS HORIZON has a future world divided into two basic types, the "Controls." or unclean, unplanned hopeless few; and the regular population, which is the result of careful planning of mates and manipulation of genes. Heinlein draws a line between "good" and "bad" genetic manipulation. As part of this particular future construct he includes two genetic wars that had occurred earlier. The events leading up to these wars, and the results of them, are important to understanding how a protagonist like Hamilton Felix can be seen as a figure to be admired for his survival capabilities.

The first Genetic War, according to Felix's genetic counselor, was a war between the "sheep" and the "wolves." The sheep were those who had been genetically manipulated to remove combative characteristics. "After the Atomic War of 1970, the survivors instituted drastic genetic regulations for one purpose alone...to breed sheep rather than wolves." Some of the wolves, however, resisted the regulations, explains the counselor to Felix, and the Northwest Colony, a nation of genetically bred wolves, resulted. "That the Northwest Union should eventually fight the rest of the world was a biological necessity. The outcome was equally a necessity and the details are unimportant. The 'wolves' ate the 'sheep'."[41] And thus it is that the men of Hamilton Felix's age are genetically bred for what the author has determined are survival characteristics--characteristics that are to be found at peak in Hamilton Felix.

After the First Genetic War, the wolves soon found themselves in another. Although the First War had avoided the disaster of breeding "the fighting spirit out of man,"[42] yet another conflict pitted the wolves against another genetic tyrant, the Great Khan, who under his despotic rule bred Homo proteus, or the "mule" men--men bred to certain tasks such as warfare--unable to perform anything else. In spite of the excellent warriors that resulted, the Great Khan lost. The counselor explains

> The mules fought us--then yet the true men won. Won because they fought and continued to fight, as individuals and guerilla groups. The Empire had one vulnerable point, its co-ordinators, the Khan, his satraps, and administrators...At the end a few score assassinations accomplished a collapse which could not be achieved in battle.[43]

The true men, adaptable and non-specialized, but nonetheless wolves determined to survive, did survive.

Felix, as the genetic result of such social philosophies, is an interesting focus for Heinlein's survival characteristics. He has many of the traits exhibited by other protagonists. He is basically a loner, bellicose when necessary, capable but with sexual anomalies odd even for him time, and he is demanding of others. His one close associate and friend is a statistician, Monro-Alpha. Alpha, although likeable, has none of the psychological quirks that make Hamilton Felix outstanding for his time, and Alpha does not truly understand these quirks in Felix. The basis for this friendship, never adequately explained since the two are quite variant from each other in personality and interests, nonetheless forms an integral part of the plot.

Like many of Heinlein's protagonists, Felix is possessed of a dry wit that others find unusual. Alpha, for instance, thinks to himself that

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> Hamilton's remarks often did not appear serious...Nor did they appear to follow the six principles of humor--Monroe-Alpha prided himself on his sense of humor ...But Hamilton's mind seemed to follow some wierd illogic of its own, self-consistent perhpas, but apparently unrelated to the existent world.[44]

His dry humor is a factor in the plotting much later in the novel; but, more importantly, Felix relishes his society's particularly individualized combating mores.

In this future world, duels are an established form of social conduct, and all men wear either weapons or brassards denoting their noncombative status. The brassards, of course, are connotative of cowardice unless worn for an excellent reason. Doctors wear them, as do the elderly, sick, and others. Felix, as one would expect, is not only willing to wear a weapon, he is always searching for a superior weapon, one that will serve him with better force than another. Early in the novel, during the reader's first acquantance with Felix and Alpha, Felix asks his friend to notice his new sidearm. Although Alpha had not noticed it, he tells himself that not noticing a new weapon is not unusual; and that "had he (Felix) arrived unarmed Monroe-Alpha would have noticed it, naturally."[45] The new weapon is a relic from the past. Although "It's mill new," says Felix, "it's a facsimile of one in the Smithsonian Institution collection. It's called a point forty-five Colt automatic pistol."[46] Rather than use the standard needle beam coagulator, Felix has chosen this weapon for its psychological as well as physically damaging potential. Not only will it "blast a hole in a man big enough to throw a dog through,"[47] but, just as importantly, "it's a terror weapon. You wouldn't even have to hit with your first shot." Having fired the extremely noisy weapon in Monroe-Alpha's office to prove the psychological point, Felix adds that "Your man would be so startled you'd have time to get him with the second shot." Furthermore, he adds,

> ...the braves around town are used to putting a man to sleep with a bolt that doesn't even muss his hair. This thing's bloody. You saw what happened to that piece of vitrolith. Think what a man's face will look like after it stops one of those slugs. Why a necrocosmetician would have to use a steroculp to produce a reasonable facsimile for his friends to admire. Who wants to stand up to that kind of fire?[48]

Thus by page 11 of the novel we have been introduced to a protagonist who, as someone the author had designed to win our admiration, goes beyond the normal weaponry of his time to find something from the past that will cause greater bloodshed and damage to suit his own psychological purpose.

Heinlein is careful to bring Felix's combative nature into action as soon as possible. The weapon serves to introduce the reader to the constructed society; and a shoot-out a few pages later re-emphasizes the point that duels are common, and demanded of real men. Felix shows his skill with his new sidearm when he wounds rather than kills another man in a shoot-out in a restaurant. The drunken antagonist insists on the shoot-out in spite of his table companions' attempts at restraint. Finally, after Hamilton states "Your manners are as think as your tongue. You are a disgrace to the gun you wear,"[49] the other man draws, is outdrawn in turn by Hamilton, and is wounded. The paragraph describing the action is most useful in setting the societal structure for the rest of the novel.

> The terrific explosion of the Colt forty-five brought every armed man in the place to his feet, sidearm clear, eyes wary, ready for action. But the action

> was all over. A woman laughed, shortly and shrilly. The sound broke the tension for everyone. Men relaxed, weapons went back into belts, seats were resumed with apologetic shrugs. The diners went back to their own affairs with the careful indifference to other people's business of the urbane sophisticate.[50]

The crowd is obviously just as bellicose as Hamilton Felix. Every armed man was ready for action after the unusual noise of the Colt. Although they are eating dinner in what is described as a fairly high class restaurant, the people eating are as ready for deadly serious combat as men in trenches of a more conventional war. By thus establishing his societal patterns, Heinlein is able to make his protagonist as nonchalantly violent as possible and still have him retain his stature as the character to be admired in the novel. Futhermore, the establishment of the society as a good one by the author is a possibility to be welcomed, and that the belligerency evinced by Hamilton Felix is a necessary attribute for the survival of man since Felix is the culmination of a star line and many generations of his progeny are destined to spread and "better" mankind.

In this major respect, the overt genetic manipulation to produce desired aggressiveness, Hamilton Felix is an important protagonist in Heinlein's work. Felix is, importantly, an early figure (1942); later protagonists follow, to a large degree, the pattern set by Felix's activities.

In that overt use of genetic planning and manipulation, Hamilton Felix in BEYOND THIS HORIZON is not alone; he is merely among the first to be used by Heinlein in this fashion. Although in most cases Heinlein's protagonists rise to the top and survive through natural selection, in some important instances that rise is planned and calculated. Lazarus Long is among the most recent.

Long is the Senior of the Howard families. That group, encountered in other Heinlein novels and short stories, is a genetically planned group composed of members bred for long-term survival. Lazarus Long is the first one to achieve apparent immortality. He is also the head, in TIME ENOUGH FOR LOVE, of the now powerful families. What makes Lazarus Long interesting, however, even more than his age, are the methods by which that age has been achieved. Lazarus Long is not only the most recent Heinlein protagonist; he is also the most overt in his statement about his methods of survival.

We are introduced to the novel through a historian's narrative about the events leading up to the novel, including the passage from Earth to Secundus of the Howard families. It was Lazarus Long who prompted that first migration, made to escape the jealous people of Earth who could not believe that the long lives of the Howard's was not the result of some drug or device that could be used by others. In that introduction, the historian points out that

> Our genetic debt to him...lies in the fact that migration is a sorting device, a forced Darwinian selection, under which superior stock goes to the stars while culls stay home and die. This is true even for those forcibly transported... save that the sorting then takes place on the new planet. In a raw frontier weaklings and misfits die; strong stock survives.[51]

Long does his best throughout the novel to reinforce that theme of the culling of the weak. In a series of adventures in this 589 page novel, the protagonist seems determined to search out his own limits in a continual flirtation with death; and almost succeeds in finding death in the end. In those adventures, his willingness to use the violent tools at hand to deal with those opposed to him is stressed time and time again. At one point he has married a mortal who does not know of his immortality. They illustrate the historian's statements and migrate to the frontier on her planet. After they have successfully homesteaded and Long has passed every test that the trip through the mountains, the erecting of the home, and the whims of nature can throw at him; the bad guys, in the form of a father and his two sons, arrive. It becomes obvious after a short and strained dinner conversation that the three newcomers have evil intent. When the father says that they will all wrestle with Lazarus, who has taken the pseudonym Bill, and the winner will sleep with his wife, the action starts. Lazarus and his wife kill all three in under two seconds, no questions asked.

> From the kitchen Dora shot the gun out of his hand just as a knife suddenly grew in Dan's neck. Lazarus shot Montgomery carefully in the leg, then even more carefully shot Darby--as Lady Macbeth (the dog) was at his throat. The fight had lasted under two seconds.[52]

Futhermore, the father of the three, Monty, is not yet dead. Lazarus, after asking Dora if she wanted the pleasure, picks up Monty's gun, "noted that it was indeed a museum piece but did not seem to be hurt. He used it to finish off its owner."[53] Finally, with a perhaps intentional pun on the novel's title, Lazarus, discussing with his wife what to do with the bodies, says that he will take them out and leave the bodies for the wild scavengers. "An hour and more of daylight left," he says. "Time enough."[54] Time enough, it is supposed, for death.

The culmination of this particular adventure is when other more peaceful and subdued settlers move into Happy Valley and Lazarus comments about the new neighbors. In a statement strongly reminiscent of the novel's historian's prologue, Lazarus notes that

> The pioneers in Happy Valley had been through a double screening, first in a decision to leave Earth and then in deciding to tackle Hopeless Pass. So we had real survivors willing to fight when necessary but not likely to fight over trivial matters.[55]

Because he serves as both the protagonist and the mentor in the novel, Lazarus Long is afforded the opportunity to preach by both actions and words. In the typical Heinlein plot structure, the mentor will help to guide the protagonist's actions and later take action on his own. The advice normally comes first and the action second. In the case of Lazarus Long, however, the situation is altered. Long acts, then discusses the acts in the narration.

In Long's case, this guidance is not held within bounds set by the novel's plot-

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ting and characterization. Heinlein takes the opportunity offered by two "intermissions" to insert a series of sayings or statements about things in general that are presumably the thoughts of Lazarus, although whether the intermission is Heinlein's or Long's is unclear--if Heinlein's, then the thoughts have little or no connections with the novel--if Long's then they should be seen in the light of Long's establishted characterization.

The statement's are most illuminating. One, for instance, says that "Roman matrons used to say to their sons: 'Come back with your shield, or on it.' Later on, this custom declined. So did Rome." Another, just as succinctly, notes that "Just as racial survival is the only universal morality, no other basic is possible."[56] Another statement notes that the distances involved in space travel make war very difficult, which "is probably a loss for most people, since war is our race's most popular diversion, one which gives purpose and color to dull and stupid lives." More importantly, he adds to this statement that space travel, by making war difficult, "is a great boon to the intelligent man who fights only when he must--never for sport."[57] For Heinlein war is the deversion of the masses, while personal combat and survival of the fittest operate more for the elite, as in Hamilton Felix of BEYOND THIS HORIZON, and Lazarus Long in TIME ENOUGH FOR LOVE. Two important characteristics of the protagonist readily identifiable in Lazarus Long as well as a number of other characters are the protagonist's personal responsibility for his own actions and the coward/hero ethic.

The first theme is not new to Heinlein plots and characters. The Professor in THE MOON IN A HARSH MISTRESS notes that political executions should be carried out by the person responsible for the sentence; and adds that "I am free because I know that I alone am morally responsible for everything I do."[58] But for Lazarus Long, that code of personal responsibility is particularly evidenced. His marriage to Dora during his period as a settler with her was particularly happy because Dora was "always aware that she was responsible for her own actions."[59] This personal responsibility is closely aligned with the theme of the competent man. The competent individual seen by Heinlein should be

> Able to change a diaper, plan an invasion, butcher a hog, conn a ship, design a building, write a sonnet, balance accounts, build a wall, set a bone, comfort the dying, take orders, give orders, cooperate, act alone, solve equations, analyze a new problem, pitch manure, program a computer, cook a tasty meal, fight efficiently, die gallantly. Specialization is for insects.[60]

By being competent, as discussed, and by then being totally responsible for the actions resulting from competence, the protagonist is a man alone; surviving through his own actions in a hostile environment. If the situation demands it, he may temporarily subjugate his own independence in order to help the race or group survive; but even that subjugation is a part of his ability to survive through competence. Subjugation will only come when the person who is controlling the situation is demonstrably more adept than the protagonist. Understandably enough, in terms of plot and characterization, that is a fairly infrequent occurence.

The second theme, the coward-hero ethic, is seen in Long's statements about seeking to avoid violence, but nonetheless always managing to find it. Like Johnny Rico in STARSHIP TROOPERS, and like Oscar Gordon in GLORY ROAD, Long, in spite of professing to be a coward, always manages to prove himself a hero time and time again. The technique is used in many Heinlein stories by having the mentor, or

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occasionally by having the protagonist himself, first define the common-sense attitude involved in seeking to avoid potentially deadly situations, and then showing the hero venturing directly into the path of such situations to display his ability to survive in such risky circumstances. For Long, for instance, the trip to Happy Valley was not supposed to be a death-defying journey fraught with peril and evil intentions from despicable characters, but didd turn out to be so. Had he wanted, Long could have transported his wife and supplies to Happy Valley by his space ship, parked in orbit above the planet at the time. Instead, to prove his mettle in spite of professions of common-sense cowardice, Long insists on venturing to the valley by foot, with wooden wagon and an intelligent mule as his and his wife's companions.

The basic characteristics of the protagonist, then, might be summed up as follows: he is competent and violent; he is ready for action and highly adaptable; he is a hero/coward; he is intelligent and a leader; he is a preacher primarily through action; he is a student of the mentor; he is sexually inconsistent but genetically superior; he is a "wolf", not a "sheep"; he is responsible only to himself; and he is, above all, a survivor.

CHAPTER THREE: FEMALES AND OTHER MINOR CHARACTERS

Females, while important, always take subserviant roles to a dominant male character in Heinlein's work. Although the female may demonstrate many of the same characteristics found in the male protagonist and the male mentor, those characteristics are always found in a context that includes dominant male control over female actions. Such total dominance colors significantly the effect the female has on the plot, theme, and structure of the novel.

For Heinlein, the plot normally calls for survival of either a man as an individual or for the survival of mankind. In both cases a surviving female love interest is useful as a display of continuity for either the individual or the race. For the individual, a formalized marriage of some sort establishes male dominance of a family group that has survived through the perils recounted in the novel and will thus survive in the future. For mankind females are essential for the continuation of the race. They are often found in the novels displaying both their competence for survival through violence, under the control of the dominant male, and their ability to happily and with vigor bear and raise children. Often a sort of chivalric code toward the females is evidenced by the protagonist. The code allows the protagonist to show due respect to females while retaining complete domination over them. In some novels, however, while the code changes form to meet the demands of plot and theme, it nevertheless always manages to incorporate competency for the female. It is the same sort of often violent personal control of action demanded of the male characters, but for the females such action takes place only under the guidance of the dominant male.

In GLORY ROAD, for instance, although Star is the Empress of the Twenty Universes and a far older, more intelligent, and more powerful person than the protagonist Oscar, when he rages at her to "Hold your tongue, you bad-tempered brat! You have not earned the right to speak to me that way," she meekly acquiesces. Furthermore, he adds, "Nor will any girl ever earn that right. You will always--<u>always</u>!--address me politely and with respect. One more word of your nasty rudeness and I'll spank you until the tears fly."[61] Rufo, the mentor, is so suprised by Star's submission that he asks of Oscar, "I knew you were boss as soon as I got back. But I don't see how you did it. Milord, I have never seen <u>Her</u> meek before. May one ask?"[62]

That subservience is similarly seen in other stories. In BEYOND THIS HORIZON Hamilton Felix finds himself in a violent first meeting with the woman who will later become his wife. They fight fiercely, but Hamilton wins rather handily. Finally, after they have stopped fighting, she asks "What do you intend to do with me?" He responds "Talk to you. Yes, and I think I'll kiss you." She struggles, and "He took a handful of hair and snapped her head back. 'No biting,' he warned, 'or I'll beat holy hell out of you.'"[63] Finally she gives in and kisses back when he kisses her, and they fall in love. He has conquered his woman.

Longcourt Phyllis, the woman he falls in love with, is an example of what the competent woman must be, a supplier of progeny and a keeper of the home. Phyllis is combative and willing to fight to defend her man. A woman who is not capable of such action is not worthy of the competent man. Together they will survive. Midway in the novel Felix and Phyllis find themselves defending a room along with two others against attacks from a common enemy. With a pile of bodies in front of his door, Felix asks Phyllis how she is doing. She replies "I'm doing all right." He advises her to "Burn 'em so they don't wiggle,"[64] and she, as competent with her weapon as he is with his, replies that "They don't." As cooly as he, she is able to kill. Later, the battle over and the victory won, they marry. And when, some time later, Phyllis gives birth, Felix asks her how she is, she sums up the most important aspect of Heinlein's women when she says, "Of course I'm all right--this is what I'm for."[65]

The subservience of women is found even when the female is the protagonist, as in PODKAYNE OF MARS. Although Podkayne narrates the story it is Clark who provides the cunning and the physical ability to overcome adversity, and thus wins the two their survival. Podkayne is not violent, so she is unable to provide the action needed for the survival of the double protagonist (Podkayne and Clark). Clark is as violent as he needs to be. And his willingness to shed blood brings about their survival. Podkayne, therefore, defers to Clark in moments of violent action. Podkayne's inability to use violent means to insure personal survival is her drawback as a protagonist; and only Clark's actions save her. The message for the reader is quite clear, with only a weak disclaimer against survival through violent means made at the end of the novel by Uncle Tom. A Heinlein male protagonist who is unwilling to use violent means to an end is not to be found--only in the rare female protagonist such as Podkayne can we find a protagonist who is <u>not</u> prone to violent action. And even here the message is that her inability to be bellicose is her downfall; only her brother's willingness to act allows the nonviolent Podkayne to survive. As Clark notes in one of his brief narrations, "Poddy'd greatest weakness--the really soft place in her head, she's not too stupid otherwise--is her almost inability to grasp that some people are as bad as they are. Evil. Poddy never has understood evil."[66] That misunderstanding of evil, and the unwillingness to use force to combat that evil, are only possible in a Heinlein female characterization. Having established in a number of situations that violence is a necessary function of personal and racial survival, Heinlein's favorite characters are always willing to use whatever force is necessary. Podkayne is a rare exception where, by sharing the protagonist's action with her brother Clark, we find a peaceful yet favorably portrayed characterization. But she is favorable only in that we are told, through deed as well as word, that her unwillingness to act is a fault--a fault remedied only by Clark's actions.

A more typical female, one who is willing to be forceful when necessary, is Mary Barkis in THE PUPPET MASTERS. Mary, Sam's love interest, is a typically attractive, truculent, outspoken, yet curiously subservient female Heinlein character. Like Longcourt Phyllis in BEYOND THIS HORIZON, Mary is armed, trained, and willing to use her

weapons. She is also fully as attractive and as sexually appealing as Phyllis. As Sam notes early in the novel, Mary has "A long, lean body, but pleasingly mammalian. Good legs. Broad shoulders for a woman. Flaming, wavy red hair and the real red-headed saurian bony structure to her skull. Her face was handsome rather than beautiful; she looked me over as if I were a side of beef." Then, later, when they walk into the president's office and are checked for weapons, San finds that "Mary turned out to be a walking arsenal; the machine gave four beeps and a hiccouph, although you would have sworn she couldn't hide a tax receipt."[67]

Mary does serve a distinctly feminine purpose in the novel. The female role, like the majority of Heinlein's minor chracters, normally offers some minor element of plotting or characterization that serves to round out the protagonist's character. The female in most cases is meant to display the protagonist's overt sexual attractiveness, and to also display the type of female fitted for survival. Mary, by providing the love interest for Sam, fulfills both these purposes, offering Sam opportunity for displays of sexual attractiveness and, through her actions displaying the attributes of the female who can survive. But Mary's femininity is also important in one other area of plotting. The invading parasitic slugs control their human subjects once they have become attached to them. As part of that control they are able to make the human host act normally, thus allowing for the invaders to use their hosts in non-invaded areas for infiltration. Mary, however,discovers that slug-controlled men do not react normally to her seductive advances. Using this knowledge, Mary is able to pinpoint key figures who have been taken over by slugs. At one point, during a congressional hearing on the matter, Mary poses as a presidential secretary and, as Sam (the narrator) says, "She looked like Cleopatra on a warm night--and as out of place as a bed in church. She got as much attention as the President."[68]

That attention is important. As soon as she discovers a male who is not paying the right attention, she acts. When Senator Gottlieb comes to the rostrum, Mary bumps against him, whispers a few remarks into his ear, and, when he does not react as he should, nods to Sam who attacks the Senator and finds that he does, indeed, have a slug controlling him.

Although bellicosity is important to Heinlein's female characters, their prime function is most often child-bearing. In most cases, the female is violent only when such action is absolutely essential to survival. For the most part the male handles the action necessary for racial and personal survival, while the female handles the child-bearing and raising. That fostering of progeny is the principle female role in assuring racial survival. The importance of that fecundity is displayed in a number of novels. In FARNHAM'S FREEHOLD, for instance, Hugh Farnham's daughter's pregnancy is a cause for rejoicing for Farnham, even though daughter Karen will be an unwed mother. They are castaways, and the child, according to Farnham, is a good thing because, as he tells Karen "You have almost doubled the chances of this colony surviving."[69]

With Farnham's situation serving as a microcosmic pattern of racial survival, the birth and subsequent death of both new-born and mother are indicative of the role played by Heinlein's females. Later, when Farnham's sexual interest, Barbara, delivers twins, the twins are just as important, though by that time they are no longer colonists and the survival of the group is not in question.

In addition to a tendency toward ready violence, Barbara also displays the total devotion to her man that is typical of the Heinlein female. Although she has a great

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deal of intelligence, which she displays to an admiring Hugh Farnham early in the novel, and is capable of strenuous and prolonged physical activity, she has no direct motivation other than obeying her man's commands. This devotion is the same as that found in Longcourt Phyllis after she has lost her struggle with Hamilton Felix in BEYOND THIS HORIZON; the same as that found in Star, Empress of the Twenty Universes, when she is told to shut up by the mercenary vagabond Oscar in GLORY ROAD; and the same as that found in Wyoming Knott when Manny becomes her husband and boss in THE MOON IS A HARSH MISTRESS. In each case the female fulfills her established role by professing her subservience to her chosen man and then obeying his commands. The competent woman, it would seem, is competent primarily in her ability to correctly obey the competent man. That ability to obey is, of course, a requisite for the competent man's woman. As Hugh Farnham notes near the successful conclusion of FARNHAM'S FREEHOLD, "He adjourned that thought too, and concentrated on being glad that Barbara was a woman who never chattered when her man wanted her to be quiet."[70]

That instant and complete obedience is shown even better when the two are attempting an escape from their master's house after they have become slaves. Even though her position at the master's house is a good one, and she is leading an active and good life, when Hugh says they must escape to be free from this tyranny, she instantly agrees. Then, when the escape attempt is made, at first "She clung to him sobbing; he whispered to her fiercely not to make a sound, then added last-minute instructions into her ear. She quieted instantly; they got busy."[71]

Not all Heinlein female characters are totally subservient. When no romantic involvement entangles them, a large number of the female characters display a great deal of independence. In STARSHIP TROOPERS, for instance, the pilot of the troop carrier is a woman. The protagonist, Johnny Rico, has nothing but admiration for her skills. At one point his delay in arriving at the embarkation point after a planetary raid has caused problems. As he says,

> I'll say this for Captain Deladrier: they don't make any better pilots. A rendezvous, boat to ship in orbit, is precisely calculated. I don't know how, but it is, and you don't change it. You <u>can't</u>.
>
> Only she did. She saw in her scope that the boat had failed to blast on time; she braked back, picked up speed again--and matched and took us in, just by eye and touch, no time to compute it.[72]

Of course that admiration is untouched by romance. Captain Deladrier is never involved in any serious romantic entanglements that would force her to submit to the dominance of her man. As such a competetnt woman, alone, she is on her own. Further, her role in the novel is of minor importance.

Heinlein, in STARSHIP TROOPERS and other novels, is willing to admit that a woman has capabilities other than bearing babies and defending her man. Those capabilities, however, are always determined by the woman's romantic entanglements. If there is no man to follow, then personal competence shines through. If there is a man to follow, his will dominates. This subservience is not limited to an yparticular Heinlein period (early or late) or to the novels alone. In the short story "Space Jockey" (1947), a pilot of a Luna-Terra passenger run is having marital troubles. His wife does not appreciate his odd time schedules, his devotion to a demanding and time-consuming job, and his placing of their marriage in a secondary role. In the beginning of the story their marriage is nearing collapse. In the end,

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however, after she has faced his possible death on a hazardous run, she realizes that

> Her Jake could not be tied to apron strings; men--grownup men, not mammas' boys --had to break away from mother's apron strings. Then why had she tried to tie him to hers?--she had known better; her own mother had warned her not to try it.

Jake, similarly, has come to the conclusion that he must bring her to Luna to be nearer; but that space comes first, and Phyllis second. After she agrees, he muses, "Good girl, Phyllis. Staunch. He wondered why he had ever doubted her."[73]

While the "Space Jockey" example is a cliche, serving as little more than a futuristic sailor's wife waiting for her husband to come home from the sea, it is, nonetheless, typically Heinlein. The sailor's wife is subservient to his wishes.

Women are not the only minor characters in Heinlein novels. They share their subservience to the protagonist with other minor characters. Common characters seen serving important minor roles in other novels and short stories include the child prodigy in HAVE SPACE SUIT, WILL TRAVEL, PODKAYNE OF MARS, WALDO, and short stories; the understanding but firm father seen in a large number of stories including HAVE SPACE SUIT, WILL TRAVEL, STARSHIP TROOPERS, the PUPPET MASTERS, FARNHAM'S FREEHOLD, PODKAYNE OF MARS, and short stories; and the animal friend, usually a cat, who assumes importance in a few different stories--with THE DOOR INTO SUMMER the leading example.

The child prodigy is a fairly common character. The prodigy uses his or her skills to achieve some sort of survival against inimical forces. In some cases the protagonist of the story is a child prodigy, as in WALDO and HAVE SPACE SUIT, WILL TRAVEL, and in other cases a minor character is assigned the role. The character is understandably common in juvenile novels. In HAVE SPACE SUIT, WILL TRAVEL, for example, not only is the protagonist a prodigy of sorts, with outstanding engineering knowledge; but his female counterpart, Peewee, is also wise and intelligent far beyond her years. That intelligence is exemplified by each character simply by the circumstances under which they meet. Kip has won a second-hand space suit in a slogan contest and refurbished it to meet deep space standards; Peewee has stolen a space ship from deep space and piloted it to Earth where she receive's Kip's unintentional signal, homes in on it, and lands. As Peewee explains later to Kip, "...if you think it's easy, when you've never piloted anything but a Cessna with your Daddy at your elbow and never made <u>any</u> kind of landing, then think again. I did very well!--and your landing instructions weren't too specific."[74] Throughout the rest of the novel the two display surprising abilities. Kip manages rescue after rescue; and Peewee provides the knowledge of how to pilot such vehicles as they run across.

Peewee, of course, fulfills two minor characterizations. Not only is she the supremely talented child prodigy, she is also the subservient female. Although her talents are quite important to the story, she always acquiesces to Kip when the time comes for action.

The same sort of dual role is played by Clark, Podkayne's younger brother in PODKAYNE OF MARS. This juvenile novel also has two young characters, although Podkayne is not the prodigy that her protagonist counterpart, Kip, is in HAVE SPACE SUIT, WILL TRAVEL. Clark, however, is possessed of some rather uncanny abilities that mark him as not only a key element in the story and part of what might be termed a twin-protagonist with his sister Podkayne; but also make him the perfect example of the child prodigy. As noted in the chapter on protagonists, Clark's bellicosity and

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ingenuity are constructed to earn the reader's admiration.

The child prodigy in WALDO is the protagonist after whom the novel is named. Waldo is afflicted with myesthenia gravis, the debilitating muscular disease which weakens the afflicted to the point where even simple movements require great effort. Waldo, in an effort to survive and to overcome this disability, has become the top inventive genius on the planet. Living and working in his orbital workshop and home where the zero gravity helps nullify the effects of his disease Waldo in his adulthood has become an embittered but successful genius. The mentor in this novel, Doc Grimes, explains to one of the key figures in the novel that "His weakness is his genius, in a way."[75] Stevens asks why and Grimes, who "had felt sorry for the child at first," explains that

> Young Waldo grasped at what little life was offered him, learned thistily, tried with a sweating tenseness of will to force his undisciplined muscles to serve him.
>
> He was clever in thinking of dodges whereby to circumvent his muscular weakness. At seven he devised a method of controlling a spoon with two hands, which permitted him--painfully--to feed himself. His first mechanical invention was made at ten.[76]

And from that point his career as a handicapped genius overcoming his handicap through inventiveness grew in proportion with the importance of his inventions. Waldo was a child prodigy who grew into an adult inventor of unsurpassed genius.

Another important minor character, the father figure, is seen in a number of novels. Kip's father in HAVE SPACE SUIT, WILL TRAVEL is a good example of the Heinlein father figure. For the young protagonist to become the person he is, a suitable independent, competent, and confident father figure must be supplied. Kip's father is all of those things.

As the novel opens, Kip tells his father that he wants a trip to the Moon. The father agrees, but adds that getting there "is your problem." As Kip admits, "Dad was like that."[77] And the father's own self-assured independence, which breeds the same sort of self-reliance in the son, is further illustrated when Kip notes that "Dad didn't bother with banks--just the money basket and one next to it marked 'Uncle Sam,' the contents of which he bundled up and mailed to the government once a year."[78] Kip's real chance for success comes from his father's dismay at Kip's education. Dad is startled to find that Kip's high school is "a delightful place, well equiped, smoothly administrated, beautifully kept...I think you kids love the place. You should. But this--" and he slaps at the description of the curriculum offered at the high school, is "Twaddle! Beetle tracking! Occupational therapy for morons!"[79]

The high school, it is discovered, does not offer mandatory hard mathematics, or difficult history courses, or other more difficult disciplines that Dad feels are necessary. To make up for the deficiency, Dad begins tutoring Kip as well as demanding that he take the toughest material available in the school. It works wonders for Kip. He begins to discover his desire for mathematics. And that, in turn, helps explain Kip's surprising prowess in deep space navigation and space suit manipulation. As he says, for instance, "Analytical geometry seems pure Greek until you see what they're driving at--then, if you know algebra, it bursts on you and you race through the rest of the book. Glorious!" The same glorious discovery is made about Spanish,

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which he learns to "speak like a Mexican."[80] It also happens with calculus, vetor analysis, chemistry, physics, and electronics. Soon he finds that with Dad's help and encouragement, "The barn was mine and I had a chem lab and a darkroom and an electronics beck and, for a while, a ham station." This extravagance is even more notable in that "Mother was perturbed when I blew out the windows and set fire to the barn--just a small fire--but Dad was not. He simply suggested that I not manufacture explosives in a frame building."[81]

Of course as a competent man Dad is actually quite important in the great scheme of things. One day, Kip recalls, an important Washington official comes knocking at the door and says, "Dr. Russell, I concede that Washington has an atrocious climate. But you will have air-conditioned offices." This sways Dad not at all, and he tells the visitor that "Once I had a large income and a larger ulcer; I now have a small income and no ulcer. I stay here."[82] Dad, it seems, is not in small Centreville because he must be, he is there because he wants to be. Part of being totally competent is completelt controlling your own destiny, and Dad Russell is in full control. It is no wonder that Kip is forged from the same mold, and becomes equally competent when the situations later arise that call for such ability.

Podkayne of Mars also has a successful father. And, although he is not as directly involved in Podkayne's actions as is Kip's father, he is every bit as successful and as competent. He and his wife are two of Mars' top scientists. Podkayne narrates that

> Daddy's title is Van Loon Professor of Terrestrial History but his real love is Martian history, especially if it happened fifty million years ago. But do not think that Daddy is a cloistered don given only to contemplation and study. When he was even younger than I am now, he lost an arm one chilly night in the attack on the Company offices during the Revolution--and he can still shoot straight and fast with the hand he has left.[83]

One major difference between the two fathers, Kip's and Podkayne's, is that the former has given up his career for the most part in an effort to re-establish a harmonious family and to better maintain his personal equilibrium--he has traded the high income and the ulcer for the smaller income and no ulcer. Podkayne's father, on the other hand, has not given up that career to raise his daughter and son and the difference is important. As Uncle Tom says to Podkayne's father,

> People who will not take the trouble to raise children should not have them. You with your nose in a book, your wife gallivanting off God knows where--between you, your daughter was almost killed. No credit to either of you that she wasn't.[84]

They, obviously, have not prepared Podkayne adequately for life. She is <u>not</u> prepared in terms of Heinlein's typical protagonist. Not only the father is berated, but the mother too, for, as we have seen earlier in this chapter, a woman's place is at her man's side raising the children and, as Uncle Tom says to Podkayne's father, "You should tell your wife, sir, that building bridges and space stations and such gadgets is all very well...but that a woman has more important work to do."[85]

In some stories the father is a key figure, either serving as the protagonist (as in FARNHAM'S FREEHOLD) or as the mentor (as in THE PUPPET MASTERS). Little additional discussion is needed of the characteristics of competence, combativeness, prepared-

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ness, and individual freedom are displayed by the character in such cases as is displayed by the character in its more minor roles.

One major father figure who is slightly variant from the typical form is Johnny Rico's father in STARSHIP TROOPERS. Early in the novel Rico's father is distraught at his son's leaving to become a member of the Mobile Infantry. As his father explains it,

> So what is this so-called 'Federal Service'? Parasitism, pure and simple. A functionless organ, utterly obsolete, living on the taxpayers. A decidedly expensive way for inferior people who otherwise would be unemployed to live at public expense for a term of years, then give themselves airs for the rest of their lives.[86]

Rico's father feels that, unless there is a war, being in service, or even having a service, is wastefully expensive folly. And, since this future society has outgrown wars, all federal service is "utterly obsolete."

Later, when Earth is at war with the invaders, his father is willing to admit he was wrong. As he explains when the two meet after years of separation,

> I wasn't in good shape at the time you enrolled. I was seeing my hypnotherapist pretty regularly...After you left, I took it out on you--but it was not you, and I knew it and my therapist knew it. I suppose I knew that there was real trouble brewing earlier than most; we were invited to bid on military components fully a month before the state of emergency was announced. We had converted almost entirely to war production while you were still in training...
>
> A lot of us are doing things we didn't know we could...I had at last found out what was wrong with me...I had to perform an act of faith. I had to prove to myself that I was a man. Not just a producing-consuming economic animal...but a man.[87]

Rico's father has seen the light. In his pre-M.I. (Mobile Infantry) days he was just another civilian; now, as a member of the M.I. he is a man. He has proven to himself what he is, what he can do. He has become the same competent man that his son is. The act of faith is the denial of what he previously thought was the correct way to act and the commitment instead to the survival of the race by battling the enemy.

Even Heinlein's animal characters, always in minor roles, demonstrate the typical characteristics of independence, competence, preparedness, and willingness to use violence when necessary. The best example of this is the tomcat Petronius the Arbiter in THE DOOR INTO SUMMER. Petronius is the pet (although the inherent patronization involved in the term 'pet' is offensive to Petronius) of the novel's protagonist, Dan Davis. Petronius' character is much the same as his owner's. As Davis notes when deciding what to to with Peter, if he (Davis) decides to take cryogenic "long-sleep" and awaken in 30 years or so, "You can't give a cat away the way you can a dog; they won't stand for it." Futher, Peter,

> Was in good health and likely to stay that way even though he was held together with scar tissue. If he could just correct a tendency to lead with his right he would be winning battles and siring kittens for another five years at least.[88]

Pete is independent, and the two are so close that eventually Davis decides to pay an exorbitant fee to have Pete also put into cryogenic sleep. Before that sleep occurs, however, the two are involved in a battle with Davis' ex-girlfriend and his swindling partner; a battle where Peter does a better job than Davis. When Miles, the partner, attempts to put Pete back into the traveling bag he came in, Pete "got him with claws in the forearm and teeth in the fleshy part of Miles' left thumb. Miles yelped and dropped him." Then, when Belle, the ex-girlfriend, tries to hit Pete with a poker from the fireplace, she finds that "she wasn't very skilled with her weapon, whereas Pete was very skilled with his. He ducked under that roundhouse swipe and hit her four ways, two paws for each leg."[89]

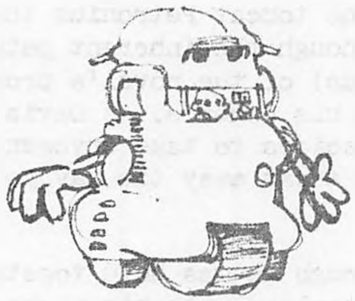
Pete eventually escapes, without being harmed in the slightest, and Davis' only regret is that he is under the influence of a drug at the time and that

> In Pete's finest hour, his greatest battle and greatest victory, I not only did not see all the details, but I was totally unable to appreciate any of it. I saw and heard but I had no feeling about it; at his supreme Moment of Truth I was numb.[90]

Pete's primary importance is that he serves as a vehicle for a typical Heinlein discussion. We find in that discussion for instance, that people who do not like cats are immediately associated with Belle Darkin. As Davis explains, "There are cat people and there are others, more than a majority, who 'cannot abide a harmless, necessary cat.'" These people are not the independent survivors that we have seen as admirable in novel after novel, they do not like cats because

> They don't understand how to treat cats--and cat protocol is more rigid than that of diplomacy.
>
> It is based on self-respect and mutual respect and it has the same flavor as the dignidad de hombre of Latin America which you may offend only at risk to your life.[91]

Pete, then, is the type of animal that survives. In the end Davis and Pete are together, having survived the attacks of all the enemies. For Pete, those enemies are the same people, with different but analogous intents, that they are for Davis. Belle, for instance, wants to have Pete altered when she and Davis are married. Davis is astounded. "I stared at her, unable to believe my ears. Make a eunuch of that old warrior? Change him into a fireside decoration? 'Belle, you don't know what you are saying!'"[92] Belle's intentions are similar for Davis. She intends to make him as impotent in his business as Pete would be in his sexual forays. They both survive her attacks.



Davis' fondness for Pete becomes maudlin, purhaps purposefully, at the end, when he says that

> Pete is getting older, a little fatter, and not as inclined to choose a younger opponent; all too soon he must take the very Long

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> Sleep. I hope with all my heart that his gallant little soul may find its Door into Summer, where catnip fields abound and tabbies are complacent, and robot opponents are programmed to fight fiercely--but always lose--and people have friendly laps and legs to strop against, but never a foot that kicks.[93]

In spite of the bathos hiding the importance of the statement, we can see the same Heinlein characteristics we see in other characters. Pete will go to a feline Valhalla, where warriors can wage war and always win, always survive, and always have their women ready to love them and obey.

CHAPTER FOUR: STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND

STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND is Robert Heinlein's most widely read, most critically discussed, and yet his most often misunderstood novel. Although the novel's initial sales lagged following its first publication in 1961, a few years later it became a counter-culture favorite, and sales rose sharply. Now the novel is used to entice potential readers at the newsstands and bookstores to read other Heinlein novels. Heinlein paperback editions now hail the writer as "author of STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND." And, following the rise in sales in the mid-1960's, the Berkley Medallion paperback edition now boasts on the cover that the edition is the "best-selling under-ground novel by the dean of American science fiction writers."[94]

It is difficult to fathom the acceptance of any Heinlein work by the so-called "counter culture." A writer whose work so decidedly expounds survival-through-conflict would seem to be at odds with the politically and socially liberal counter culture that, at least in the mid-1960's, seemed to lean more toward pacifism than toward the dominance of one's fellow man. Yet the critics seemed as content to read the novel as an "underground bible" as did the counter culture. Theodore Sturgeon, reviewing the book in the NATIONAL REVIEW,[95] hailed it as a work that gives the reader "a glimpse of love, of worship, of honor and devotion more basic and more pure than anything Earth has seen since the days of Apostolic Christianity."[96] Such strong praise was offered, and the novel became an "underground bible", despite the strong similarity between STRANGER and all of Heinlein's other works. The same characters are used in STRANGER to achieve the same sort of dominance and survival through conflict as the author uses in his other works. There is the typical mentor, the same bellicose protagonist, the same subservient females, and the same other minor characters. And they are all used to the same purpose seen in story after story, to demonstrate the Heinlein ethic. The strong and prepared will survive, and the weak will succumb.

A serious misreading of the novel by the counter culture, and perhaps by most of the critics, seems the only adequate way to explain its popularity with people professing a decidedly peaceful, harmonious social philosophy which disdains violence. While some of the critics, at least, were aware of the full context of Heinlein's work (Sturgeon, for instance), the book apparently became a financial success because of a misreading by the members of the counter culture who did not understand the full implications of Heinlein's characterizations. A careful look at the characters with the same types we have seen in other novels and short stories, displays how the novel fits the violent pattern set in Heinlein's other work.

Jubal Harshaw is the novel's mentor. In the same fashion that Professor Bernardo de la Paz provides the impetus and guidance for a successful revolution in THE MOON IS A HARSH MISTRESS, jubal Harshaw provides the instruction to the protagonist that

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allows for a similar revolution on Earth in STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND. And, in the same manner that Hugh Farnham is a survivor through his preparedness for forseeable problems, Harshaw is a survivor through his capable prognostications of his own and the protagonist's future actions. Harshaw has the same harsh, inflexible view of man's ability to survive as do Farnham and the Professor. And the defence which Harshaw and the extra-terrestrials expound for man's violence in STRANGER is very similar to that presented by the Mother Thing in HAVE SPACE SUIT, WILL TRAVEL. Even as the protagonist in THE PUPPET MASTERS must look to his father for guidance, Smith in STRANGER looks to Harshaw as an obvious father figure. Finally, Harshaw has the same active past and seemingly bland present as Uncle Tom in PODKAYNE OF MARS and the same surprising depth and importance as Rufo in GLORY ROAD. The similarities exist because in each case the characters are cut from the same formalized mold. Jubal Harshaw fits very closely into the basic character patterns of Heinlein's mentor--and that pattern is quite deviant from the type of important and sympathetically portrayed character one would expect from an "underground bible."

Professor de la Paz in THE MOON IS A HARSH MISTRESS was, as we have noted, initially the most disinterested in the revolution on the Moon. That detachment waned as he became more and more an integral part of the successful revolution, but his interest remained the most intellectual, and the least emotional, of any of the prime conspirators with the possible exception of Mike the computer. Jubal Harshaw, in STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND, shows many of the same characteristics. Jubal also maintains his emotional distance from Valentine Michael Smith and his Martian revolution of Earth's moral and social system. Although a prime mover in Mike's education and in Mike's mental and physical growth, and thus an important source of Mike's knowledge, Jubal nonetheless strives to maintain a distance from Mike and his actions which lasts until near the novel's end. In the very end, when Mike "discorporates" willingly, submitting to a stoning that is purposely analogous to Christ's crucifixion, Jubal finally realizes that more is demanded from him than he has been able to give. Yet, even here he manages to maintain his personal competency and independence. Jubal does not become a true convert to Mike's Martian idealogy as do the other principal characters. Instead, Jubal in the end reverts to his old self and calls for one of his stenographers so he can begin a screenplay for a new work entitled "A Martian Named Smith." Jubal has become a disciple, to the extent that he now uses his old methods to a new purpose (at least in this one instance); but Heinlein, by showing that Jubal has changed only his title for this one work, and not his working style and personal philosophy, shows that Jubal remains the individual and competent man he was in the novel's beginning. As Jubal says near the novel's end,

> He (Mike) had had so much to live for...and an old fool (Jubal) that he respected too much had to shoot off his yap and goad him into a needless, useless martydom. If Mike had given them something <u>big</u>--like stereo, or bingo--but he gave them the Truth. Or a piece of the Truth. And who is interested in Truth?[97]

Jubal knows that he can never really become a disciple of Mike's movement, at least not to the same total degree that the others have become, because he has been Mike's mentor and guide and cannot give a total commitment to his student. Jubal is a leader, and cannot become a follower. Even Mike, after he has gone through his growth period and become the superman who eventually leads the new revolution, admits that Jubal is, as Ben explains to Jubal, "the only human he knows who can 'grok in fullness' without learning Martian." Further, Mike has taught the others to think of Jubal as "a myth, not quite real and more than life size."[98] Later, Ben, who knows Jubal well and regards this virtual sainthood as somewhat misapplied but useful, ad-

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mits that perhaps Mike is right in his assessment when Jubal proves he is as careless of life as Mike by agreeing with Mike that "Killing a man may be necessary. But confining him is an offense against his integrity--and your own."[99] Jubal also resembles the old man of THE MOON IS A HARSH MISTRESS in being what Professor de la Paz calls "a rational anarchist." As the Professor explains it, a rational anarchist is one who believes that blame cannot be shifted, that every man is responsible only to himself, and that every man is answerable for his actions. Government, for the rational anarchist, exists only as an entity physically shown in the acts of self-responsible individuals. Moreover, as part of that rational anarchism, the mentor obeys those rules he accepts, and blatantly disobeys those that are not acceptable. As the professor says, "If I find them tolerable, I tolerate them; if I find them too obnoxios, I break them. I am free because I know that I alone am morally responsible for everything I do."[100]

Jubal Harshaw is that kind of man. When we first meet Jubal in his estate in the Poconos, a frightened Jill Gillian has just brought the infantile Mike to the estate for protection. In a few days, when Jubal decides to aid Mike, he is said by the author to be doing so, at least in part, because "he was tickled at the notion of balking the powers-that-be. He had more than his share of that streak of anarchy which was the birthright of every American; pitting himself against the planetary government filled him with sharper zest than he had felt in a generation."[101] Jubal sees Mike as not only someone needing his help, but also as an opportunity to show his "birthright", the rational anarchy that allows him the personal privilege of breaking or ignoring those laws that he does not believe in, and adhering only to those that he does accept.

Evidence of this type of anarchy persists through the novel. Jubal Harshaw in each case makes the final decision on what laws to follow and what laws to ignore. The laws of his society do not affect him; only those laws that he has established to be followed on his property need be adhered to. Like Professor de la Paz, Harshaw has a strong sense of his own power of self, and the responsibility of that power. His inculcation of that philosophy into Mike, who arrives at Harshaw's home totally receptive to the ideas of his "water brother," is a prime factor in Mike's later actions. Harshaw also has the willingness to use violence when necessary, and the outlook that it is just and fitting that only the strong survive. That outlook is also a key element in the character of Hugh Farnham in FARNHAM'S FREEHOLD. While Harshaw views man as somewhat more comical in his actions than does Farnham, the overall view is quite similar. Both men feel that the agressiveness of man is one thing that helps the strong survive, and thus improves the race.

For Harshaw, that acceptance of violence is first seen when he discovers Mike has the power to mentally "twist" those things that Mike groks are bad, and "make them go away."[102] After testing Mike's mental power on inanimate objects, and hearing verbal witness verify that Mike did indeed do this, Jubal tells Mike, "if you reach a--'cusp'--where you must do something to protect Jill, you do it. Don't worry about wasting food (Mike's expression for murder through mental power). Don't worry about anything else. Protect Jill."[103] Mike, totally malleable at this point in the novel, agrees. There is no doubt about Harshaw's understanding of the situation. He had warned himself just prior to the command that Mike still took his recently acquired English literally. "Harshaw recalled," Heinlein tells us, "insults common in his early years--and reminded himself never to use such to Mike--if he told the boy to drop dead or get lost, Harshaw felt certain that the literal meaning would ensue."[104] Also, prior to the statement about what to do with those who threaten Jill,

Harshaw had reminded himself

> That this baby innocent was neither babyish nor innocent--was in fact sophisticated in a culture which he was beginning to realize was far in advance of human culture in mysterious ways...and that these naive remarks came from a superman--or what would do for a 'superman'.[105]

Harshaw is well aware of Mike's present and potential power. He is, indeed, perhaps the only Earthman aware of Mike's powers this early in the novel, and he seeks immediately to use these powers in the fashion he deems best--the defense of Jill through violent means. Further, although aware of Mike's potential, Harshaw does not try to restrain Smith; rather, he instills into Mike those aspects of violent action Harshaw feel necessary, and Harshaw does so despite his awareness of Mike's individual strengths and potentials. Thus he uses Mike while the Martian is still mentally receptive to suggestion, and at a stage in Mike's growth as a human that helps to forever cement Harshaw's relationship to Mike.

The result of this mental tampering is quickly seen when the Harshaw residence is invaded by the novel's equivalent of the Nazi SS. When two police vehicles approach, Harshaw immediately engages the police contingent's leader in verbal battle. Although he is holding his own, and might be able to talk his way out of the situation without violence, Mike "sees" (from his hiding place on the bottom of the murky swimming pool) that the new visitors are "wrong" and, following Harshaw's directions, he makes them go away.

"Smith looked around and sensed the wrongness." Sensing wrongness in the police, their vehicles, their weapons, and their action, he acts. "When the man pointed at Jill and the two men flanking him hurried toward her with their guns of great wrongness, Smith reached out...and gave them each that tiny twist which causes to topple away." He is reassured about the correctness of his actions, even though the actions are not directly authorized by Jubal, because he remembers that "Jubal had told him, 'Protect Jill. Don't worry about wasting food. Don't worry about anything else. Protect Jill.'" The reader is told that "He would protect Jill in any case. But it was good to have Jubal's reassurance; it left his mind undivided and untroubled."[106]

Thus the first three men of the invading police die, tumbled away by a powerful man with an untroubled mind--untroubled because his mentor has assured him that such actions are good actions. Then, as the rest of the events in the sequence progress, Mike does away with four more men, their aircraft, and an accompanying aircraft; all with his feather touch that "tilted it into neverness."[107]

Harshaw, unaware that this would happen although aware of the possibilities of Smith's powers, does not mourn the fate of the police. As he tells himself,

> Well, he wouldn't waste tears on Cossacks. Jubal conceded that cops qua cops were all right; he had met honest cops...But to be in the SS a man had to have larceny in his heart and sadism in his soul. Storm troopers for whatever polotico was in power.[108]

This "larceny in their hearts," for Jubal, is adequate excuse for their annihilation.

Another important similarity between Hugh Farnham and Jubal Harshaw is their ability to survive. Farnham survives through a series of crises that would eliminate

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most men. The only mentor figure to suffer through more crises is Lazarus Long. Harshaw, in similar fashion, survives the police raids; a tiring and trying political hassle that is resolved, through Jubal's efforts, in Mike's favor; and, finally, through Mike's triumphant death.

Finally, both Harshaw and Hugh Farnham view the elimination of the weak as the proper method to improve the race of man. Farnham discusses this with Barbara in regard to the cataclysmic war they have just lived through. He calls it a war that "will improve the breed."[109] In answer to Barbara's statement that what he is saying is genetically true, but cruel, he admits that "It is cruel. But no government yet has been able to repeal natural laws, although they keep trying."[110] Harshaw, discussing the improvement of the race with Ben Caxton, says much the same thing when he tells Ben, "Do-gooding is like treating hemophilia--the real cure is to let hemophiliacs bleed to death...before they breed more hemophiliacs."[111] Both see the survival of the race, through the culling of the weak, as a goal worth striving for--at the expense of the weak. And both men use their abilities, powers, positions, to indoctrinate those in their charge with that philosophy.

Another striking similarity between STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND and Heinlein's other novels is the close parallel between the Mother Thing in HAVE SPACE SUIT, WILL TRAVEL and the Old Ones of Mars who serve a secondary mentor role in STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND. In HAVE SPACE SUIT, WILL TRAVEL, the Mother Thing is a guide for Kip and Peewee. More importantly, the Mother Thing comes to Earth's defense when the planet's future is at stake by explaining that mankind's inherent violence is necessary to survival. Further, a member of the judging panel comes to the aid of the human children and agrees with the case for the defense the Mother Thing has made by pointing out that "As our sister has said, this race is young. The infants of my noble race bite and scratch each other--some even die from it. Even I behaved so at one time."[112]

In STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND, the Old Ones of Mars, discorporate beings and the oldest and wisest of that race, are judging Earth on the basis of Michael Smith's experiences. They too, watching man's violence, find goodness in that violence and do not destroy the planet as they might well have. Such destruction in within their power. The asteroid belt is the result of their destruction of the fifth planet of the solar system. As the author notes in his description,

> The verdict to be passed on the third planet around Sol was never in doubt. The Old Ones of the fourth planet were not omniscient and in their way were as provincial as humans. Grokking by their own local values, even with the aid of vastly superior logic, they were certain in time to perceive an incurable 'wrongness' in the busy, restless, quarrelsome beings of the third planet, a wrongness which would require weeding, once it had been grokked and cherished and hated.

But, Heinlein adds,

> By the time they would slowly get around to it, it would be highly improbable, approaching impossible that the Old Ones would be able to destroy this wierdly complex race. The hazard was so slight that those concerned with the third planet did not waste a split eon on it.[113]

The parallel is in the final outcome for the human race; in both cases the race will

continue. In the first instance, with the Mother Thing, the continuation is on a contingency basis, with the final outcome hinging on man's ability to grow and mature before the race "will be re-examined in a dozen half-deaths of radium."[114] In the second instance, the continuation is based on Michael's martyrdom and the time sense of the Old Ones, which will allow man to gather his strength before the Old Ones act. By the time the Old Ones act, man will be able to withstand that action and survive. In both cases the judging panel allows man to survive. In both cases that survival is supposedly temporary, but the reader is left with little doubt that that survival will continue permanently.

Direct preaching of violence as a necessary attribute of survival is as present in STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND as it is in most of Heinlein's work. Jubal Harshaw preaches it to Michael, and Michael, the compliant student to Harshaw's guidance, obeys. Such preaching is also obvious in the actions of the Old Ones, who have inculcated in Michael a belief that the destruction of another is to be lamented primarily as a waste of good food. To that same result, the willing use of violence, they have taught Michael about their life cycle. Heinlein uses that Martian life cycle as an example of how mankind ought to handle its young. As Harshaw is to Michael in term's of Earth's realities, so are the Martian Old Ones and the civilization they have developed to Earth and its young, brash, beings.

As Heinlein explains, the ancient Martians were not disturbed by contact with Earth.

> Nymphs bounced joyously around the surface, learning to live, eight out of nine dieing in the process. Adult Martians, enormously different in body and mind from nymphs, huddled in faerie, graceful cities and were as quiet as nymphs were boisterous--yet were even busier and a rich life of the mind.
>
> Adults were not free of work in the human sense; they had a planet to supervise; plants must be told when and where to grow, nymphs who passed their 'prenticeships by surviving must be gathered in, cherished, fertilized; the resultant eggs must be cherished and contemplated to encourage them to ripen properly, fulfilled nymphs must be persuaded to give up childish things and metamorphosed into adults. All these must be done.[115]

The strong and the able survive on Mars. The rest die and improve the race with their death. This method of racial survival, with its message for Earth so similar to Hugh Farnham's message to Barbara in FARNHAM'S FREEHOLD is that mankind would also be far better off without the weak ones; and that man will be better only when men systematically cull out the weak and leave the strong to survive.

Jubal Harshaw does not, however, fit all the typical modes of the old man and mentor. One important variation is his immediate establishment as a powerful person in the society in which he operates. Unlike Uncle Tom in PODKAYNE OF MARS, the reader is not led to believe that Jubal is just a simple, kindly old man. The reader is instead furnished immediately with the proof of Harshaw's prestige and power in high places. When Michael's stay at Harshaw's residence in the Poconos is threatened by the invasion of the SS police, Harshaw is able, through friends, to establish a one-to-one telephone conversation with His Excellency the Honorable Joseph Edgerton Douglas, secretary general of the World Federation of Free Nations. Douglas, the highest power in the world, is successfully out-argued and out-maneuvered by Harshaw during the conversation to the point where the tactical victory is Harshaw's. How-

ever, Harshaw's importance is established for a crucial reason. As the mentor, Harshaw is the guiding force from the novel's beginning through its end, and that guiding force must deal with world politics. Uncle Tom, on the other hand, never needs to deal overtly with such political maneuverings, and his importance is not realized until the plot structure demands that the reader possess the knowledge. Despite that one minor difference, Harshaw is as important to the survival of the protagonist as are any of the mentor figures.

Harshaw provides Michael with his first real look at society, and advises him to be wary of it. He also tells Michael to be willing to use his unique abilities to combat what Harshaw feels are society's faults. As the novel progresses, that guidance continues. Fulfilling his role as mentor, Jubal at one point convinces a doubting Ben Caxton that he should return to Michael's flock once the movement has been established. Ben, having seen the movement and its sexual and moral innovations, questions it.

> What I saw worried the hell out of me--so I stopped...here. Jubal, couldn't you rig it...to close down the operation?[116]

Jubal, of course, refuses to do so, and each argument that Ben offers as a reason to close down Mike's church, Jubal convincingly opposes.

Jubal points out to Ben when "you go into a man's house, you accept his household rules. That's a universal rule of civilized behavior."[117] The nudity and group sex, the total sharing of one another that is practiced in Mike's group is, as Jubal explains it, Mike's chosen way of life in his own house, and, as such, is to be respected, not feared or hated. As Jubal says, "Ben, I am afraid that you--and I, too --lack the angelic innocence to practice the perfect morality those people live by."[118] Ben, distraught by Jubal's statement, seeks further explanation. Jubal responds,

> I see the beauty of Mike's attempt to devise an ideal ethic and applaud his recognition that such must start by junking the present sexual code and starting fresh.... I don't know the details of Mike's code, but it clearly violates laws of every nation and would outrage 'right-thinking' people of every major faith--and most agnostics and atheists, too.[119]

Jubal continues that Ben has simply not given the new code, the new morality, a chance to demonstrate its good. Ben must first shed his societal predjudices. Ben, finally, agrees and returns to join the group.

Jubal sees the group as an interesting display of Mike's power and individuality. Both characteristics are strong Heinlein traits. He admires those traits, advises Ben to seek them himself, and watches with further admiration when Ben does successfully achieve them, although Ben and the others remain, finally, subservient to Michael Smith. For Jubal, Mike as a surrogate son and a willing student has become in many respects the perfect Heinlein protagonist. That perfection is a reflection of Harshaw's guidance. Harshaw, with the assistance of the Old Ones on Mars in a secondary role, does meet the requirements of the typical mentor role that Heinlein has established in previous novels. Harshaw demonstrates the same bellicosity, the same survival ethic determining action and purpose to life, and the same strong individuality that leads for a typical Heinlein mentor.

Just as in the other Heinlein novels, the protagonist in STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND makes his social comment through action more than through words. While Jubal Harshaw provides social commentary through overt preaching, Michael Smith, the protagonist, acts, with his actions proving the efficacy of the philosophies discussed and promulgated by Harshaw.

As do the protagonists in most other Heinlein novels, Smith begins as a naive, undeveloped individual who learns from the mentor how to survive in hostile situations, and learns from the mentor how to become capable of controlling his own destiny and charting his own moral path through life. Not unlike Clark in PODKAYNE OF MARS, Smith sees violence, extreme violence at times, as a necessary, even desirable, action. As noted in the old man and mentor section, Smith's use of violence is reinforced by Harshaw's recognition and then admiration of Smith's violent abilities; but that impetus is not necessary to spur him to violence. Early in the novel Smith has found a new "water brother" in Gillian Boardman, a nurse in the hospital where he first finds himself. Having accepted Boardman as his water brother, Smith is worried when she is attacked by thugs who are trying to capture the valuable Smith. So, "When he saw his water brother struck by this other, he twisted, got free--and reached toward Johnson--and Johnson was gone."[120] Then another thug, the leader, attempts to take action. "The Old Ones had taught him well. He stepped toward Berquist; the gun swung to cover him. He reached out--and Berquist was no longer there."[121] The action momentarily worries Smith, and he drops into his defensive state of catatonia for a time; but when he is later reassured by Harshaw that such actions are not only acceptable but desirable, his relief allows him to use such actions without hesitation in future situations.

Smith's musings about life, and the personal and social philosophies that are best in life, are also reminiscent of Podkayne's in PODKAYNE OF MARS. Podkayne, however, makes her statements about the social life on Mars, and thus by inference draws a picture of her thoughts on Earth and its people. Smith discusses the men of Earth directly. His first discovery is that he is not a man because he is not what Jubal describes as a man. "Man," says mentor Jubal, "is the animal who laughs." And Smith cannot laugh until late in his development. He does not see humor in man and his situation and it is only much farther along in his development when he has more complete control of himself and his destiny that he finds himself able to laugh, both at and with mankind. As Jubal tells him,

> You simply haven't learned yet...and you'll never learn by trying. But you will, I promise you. If you live among us long enough, one day you will see how funny we are--and you will laugh.[122]

Harshaw, predictably, is proven right. In the end Smith sees that humor and finds the occasion for laughter.

Other musings and comments come in the third major section of the novel, "His Eccentric Education," where Smith is beginning to observe and understand man. After Smith has started his own religion, which serves primarily as a place for teaching the Martian language to the men of Earth, he finds that by passing a plate with money on it and asking the people in the church to give or take as they see fit, that he invariably makes more than he loses. The principles of embarassment and pride culminate in his doing as well as he could with a more conventional collection, and yet secures him the reputation of having a novel approach to tithing that brings in more converts daily. As Jubal explains to Ben upon hearing of the scheme, "That

pitch, properly given, should result in people giving more...while a few take just a little. Probably very few."[123] Harshaw, of course, is right. And, as Smith obviously sees, such a pitch is effective only when he fully understands the people involved and is himself the complete Heinlein protagonist.

Smith has become a complete man before entering upon his education in section three of the novel. His great moment of awakening, when he leaves the nymph stage according to Martian standards, and moves the next step up the ladder, comes after he has murdered the highest church official of the Fosterites, a powerful religious sect that has sought to convert the "Man from Mars." Mike, seeing wrongness in Supreme Bishop Digby, uses his mental powers to send the Bishop off to the novel's netherworld. Looking back on his actions, Mike realizes that he had known there was a wrongness, and the wrongness needed taking care of; but he remembers Jill had advised him not to waste food, and not to do away with people unless she had given the word. But he acted in spite of those restrictions, using his powers as he saw fit. And

> At this point the being sprung from human genes and shaped by Martian thought, who could never be either, completed one stage of his growth, burst out and ceased to be a nestling. The solitary loneliness of predestined free will was then his and with Martian serenity to embrace, cherish, savor its bitterness, accept its consequences. Here was ownership beyond sale...He eternally was the action he had taken at cusp.[124]

Mike, through that latest act of cooly calculated murder has become the complete man. He now has the power, and the willingness, to assume the more complete Heinlein protagonist's role of the competent man. He has become the man who, like the other protagonists we have seen, is answerable to himself alone, who operates on a personal philosophy that decides personal right or wrong, and who is totally answerable for every action committed. From this point forward in the novel Mike resembles more and more the typical Heinlein protagonist.

Mike thus becomes the archetypal Heinlein protagonist. There is no one else who can ever become the man he is. Residing as he does at the pinnacle of human ability for his time, he is answerable to no one and responsible only to himself. Like Kip in HAVE SPACE SUIT, WILL TRAVEL, or Oscar in GLORY ROAD, or Felix Hamilton in BEYOND THIS HORIZON, or any number of other protagonists, Mike is someone special who has special talents no one else can match. He finds himself, as do the other protagonists, as the leader of his own group, with only the old man and mentor as a guiding force for his actions. As Mike tells the others repeatedly, only Jubal has become enlightened without struggling through the difficulty of the Martian language. Only Jubal is a human worth listening to in the elevated sense of Martian philosophy.

Mike also resembles the typical Heinlein protagonist in his dealing with females. While Mike is much more willing to actually take part in the sexual act (an interesting deviation from the typical Heinlein protagonist's role), the act is always performed with Mike in complete control of the female he has subjugated. Mike's style of love always involves complete control. As Jubal notes, once Mike has become the solitary individual he is finished with being a nestling, and "He accepted homage from the girls as if a natural right."[125] For Mike it is a natural right. Women are always under the control of the protagonist. Like Oscar in GLORY ROAD, Mike will not allow his women to offer backtalk to him. He is the ruler of his own harem, and he establishes the rules by which they all must live.

Mike does, indeed, assume the role of totally competent protagonist and enlarge it from what has been seen with previous protagonists. His sexual competence is complete, for instance, with the sexual act taking place frequently once he leaves the nestling stage. His first lovemaking takes place immediately following the passage in which he leaves the nestling stage. Previous protagonists, like Oscar in GLORY ROAD, had claimed sexual competence but rarely proven the claim with action. Mike, as the same general type of character, uses actions rather than words to make clear his sexual competency. This competency, which helps lead to his complete dominance of his females, is first seen in an unfortunately ludicrous section where Mike first groks kissing females. Jubal tells Mike, "Kiss girls all you want--it beats hell out of card games." And Mike, following that admonition, practices the new art on each of the four girls available at Jubal's residence. Dorcas, one of the women, is the first to accept the offer. "She went to him, stood on tiptoes, held up her arms. 'Kiss me, Mike.'

"Mike did. For some seconds they 'grew closer.'"

"Dorcas fainted."

The passage continues, as Miriam had watched round-eyed. "'I wonder if I dare risk it?'" Instead, Anne (a Fair Witness, a character previously established by the author as unswayable emotionally) asks, "Boss, are you through with me as a Witness?" Jubal acceeds and then watches in admiration as "Anne was forced to give up through hypoxia; Mike, with Martian training, could have gone without oxygen much longer."[126]

While somewhat ludicrous in handling, the passage does help illustrate Mike's remarkable hold over females. It is a hold that differs only in dgree from the surprising power over women exercised by Oscar Gordon, Hamilton Felix, and the other protagonists. The culmination of such dominance comes when Jubal realizes that "suddenly it was ABCD in the service of Mike, 'less than the dust beneath his chariot wheels.'" Oddly, Jubal, always the absolute monarch of his own home, is so happy to have domestic tranquility that he "did not mind that his kingdom was ruled by a mayor of the palace." Later, during Mike's eccentric education, Heinlein tells the reader that

> Valentine Michael Smith grokked that physical human love--very human and very physical--was not simply a quickening of eggs, nor was it ritual through which one grew closer; the act <u>itself</u> was a growing-closer. He was still grokking it, trying at every opportunity to grok its fullness. He had long since quit shying away from his strong suspicion that even the Old Ones did not know of <u>this</u> ecstacy--he grokked that his new people (humans) held spiritual depths unique. Happily he tried to sound them, with no childhood inhibitions to cause him guilt nor reluctance of any sort.[128]

Thus through his willingness to happily, often, and with few inhibitions engage in sex, Mike becomes something more than the usual protagonist. But, as in other cases, the difference is only a matter of degree. Just as Mike's violence is similar in intent, and greater only in degree, than the violence of other protagonists, his sex is similar in its dominance and subjugation, and different only in the extent to which this method of subjugation is used.

One of Mike's most important similarities to the other Heinlein protagonists is his genetic superiority. We have seen such genetic superiority before, notably in

Hamilton Felix in BEYOND THIS HORIZON and in Lazarus Long and the rest of the Howard Family. For Mike the superiority comes from his parents; both were genius level IQ's, and from his education on Mars, where the Martian elders and Old Ones have given him complete control of all his human abilities. That complete control is what gives Mike his powers. And he, through the Martian language, starts his "religion" to teach others how to have that same control.

As a direct result of his fortunate genetic background and his even more fortunate education on Mars, Valentine Michael Smith is the most competent of Heinlein's many competent protagonists. While the others all have their areas of expertise, Mike is totally competent in virtually everything he tries--even, eventually, in his ability to laugh. The only area in which his competence is in doubt is in his ability to physically survive, for he does suffer martydom in the end. Heinlein, however, constructs for this novel a real and tangible life after death, where Mike goes to claim his post as "Archangel Michael." As Heinlein ends the novel, "Mike pushed back his halo and got to work. He could see a lot of changes he wanted to make--"[129] Thus, Mike has really survived in the ultimate sense. Smith becomes the ultimate survivor, in a manner even more impressive than that of Lazarus Long, who, although he has lived for thousands of years, nonetheless can die, and does, at the end of TIME ENOUGH FOR LOVE. Although Long is brought back from that death by the advanced state of medical technology of his future time, the important thing is he must remain alive physically to survive. Smith has gone beyond that state and no longer needs to bother with physical survival to survive as a character.

Both Hamilton Felix and Valentine Michael Smith are interested, in the end, in propagating their "new" race of man so that the race will improve. Felix's propagation is through the more usual method of progeny; in the novel's closing paragraphs he mentions the importance of his son and the joy of raising him. This importance, which he has realized only after suffering through and surviving the hardships the plot places in his way, is in direct contradiction with his early thoughts. But, in the end, the previously cynical Felix thinks,

> It was a good world, he assured himself again, filled with interesting things. Of which the most interesting were children. He glanced at Theobald. He was a lot of fun now, and would be more interesting as he grew up--if he could refrain from wringing his cussed little neck in the meantime![130]

Valentine Michael Smith, similarly, is interested in fostering progeny. By the time Mike has started his religion two of the girls involved with it, and with him, are pregnant. But for Mike progeny is secondary to the use of his religion as the main force of propagation for the new, competent man. That competency, which Mike attempts to impart at first without the use of the "religion," enables every man to become a fulfilled person. As Jubal hears it told, when Mike joined the army (under an alias), he

> crowned his military career by grabbing the question period following a lecture to preach the uselessness of force (with comments on the desirability of reducing the surplus population through cannibalism), then offered himself as a test animal for any weapon of any nature to prove that force was not only unnecessary but <u>impossible</u> when attempted against a self-disciplined person.[131]

Mike, needless to say, is booted out of the army; but the point is made nonetheless. As the totally competent, self-assured, self-disciplined person, Mike is impervious

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to the dangers facing lesser, more mortal, men. And he finds that the only viable path to converting other men to his philosophies is through his Martian language "religion." The religion is an overt sham, constructed solely to allow for indoctrination in the Martian language, which is the only vehicle possible for the learning of the attitudes and practices consistent with becoming truly self-disciplined and totally competent. For Mike the construction of the religion, done by legally acceptable but morally dubious means, is necessary to allow for the important work of conversion to the new man. The use of religion as the vehicle for that conversion is suggested accidentally to Mike early in his education as a joke by Jubal Harshaw. And the mentor acquiesces only grudgingly to the realization of that idea. Harshaw is unhappy with the result, since Jubal has a natural aversion to any particular organized faith.

In STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND Heinlein has incorporated another basic technique used effectively in BEYOND THIS HORIZON and other novels. In both cases his societal construct is necessary to the attitudes and philosophies of the protagonist and the protagonist's mentor. In BEYOND THIS HORIZON the society is a personally armed one. Because of this society, it is not only acceptable for Hamilton Felix to use his own side-arm in a number of violent situations; but it is socially preferred. Because of this Felix's overt bellicosity is seen in very favorable light. He is simply one of the best in his own society, rather than being an outcast or anti-social trouble-maker in a more peaceful society. Mike, similarly, is placed in a constructed society that allows him to achieve his end results with precisely the right connotations of good and bad actions on the part of the protagonists and the protagonist's enemies. Michael's society is a degenerating one, and personal combat is a rare exception rather than the rule. There is little personal competency shown, with society's rules rather than personal philosophy dominating personal action. This repressive governmental set-up, which is held in low esteem by Jubal Harshaw and thus by Mike, needs changing. That is what Mike, by espousing so convincingly his own philosophy of self-discipline and competency, attempts to do. By using his own immensely powerful violent abilities, and by teaching others how to use those abilities, Mike is attempting to change his constructed society to one more in keeping with the liberation views of Hamilton Felix, Johnny Rico in STARSHIP TROOPERS, Lazarus Long, Oscar Gordon, and most other Heinlein protagonists. If destruction of life is needed to accomplish his goals, then Mike is quite willing to destroy that life which he feels is bad.

Such a societal construct, of course, is not unusual in fiction, especially in science fiction, since the field often constructs future societal possibilities and discusses them at length. But Heinlein is careful to make clear that Mike's eventual martydom is a planned event; thus not only once again displaying Mike's total competency but also showing the evil in the society that Mike is attempting to correct. In the martydom we see the display of the society's faults and of Mike's virtues. And we find through his disciples Mike will eventually realize his goals of changing man and his society. Part of that change is the lessening of equality between man and woman. Mike's stance toward women is not only in the familiar role of subjugator; but also is in the familiar role of competent man demanding competency from his woman. All of Mike's females are either already competent or rapidly becoming so through his teaching. Jill, the firts he meets, is a strong-willed nurse. At one point, when she first encounters Mike's ability to kill, she almost panics; then, "seeing Mike's need, Jill's hysteria chopped off. A patient needed her; she had no time for emotion, no time to wonder how men disappeared. She dropped to her knees and examined Smith."[132] Later that point is re-emphasized time and time again. Harshaw,

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as a medical doctor (among his many other talents) recognizes Jill's competency as quickily as he recognizes that she is a nurse. Her competency from that point forward in the novel is rarely questioned. The other females all fit the same mold. For all of them, however, their competency is dependent on Mike's whims and demands. They are all competent only insofar as Mike's demands are followed. They have no individual will, and are not really self-disciplined. They are disciplined only in respect to fulfilling the needs of Valentine Michael Smith.

In a final comparison with Heinlein's other protagonists, Mike's attitude toward his violence is as frighteningly blase as any. With the casual excuse of necessity, or simply the conscience nullifying "following of orders," Mike kills with simple finality. While the trait is typical of many of Heinlein's protagonists, in many respects Mike seems to resemble Johnny Rico of STARSHIP TROOPERS more than he resembles others. Like Rico, Smith does not have a great fear of death; and this lack of fear allows him to enter situations where death is a distinct possibility. With his own knowledge of life after death, Smith views cessation of physical life as merely another step forward for his own identity. While Rico's philosophy is not quite so complete, he operates on the same principle of facing death willingly. Neither man regards life itself or the right to life as a matter of great importance. As Rico is told by his mentor

> What 'right' to life has a man drowning in the Pacific? The ocean will not hearken to his cries...If two men are starving and cannibalism is the only alternative to death, which man's right in 'unalienable'?[133]

Smith would agree, since for the man from Mars life is only the corporate state of existence, and to "discorporate" is simply to leave the physical for a higher plane of existence. Life, the physical state of being, is not something to be terribly concerned about, since another state of existence follows immediately after. However, that further state should be reached only when one is ready, and, as Heinlein notes, "Martian taste in such matters called for life to be a rounded whole, with physical death at the appropriate selected instant." Still, as an example of Martian unconcern for life in general, one Martain artist under discussion

> had become to preoccupied that he forgot to come in out of the cold; when his absence was noticed his body was hardly fit to eat. He had not noticed his discorporation and had gone on composing his sequence (in the next state of existence).[134]

If necessity, then, demands death for someone, neither Rico nor Smith, nor most Heinlein protagonists for that matter, will hesitate. Similarly, both Rico and Smith have a dominant mentor who has instructed them that murder should not be a cause for concern. For Smith, Harshaw leaves orders to not worry about "wasting food", which is what happens when Smith causes someone else's death; for Rico, Mr. Dubois has explained that personal survival of a sort assured, the survival ethic is less pressing; but the carte blanche from Harshaw to practice his survival techniques on others to help his friends survive is a key element in Mike's growth. From the first permission to waste food at Harshaw's residence in the Poconos to his culminating martydom, Mike protects those he loves with a single-minded use of power that eliminates dozens of people. Were Harshaw not so ready to give blanket permission to use Mike's power in the first place, the number of those "wasted" might not be so large. Indeed, even when Harshaw learns that a relatively unpurposed death has occured, he says to himself of Digby's disappearance, "if Mike had had a

a finger in it, he had gotten away with it--and what happened to supreme bishops worried Jubal not at all as long as he wasn't bothered."[135] And Jubal, at other times, admits to having his own list that he would just as soon see gone. He does, however, to his credit, refrain from asking Mike to take action on that list--as Mike would no doubt gladly have done.

Women, as do the protagonists and their mentors, fill much the same role in STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND that they fill in the other Heinlein novels. They are subservient to the dominant male, are sexually attractive, are competent in their survival abilities, and are violent to a fault. In short, like the females seen in many other novels, the women in STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND are competent, but subservient counterparts to the dominant male characters in the novel. The main female characters involved in the plot include Gillian Boardman, the nurse who first kidnaps Mike to save him from the SS; Anne, Miriam, and Dorcas, Harshaw's three secretaries; and Patty Paiwonski, a tatooed lady Smith and Jill meet in a carnival where Mike is working as a second-rate magician. Each of these females has her area of competence. Jill, as noted before, is a highly capable nurse. Anne is a Fair Witness, a futuristic human observer whose witnessing is held legal and infallible in court. Dorcas and Miriam are important writers and rewriters for Jubal (as is Anne); and these two, in effect, run the household. And Patty is a carnival huckster, and Fosterite whose knowledge of mankind is important to Mike's success with his religion. Yet despite their competencies, each woman relies on her male for guidance--and none of the women act independently without male instruction. Miriam, Dorcas, and Anne were originally the secretaries of Jubal. As such, they were only briefly sketched in for the reader. In the first introduction the reader is given to the three important helpmates, the sum total of the physical appearances is that "Anne was blonde, Miriam redheaded, and Dorcas dark; they ranged respectively, from pleasantly plump to deliciously slender. Their ages spread over fifteen years but it was hard to tell which was the eldest."[136] This description must suffice for the reader for the rest of the book, although their personalities are filled in somewhat in succeeding chapters, especially that of Anne, whose Fair Witness abilities assume some importance.

When we first see these three, their subservience is to Jubal. As his hired hands, they operate on a secretary/housemaid basis that has them rotating on call. When Jubal yells, "Front!" whoever has the call must immediately turn up in front of Jubal and be ready to do his bidding. The girls are allowed a certain amount of verbal jousting, and may even pull an occasional practical joke on Harshaw. But their place is well understood. As he explains to Jill after she arrives with Michael Smith, "This is Freedom Hall, my dear. Everyone does as he pleases...then if he does something I don't like, I kick him the hell out."[137] Later, after Michael arrives, is taught by Jubal, and then assumes his role as the ultimate competent man and the ultimate survivor; the females begin

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to follow the new leader, although they still respect and pay homage to Jubal. Jubal is willing, as an admirer of Mike's, to become no more than titular head of his household. As followers of Mike, the girls become totally subject to Mike's power, and become willing to go through that subjugation without even the incentive of pay which Jubal Harshaw had given them. For Mike the girls are objects to be used, appreciated at times perhaps, but only as objects. Even Jill, his companion in his eccentric education, oftimes fills that role. At one point, as part of his education, she has joined a chorus line. Allowing Mike to telepathically feel the frustrated passion of a small man in the front row watching her, Jill moves Mike to appreciate the power of a woman. Not long afterward, Mike tells her he "now groks naughty pictures." He asks Jill to pose for him, she does, and Mike comments that "Naughty pictures are a great goodness." Then the narrator tells us "They quit their jobs and saw every revue on the Strip...it was fun--'great goodness'--to see girls."[138] Typically subjected in their roles, Mike's women take no positive action on their own. Only after he has decided on an appropriate course of action do they use their competency to achieve those ends. Their submission is not necessarily to Mike alone, although he, as long as he is alive, is the prime focus of that adoration. They also have other men who fill the roles of male dominance. One of the three secretaries eventually marries, and Jill and Ben Caxton eventuallt join forces, and all three secretaries also continue their devotion to Jubal Harshaw.

Even the sexual activities, which are much more openly discussed and described in STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND than in other novels, are more a simple increase in quantity than a change in style for Heinlein. Mike dominates the sexual activities, and initiates the lucky chosen few into the Ninth Circle where free sex exists--free, at least, under Mike's rules. As in the other Heinlein novels, sex is often discussed, but rarely described in detail. In STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND the discussion is found significantly more often; but always under the same rules established in the other novels. The most important role that women in STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND fill, finally, is that of a foil for the display of the male's competence. As willing followers of Mike the women discuss, admit, and admire Mike's sexual attractiveness and prowess. As Anne tells Jubal, the old man and mentor asks why Mike's kisses evoked such a strong response,

> I've been kissed by men who did a very good job. But they don't give kissing their whole attention...Mike doesn't have technique...but when Mike kisses you he isn't doing anything else. You're his whole universe...and the moment is eternal because he doesn't have any plans and isn't going anywhere. Just kissing you. It's overwhelming.[139]

Every woman Mike attempts to have sexual relations with yields because he is irresistably attractive. All women in the novel who encounter him and are approached by him for sexual purposes submit, and by so doing become his personal chattels in his own "religion" of the new man.

More than Smith's sexual competence is displayed by the women, however, for their needs also allow Mike to demonstrate his physical and mental abilities as a survivor. Jill's weaknesses allow Mike the opportunity and the excuse for a number of bloodless, but nonetheless final, murders. In the same fashion, his defense of the other women leads to his wholesale destruction of lives and property. The women are his, but that ownership demands of him the same chivalric stance it demands of other Heinlein protagonists. He defends them against all harm, holds them at least verbally in high esteem; but uses them unmercifully through his subjugation of their

individual liberties and his blatantly sexist stance on their purpose or reason for existence. As Jubal notes after Mike's great awakening which culminates in sex with one of the girls, "He accepted homage from the girls as if a natural right."[140] They owe him homage because he protects them and shelters them; and the girls, as his subjects, pay him that homage until the moment of his martydom and beyond.

The many similarities between STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND and the other Heinlein novels and short stories discussed demonstrate that STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND and the other novels have a commonality of purpose. The author uses his novels as a ground for advocating libertarianism and a survival ethic that includes the ready use of violence. When a critic says, "Yet the reader has been given a glimpse of love, of worship, of honor and devotion more basic and more pure than anything since the days of Apostolic Christianity,"[141] he is perhaps either in sympathy with Heinlein's personal philosophies or unaware of the covert doctrines in the book.

And that is the problem. For misunderstanding Heinlein's work, or not appreciating the importance of his preaching in the work, may cause both the juveniles and the adult novels to be seriously misread. Heinlein's own statements in non-fiction efforts tend to substantiate the aggressiveness and libertarianism seen in the fiction as well as the close similarities between STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND and the other novels.

In an interview with Oui magazine, Heinlein was asked to reconcile the apparent difference between STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND, which the interviewer considered "a departure from what Heinlein had done before,"[142] with the obviously warlike STARSHIP TROOPERS, which the interviewer pointed out, "some critics thought was militaristic and right-wing."[143] Heinlein replied that

> Effectively the two books were written simultaneously. In my mind, there never was any conflict between the two books--both books were quite savage comments on the present state of our society and both books have the same basic theme: That a man, to be truly human, must be unhesitatingly willing at all times to lay down his life for his fellow man. Both are based on the twin concepts of love and duty--and how they are related to the survival of our race.[144]

Personal responsibility, a central theme of Heinlein's work, is discussed more fully when the author explains that "Even in STARSHIP TROOPERS and STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND, the central character in each case--one was killed, one was about to be killed--nevertheless, each had successfully coped with his environment under terms that suited him for purposes that were reasonable to him."[145]

That the themes evident in his fiction are purposeful is shown in the author's statements about his work in the interview and in other non-fiction writing. In Oui, Heinlein notes that "The point is racial survival. An intelligent race has been around for a long, long time or it wouldn't be intelligent." The basic human drives such as fear, love, hate, hunger, sex, greed, and so on, are seen by Heinlein as "variations on the single theme of survival. When distorted, they result in non-survival; when they're used properly, they result in survival. Hate, used properly, can be a survival characteristic; love, used improperly, can be a non-survival characteristic."[146]

He brings the problems and ethics of survival down to a more immediate level of importance in THE WORLDS OF ROBERT HEINLEIN, where he says in an introduction that

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> The present problem (East vs. West) will solve itself in the cold terms of revolutionary survival, and in the course of it both sides will make changes in group structure. The system that survives might be called 'Communism' or it might be called 'Democracy'...but one thing we can be certain of; it will not resemble very closely what either Marx or Jefferson had in mind...For man is rarely logical...He is mean, ornery, cantankerous, illogical, emotional--and amazingly hard to kill...My confidence in our species lies in its past history and is founded quite as much on Man's so-called vices as on his so-called virtues. When the chips are down, quarrelsomeness and selfishness can be as useful to the survival of the human race as is altruism, and pigheadedness can be a trait superior to sweet reasonableness.[147]

Heinlein truly sees Man as a survivor. He adds

> I have a deep and abiding confidence in Man as he is, imperfect and often unlovable--plus still greater confidence in his potential. No matter how tough things are, Man copes. He comes up with adequate answers from illogical reasons. But the answers work.[148]

Speaking in direct terms of Man's likelihood of survival after the coming cataclysmic World War Three, which he sees happening before the turn of the century, he notes that

> Our prospects need not dismay you, not if you or your kin were at Bloody Nose Ridge, at Gettysburg--or trudged across the Plains. You and I are here because we carry the genes of uncountable ancestors who fought--and won--against death in all its forms. We're tough. We'll survive. Most of us.
>
> We've lasted through the preliminary bouts; the main event is coming up.
>
> But it's not for sissies.[149]

The survival through conflict (Bloody Nose Ridge, Gettysburg, Lazarus Long, Oscar Gordon, Felix Hamilton, and all the other characters); the survival against an inimical nature (pioneers across the Plains, Lazarus Long, Hugh Farnham, Bernardo de la Paz, and many others); the ultimate defeat of death through the survival of the human race--these are his themes and his characters. Through his many novels and stories, he has used them recurrently to good effect. Man, the man Heinlein sees as a tough, adjustable, coping survivor, will make it. Not without a fight and a struggle; but man will make it. It is a bloody vision at best of what man is and may yet become. It includes many of the traits that civilized man considers symptoms of uncivilized brutality. By melding these traits with future societies that honor them, Heinlein creates worlds of his own that praise, accept, and demand his form of survival. In all his works, including the unfortunately misread STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND, the survivor survives through action against an enemy. That action, unfortunately, all too often includes murder and mayhem, at times carried to genocidal extremes.[150]

Any critical appraisal of Heinlein's work must consider this heavy-handed preaching of survival through conflict while noting that many of his novels are aimed at the so-called "juvenile" market and are meant to be read by children. The obvious sanger is two-fold. First, such effective portrayal of survival by violence cast in a favorable light may affect impressionable minds adversely. Second, the

stature of a writer like Heinlein in his field may prompt many beginning readers in the science fiction genre to think of the field solely as a playground for such space opera violence rather than the open-minded exploration of a variety of possible societies, futures, and situations that it far more often is. Heinlein, by consistently dwelling on the same characters and situations in novel after novel and story after story, very rarely offers his readers, juvenile or adult, any other explorations other than those discussed here. Seeing Heinlein's work in a more complete context allows a reader to appreciate the author's lack of growth in themes and characterizations. From the earliest stories until the most recent, the persistent theme of man's survival through conflict emerges time after time. It can be acknowledged that Heinlein's early efforts were among the first to bring science fiction out of the Flash Gordon-style gimmickry that had beset the field in the 1920's and 30's and bring solid characterizations, realistic science and scientific extrapolation, and more effective writing to the field. It is unfortunate, however, that his lack of growth in both themes and characterizations, coupled with his ever-increasing tendency to focus more and more heavily on his survival themes at the expense of his stories' plotting and overall entertainment value, has resulted in a stagnation in his work that leaves the once preeminent author in the backwater of a flood of talented writers whose modern work has helped make science fiction a genre that merits serious study both for its obvious appeal to the reading public and for its critical value.

-- Richard A. Wilber

NOTES:

1 Robert A. Heinlein, THE MOON IS A HARSH MISTRESS (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1966), p.64.

2 Heinlein, MOON, p.65.

3 Robert A. Heinlein, FARNHAM'S FREEHOLD (New Tork: Berkley Publishing Corporation, 1971), p.35.

4 Heinlein, FARNHAM'S, p.35.

5 Heinlein, FARNHAM'S, p.319.

6 Alexi Panshin, HEINLEIN IN DIMENSION (Chicago: Advent Publishers, 1968), p.89.

7 Robert A. Heinlein, HAVE SPACE SUIT, WILL TRAVEL (New York: Ace Books, 1958) p.238.

8 Robert A. Heinlein, THE PUPPET MASTERS (New York: Signet, 1951), p.8.

9 Heinlein, PUPPET, p.23.

10 Heinlein, PUPPET, p.174

11 Heinlein, PUPPET, p.175.

12 Heinlein, STARSHIP TROOPERS (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1959), p.95.

13 Heinlein, STARSHIP, p.96.

14 Heinlein, STARSHIP, p.73.

15 Heinlein, STARSHIP, p.74.

16 Heinlein, STARSHIP, p.78

17 Heinlein, STARSHIP, p.129

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After a certain point in a writer's career, it seems useful to look back over his or her works and see if their fiction lives up to the reputation it has gained. Not the writer's personal reputation, but the reputation of their fiction. In David Gerrold's case (and in that of a number of other sf writers, where readers fail to see the difference between the two) this distinction is especially important. Franz Rottensteiner once accused American sf writers of being incestuous, of being afraid to criticise another's work because the relationships between the various editors, writers and fans was so close. There is a lot of truth to this idea (as much as I hate to admit), but honesty forms the basis of any good relationship.

Recently, in KNIGHTS 15, David Gerrold wrote: "Fans are best served by the writers through what they write--that's the part that survives, that's the core of why fans focus their attention on them. ...The only thing a fan should ever demand of a pro is that he perform his best where it counts--in print." A very sensible statement: and in the rest of this article, I intend to look at what is generally considered Gerrold's best work with just that viewpoint in mind.

Probably Gerrold's most well-known novel is his first: WHEN HARLIE WAS ONE, which was nominated for the Hugo and Nebula awards in 1973, and portions of which appeared in GALAXY magazine over the previous four years. In THE ISSUE AT HAND, which I read at the same time as the Gerrold novel, James Blish remarks that each new generation of writers needs to be reminded of certain basic techniques of fiction writing, and this became painfully apparent as I read HARLIE.

The plot of the novel is fairly simple: there is a conflict between David Auberson, one of the men who has helped to develope and build H.A.R.L.I.E. (Human Analogue Robot, Life Input Equivalent), and the board of directors of the company which has financed the H.A.R.L.I.E. project--the latter want to discontinue the project, since they see no immediate economic profit in it for the company. Other subplots involve Auberson's problems with his love life, Harlie's questions about his existence and purpose, and various disputes and misunderstandings between the man and the computer. The plot is involving, but only on a superficial level; there is little of the real drama found in the best sf novels and short stories.

The reason why WHEN HARLIE WAS ONE lacks this dramatic quality is tied to its two major flaws: a lack of real, individualized characters, and excessive "lecturing." There is little physical description of the characters in the novel, or even of the area in which they live; I assume the novel is set in Los Angeles simply because that is where Gerrold lives, and it is a common urban locale. There is no attempt--that I can see--of attributing any distinct traits, mannerisms, or ways of

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WITH A FINGER IN MY GERROLD

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thinking to any of the individual characters in the book. Let one steal another's line in any of the endless discussions/lectures in which they take part, and I doubt if the difference would be noticeable. Instead of injecting genuine emotions or characters in HARLIE, Gerrold has relied on what James Blish calls "phoney realism" --the minute description of the entirely irrelevant. In THE ISSUE AT HAND, Blish gives as an example the "maipulation of cigarettes", which adds nothing to our knowledge of a character's traits or motives, but which seems superficially realistic (after all, it is something one sees every day). In the first scene in HARLIE, this is exactly all Gerrold describes (though he is slightly original: his character's cigarettes are marijuana, not tobacco). A considerable amount of time is spent elsewhere in the novel describing smoking rituals. At one point Gerrold hints that Auberson's use of marijuana is related to his emotional difficulties, but this afterthought seems rather forced and pat--and surely unoriginal.

The excessive lecturing is hardly any better; the sheer quantity rivals that in Anderson's and Heinlein's worst novels. To a certain extent, however, Gerrold has an excuse: it would seem to be more difficult to dramatize a novel in which one of the main characters is a computer. Even in a novel which is mainly cerebral or intellectual in intent, there is a tremenous amount of physical movement and action; in contrast, a computer can only talk. So, of necessity, there will be an unusually large amount of dialog. The problem is that few of the other characters in the novel act as well; and when they talk, they talk at one another, rather than with one another. The "drama" in HARLIE seems to consist almost entirely of people sitting around and discussing supposedly profound subjects with one another; they deliver lectures rather than act out their lives. Auberson and Harlie become involved in a lengthy discussion of love, but little of that emotion is dramatized in the book. The content of the lecture on the interlocking American computer system (and the "virus" computer disease) is fascinating, but interesting in the same sense that a formal article on the subject would be (i.e., for the information conveyed). But in a good sf story we do not want only the "science" but also the "fiction"--the character's reaction to scientific change. In HARLIE, this is rarely shown; and barely even attempted in more than a rudimentary way. Instead, the novel is little more than the story of a power struggle within an electronics firm, larded with an overabundance of scientific lectures and dialog. Talk, talk, talk--at one point, Auberson and Harlie even begin using "Hhhhhmmmm" and "Mmmmmmm" in their typewritten conversations.

Gerrold also slips up on point-of-view occasionally in HARLIE. At one point he jumps from telling the reader what Auberson is thinking to telling what Annie Stimson (Auberson's lover) is thinking and back again, all in the course of only a

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CY CHAUVIN

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couple of pages. At another point, Gerrold jumps from Auberson's mind to Carl Elzer's in the space of a page. Except for these two instances, the novel is told from Auberson's viewpoint. As Blish says, it is perfectly acceptable to write a novel from several points of view--provided that each is strictly segregated from the others. But flitting from one character's mind to the other, within the same scene, and without even a break in the text (as is done here), is simply careless writing.

THE MAN WHO FOLDED HIMSELF, which was nominated for the Hugo and Nebula awards in 1974 is a somewhat better novel, though hardly more deserving of its honors than HARLIE (however, I'll admit 1974 was a bad year for sf novels). The book is told in the form of a diary, and opens with an account by Dan (the protagonist) about his rich Uncle Jim, who promises that he will raise Dan's allowance to a thousand dollars a week if he keeps a diary. In an entry a few pages later, we learn that Dan's uncle has died suddenly, and left his a strange belt as an inheritance. The belt, of course, is for time travel.

Gerrold describes the belt in some detail, but it is obvious that he is not really interested in the technology behind the belt (and I agree that it matters little). Instead Gerrold is interested in the implications of such a device--how would a human being racte to the possibility of time travel?--and speands the rest of the novel exploring these implications.

For instance: what would happen is a person "met" himself (or rather his future self) sleeping in his own bedroom? In THE MAN WHO FOLDED HIMSELF, the "present" Dan reacts with shock and confusion, but the "future" Dan (or Don, as Gerrold conveniently calls him) is calm, collected--since he has been through it all before.

Also interesting is what Gerrold calls "erasing" past events. The first occurs when one of Dan's future selves comes back to warn him not to bet on a horse race, or he'll be in deep trouble. So Dan doesn't bet on the horse race. Yet by doing this, Dan has altered the circumstances which caused his future self to come back and warn him--which means that his future self will not have a reason to come back and warn him. So what happened? Paradox.

Yet, despite all this, THE MAN WHO FOLDED HIMSELF is more a clever stunt than something of real lasting merit. This is due to Gerrold's failure to go to any depth in the book, to make it more than a hasty sketch of various cute possibilities. Gerrold lists on pages 63-66 dozens of historical events that Dan has witnessed, but never bothers to give a description or go into detail on any one of them. Two or three, suitably enlarged upon would have been more effective than the bare-bones summary Gerrold gives. Like HARLIE, THE MAN WHO FOLDED HIMSELF is mostly talk (in diary form) with little concrete description. Gerrold tells us of events, rather than showing them to us; we can understand intellectually what he is getting at, but because it is dramatized in such a sketchy and perfunctory way (if at all), we can never feel it emotionally.

The ending of the novel is cyclic, like Robert Heinlein's classic "Up By His Bootstraps" (ASTOUNDING, 1941), and is populated exclusively by duplicates of Dan. This helps to make the novel seem very artificial (no matter how logically Gerrold developes his premises), and makes realistic characterization especially difficult. It is a cute trick that adds nothing in the way of meaning or insight to the novel.

As a character, Dan remains shallow and under-developed--a piece of folded card-

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board. As is WHEN HARLIE WAS ONE, Gerrold attempts to make his time-travel novel profound by discussing profound subjects--such as Dan's sexual relations with his future selves (masturbation or homosexuality?), his witnessing of his own death, or the psychological break that grows between his older and younger selves. Again, the concepts are interesting, but only from an intellectual viewpoint--they are stated badly, and nothing in a dramatic sense beyond the immediate and superficial is done with them. We are not moved by what we read. There is a very real need in science fiction for a novel or long story that deals with time travel in an honest and human way, written by a writer with some serious literary pretentions. Not every novel (like THE MAN WHO FOLDED HIMSELF, UP THE LINE, etc.) has to try to wring every last contradiction or gimmick or paradox from the time travel. The sexual relation's between Dan's future and past selves that Gerrold hardly more than skims over is significant enough a subject for an entire novel. Here is a person who knows us totally (our shadow from the future), but who is more than us (he/she has our experiences, and then some). If we crave understanding, surely this person can offer it more fully than any other--? There are so many ramifications to the idea; but it is far more difficult to deal with an idea, to really explore and feel (and make the reader feel) what it would mean in human terms than it is to simply suggest a whole string of gimmicks and notions. This might be suitable or at least bearable for a very short story, but not for a novel.

Ultimately, THE MAN WHO FOLDED HIMSELF is shallow because Dan (the only character in the book) is shallow. It is hardly the "last word in time machine novels" as is proclaimed on the cover (but then, no one can hold Gerrold responsible for what his publishers--or for that matter, what anyone else--says of his work).

In my opinion, by far Gerrold's best work to date is "In the Deadlands", which is included in his collection WITH A FINGER IN MY I, and has had the honor of being nominated for a Nebula award and rejected from AGAIN, DANGEROUS VISIONS. In it, Gerrold attempts to use words in a non-linear fashion (like a poem), and portray a startling and very moving vision of a totally unreal world. The story is told from the viewpoint of a soldier who is marching in the deadlands, a desert area that is totally engulfing civilization and the liveable world. It is not an ordinary desert, however; it is totally flat, with no oasis or growing things at all, and staying in the deadlands does strange things to men's minds.

The experimental non-linear word arrangement of Gerrold's story is both one of its strengths and weaknesses. Gerrold--more than Ellison, or Lupoff, or Moorcock--has realized that experimental word arrangement should enhance the readibility and thematic meaning of a story, rather than simply sit on the page and Look Pretty. His use of "step

step

step" throughout, for instance, helps tie together the different sections of the story, and is effective. So too with the repitition of "run run run" in a vertical column down one side of the page--wider apart at first, then sloser together toward the climax--while the story proper continues down the other. An increasing sense of urgency and haste is created, even though it is not necessary to read both columns of information at the same time--the failure of most double column formats. It is a motion picture technique done in prose that genuinely works.

However, not all of the story benefits from being put into non-linear form; it often merely distracts the reader, and causes him to place more emphasis on certain words and lines than are really necessary. By emphasizing <u>all</u> of the story in this

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unorthodox fashion, Gerrold diminishes the effectiveness of those portions of the story in which the non-linear arrangement truely enhances the impact and meaning of "In the Deadlands." In too many cases the non-linear arrangement serves no function. For instance, compare these two passages, one Gerrold's original, the other my linear "prose" rendering of it:

> "Later, numb now. Cannot think. Can only walk. Stop for light, day turns off. Night begins. We huddle around the light--not the warmth, the light. Temperature 70. Air seems hot, heavy. The other men are talking small talk."
> (my version, p. 204)

Now Gerrold's original:

> "Later,
> numb now,
> cannot think.
>
> Can only walk.
> Stop for night.
> Day turns off.
> Night begins.
> We huddle around the light.
> the light.
>
> Temperature 70
> Air seems hot,
> heavy.
> The other men are talking
> small talk. (p. 204)

Gerrold's page tends to seem stretched out, as though he didn't have enough material to fill the book, and was using white space to "pad" it. This was obviously not his intention, but the psychological effect is still there. Gerrold's prose does not have the density and weight of good poetry--not enough of the rhythms, the music--and the reader feels cheated. It also seems that Gerrold was distracted by his use of this technique, and it caused him to write more vaguely and imprecisely than usual, rather than concentrating on detailing his vision (the real strength of "In the Deadlands"). Ultimately, it is Gerrold's vision which moves us, not his use of non'linear prose. Everything in his story should work toward increasing the power and effectiveness of this vision, rather than being just a cute and distracting appendage.

"With A Finger In My I" would appear to be a noteworthy piece, being as it is the title story of the collection, and the story Ellison selected in favor of "In the Deadlands" for AGAING, DANGEROUS VISIONS. The story is a variant of the disintergrating reality subgenre of sf, though unlike Philip K. Dick or Robert Sheckley, Gerrold includes little amusing background detail. (A talking suitcase would be a happy surprise here.) The story suffers from the same faults as Gerrold's novels: lack of strong characters, and over-dependance upon dialog to carry the story along (though since the story is told in the first person, Gerrold is able to explain much of the story situation directly, rather than have the characters lecture). In a short story, however, these faults are less acute, since a short story need not be as traditionally structured as a novel, since it only has to capture a reader's at-

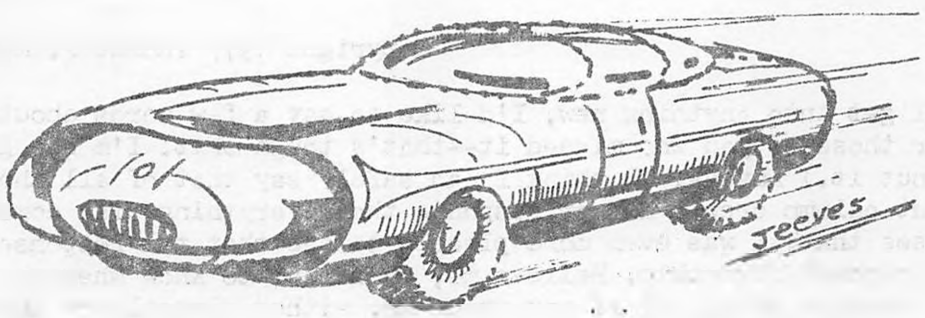
tention for a much shorter time span, and one is more willing to endure experimental or even faulty writing at shorter lengths.

The real problem is that the story is not about anything; it is moderately clever (though it uses an old idea), passably written, but will stick in no one's memory. The reader goes through no great emotional upheaval: despite all that happens, the narrator takes it as a lark. He isn't upset when the iris in his left eye vanishes; why should we be? There is nothing wrong with being clever (I only wish "With A Finger In My I" was more clever), so long as you don't confuse it with the profound or insightful.

As someone said of another writer, the major problem with Gerrold's fiction is over-recognition--it does not stand up to scrutiny, when one looks for what all the reviewers, fans and awards seem to say is there. Few writers produce mature work the instant they enter any field, but few books have suffered the over-promotion, or have been credited with so many virtues they lack, as have the ones by David Gerrold I've mentioned here. When the mass media puts down sf, everyone in the science fiction community complains; but when the seal of approval is given to poorly written novels and stories by writers and readers supposedly familiar with sf, it only encourages criticism by outside reporters, who will obviously pick up what has received the most praise, expecting it to be representative of good sf.

And if they pick up WHEN HARLIE WAS ONE or THE MAN WHO FOLDED HIMSELF or "With A Finger In My I", they will only have their predjudices confirmed.

-- Cy Chauvin



THOMAS F MONTELEONE

THE MOTHERS AND FATHERS ITALIAN ASSOCIATION

Women In Science Fiction,

Or:

Do We (CAN We) Still Like

Boobs-A-Lot?

Before I get into anything new, I'd like to say a few words about my previous column. (For those of you who missed it--that's tough shit. I'm not going to tell you much about it.) Anyway...I think I can safely say that of all the things I have written, that column drew a larger response than everything else combined. I was pleased to see that; I was even more pleased to see that the response was practically one hundred percent favorable. Believe me, it's nice to know when you are communicating, and I want to thank all of you wrote me, either directly or through this esteemed publication.

Keep the cards and letters coming in folks.

There is one drawback to all that effusiveness over my column, however. And that is simply this: I don't particularly consider myself a "fan" writer. I dash this column off with no second thoughts and drop it into a manila envelope (I mean, after

all, I'm not getting paid for it, right?). Whereas I write my fiction, my "serious" stuff, altogether differently. Short stories invariably are started four or five times before I stop spinning my wheels and find the proper opening, point of view, setting, mood, etc. Each scene plays itself out agonizingly in my head and I crap rocks trying to get it down on paper so that it even approximates the way I originally imagined it. My novels progress in fits and starts--one week I am inflammed with enthusiasm, turning out many acceptable pages; the next week I dread sitting down at the Selectric because I reached some impasse that I'm afraid I won't be able to break through. I suppose it just underscores what Damon Knight told me about six years ago: "Look, if writing was easy, then everybody would be doing it." No shit, Damon.

Getting back on line: so imagine how I feel when I finally finish a story that I feel is dynamite, wait to see it published, and then watch it flop around, gasping like a beached mackerel, and nobody seems to care. But I write a few pages in a fanzine and I get letters.

I wonder if somebody is trying to tell me something?

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And now on to some fresh fish to fry. A topic that will probably raise hackles, tempers, and brickbats for issues to come. A topic that will most likely deflate my current status as one of KNIGHTS' enfants terribles. The subject for today's discussion is the Feminist Movement and its Relationship to Science Fiction.

I suppose I should start off by saying that I am not a feminist. Now before any of you start running to your typewriters, venom and bile dripping from the corners of your twisted mouths, let me qualify that last statement. What I mean is that I am not a member of any organized movements in behalf of feminism, I don't contribute money to any of them (I don't contribute money to anything), I don't go on marches, I don't write letters, or any of that other shit. I am however, sympathetic to many of the aims and goals of the feminist "movement".

Okay, so I said "many of the aims and goals," and the more astute of you have probably already said to yourselves: "This mother's a phony. He's masking his true feelings. By saying 'many' he implies that he doesn't agree with all of the movement's aims." Well, you're goddamned right I'm not in total agreement. I don't think I'm one hundred percent in favor of anything other than the Greater Good of Thomas F. Monteleone. But since that's another story, let's stop fooling around and get this discussion into higher gears.

In recent years, science fiction has picked up the feminist banner--a bit belatedly, I admit, but they did it all the same--and have produced some very positive results: a heightened awareness of some of the special problems women face in our society, more recognition for numbers of women writing sf today, the publication of some provocative stories and novels that may not have seen print in earlier times, things like that. But aside from that, I also see letters in fanzines, book review columns, and even "discussions" in the prestigious epistolary of the SFWA, the FORUM, which would make a case for women getting a raw deal in sf.

Well, I think that is just so much bullshit.

I have been involved with sf for a number of years and I cannot think of one instance in which a writer was discriminated against by any means (bad reviews, out-of-hand-rejection of a work, derision, slander, whatever...) simply because she was a woman. All the polls and surveys I have seen indicate that the majority of sf readers are male: a fact that I don't see as intrinsically bad (I am sure that a poll would also indicate that the majority of lumberjacks are male). For whatever reasons, sf has traditionally been one of those things referred to as a "male-oriented" pastime. I suppose this, as in all other aspects of society, is a product of our culture. However, I have not seen or heard anyone saying that women cannot read, like, or write sf. I believe the opportunity to participate in science fiction has always been open to women, and those who have chosen to take it up have simply done so.

There have even been recent anthologies devoted exclusively to women in sf, and I suppose it's a good thing. We have anthologies about every other conceivable subject, so why not women? But there was one anthology--I have honestly forgotten the title--which was advertised in SFWA publication market reports and other places such as LOCUS that wanted female-oriented sf. Several writers I know who are males wrote stories for the book and sent them in only to have them returned because--they were informed--the anthology was only open to women writers. Yeah, that's pretty much the same as No Dogs or Jews Allowed, No Irishmen Need Apply. Etcetera, etcetera, said the King.

So what is this crap?

When this issue started clogging up the pages of fanzines and the SFWA FORUM I was astounded to see some of sf's most vocal feminist writers defending this unconscionable editorial stance! I mean, what the hell is the reason for this kind of reverse discrimination? Revenge for all the years of inequity? Perhaps. But an intelligent person is not truly appeased by a pound of flesh. That anthology simply had no more business in existence than a book called GREAT SCIENCE FICTION BY WHITE MEN. This is an example of taking a good thing too far. Extremes in either direction are usually disastrous and I think the feminist movement is no exception to this rule.

As a matter of opinion, I feel that maybe I should start distinguishing between the terms "feminism" and "Women's rights", because I feel that both terms imply vastly different things. When the women's movement is talking about equality of the sexes, I find myself agreeing wholeheartedly. There are no good reasons--in my way of thinking--why women should not get the same money as men for the same job, why they should not be allowed to have their own credit cards, receive mortgages, be admitted to medical schools, law schools, etc. I don't see where the beef is there. What we are talking about here is human rights. No problem, right? But feminism seems to imply more than just equal treatment and consideration. There seems to be this inherent ideology that all of a sudden no one should be allowed to make any distinctions between males and females. Okay, so we shouldn't call everybody a "chairman" or a "mailman" or a "spokesman" or any of the other "-men" because some of the administrators and mailcarriers and speakers are women. I can understand that. So why can't we call them "chairwomen" or "spokeswomen" or "mailwomen"? Seems reasonable to me. I think it's a hell of a lot better than this "person" bullshit that's being forced down our collective throats. What is wrong with identifying the gender of the individual and going on from there?

The same thing can be said for these organizations screaming for the destruction of "Father & Son" banquets, the Little League, separate public toilets, and even the

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Cub Scouts. The fucking Cub Scouts, for chrissake. All of a sudden I am supposed to believe that there is something wrong with organizations spcifically formed so that members of one sex or the other can get together? Fuck that. It just ain't gonna happen. There always will be differences--other than the obvious physiological ones--between males and females. Sure I grant that most of it is cultural, and that most of the differences exist because we have role-defined the way we raise our children. But my question is: are these differences inherently bad? I personally believe that if we lived in a society in which "unisexuality" was a complete reality, it would be goddamned boring. Such utter homegeneity would be deadly to someone like myself--a confirmed heterosexual who has no inclinations towrads homo- or bi- sexuality. Now maybe this is my own hang-ups and deep-seated psychological problems showing through the cracks,...well, okay, I can live with it. I mean, after all, this is my column, right?

I think good sf-type solutions to dilemmas like this could be solved by ways other than what is actually taking place. For instance: leave the Little League and the Cub Scouts alone. Simply start new organizations for those who don't believe in the other ones. Have three kinds of public toilets: Men, Women, and Anybody. I personally would continue to pee in the Men's room because I choose to do so; some women would continue to use the Women's facilities because they likewise choose to; and other people whould hit the Anydoby door for the same reason. Start something called the "Little Persons Scouts" or something like that, and let the people who think the Brownies and the Cub Scouts are only for microcephalics join the alternative. Give us all the freedom to choose what role we want to assume, what names we want to be called, what organizations we wish to belong to, and whatever else is an issue.

Some of this spills over into the roles that people choose to assume. All of a sudden feminists are satirizing, deprecating, and villifying the occupations of "housewife" and "mother". This is terribly unfair to the people who want to be housewives and mothers.No one has to be a mother anymore. No one has to be a housewife if they choose not to from the beginning. Oh, I'm sure there are a lot of women who do feel trapped and many of them most likely are victims of a "sexist" culture. But there are millions of workers--male and female--who loath their occupations, and they have been trapped by other aspects of our culture. Thankfully some of these things are changing.

Maybe I'm looking at this all wrong, but I only have one set of experiences to go on, and those are my own. In my marriage, Natalie and I have had very few problems about roles and sexism. We both expressed surprise and amusement to see books on "liberated" and "open" marriages and related subjects, because we found that we had been conducting our own marriage like that since its beginning. And we didn't need any books to tell us how to do it. What we do is a simple division of labor--based partly on individual talent, partly on personal preference, partly out of necessity, and that prosaic commodity known as common sense. I handle the family finances because Natalie could not give a flying shit about such things. She cooks because she enjoys it. We both wash the dishes. I cut the lawn and vacuum the carpets because I find myself enjoying these things. We both changed diapers and gave Damon baths, and we both do laundry and fold it up and put it away. I repair the leaky faucets and put new shelves in the closets, and she does the gardening. All these things, and the hundreds of other examples I could have mentioned, simply evolved and we didn't have to attend encounter groups or have family conferences to institute them.

What does any of this have to do with sf and feminism? Very little, I'm afraid. I guess I just got onto a digression, and I felt like letting it run for awhile.

Back to sf and the ladies. Which reminds me...I have understood from some corners that the word "ladies" is now a taboo term. Just like "broad" or "chick". Well, I'm sorry to hear that, I really am, but I must confess to using the term (along with "chick" and "guy" and several less savory handles for other groups). I will continue to use the terms and anyone who doesn't like it can just avoid me.

But I digress again...

A most amusing incident occured about a year ago when one of sf's most highly regarded female writers wrote a scathing tirade to the SFWA FORUM attacking one of sf's most highly regarded male writers, based in part on the male author's mention in his most recent novel of one of the male characters admiring the lovely motion of a female character's breasts bobbing about in zero-G. From what I gathered from the fusillade of letters that followed, the female writer was incensed about the inclusion of such things in modern sf and that they should be roundly condem ned, and--this is important--that the male author should not write about this kind of sexist activity.

This is patently absurd.

Any and all writers can write about whatever they choose. Let's get that straight from the beginning. No one should be put upon to pander to anyone else's predelictions if he or she does not wish to do so, especially in such a highly personal endeavour as creativity.

I don't write about homosexual characters because, frankly, homosexuality does not interest me. And I would be greatly pissed off if some representative of a gay organization wrote me, complaining that I was discriminating against gays because I didn't put any in my stories. Look, I personally don't care if two consenting partners want to polish each other's knobs, dildoe each other, or you-name-it. That's their stick and they can swing it as they choose. It's not my stick, it does not interest me, and I'm not ever going to write about it. Conversely, if I do want to write about a male character who gets off at the sight of a well-shaped pair, I would not want some strident feminist castigating me for it. It's my story, my fantasy, and I will put in it whatever I choose.

But these are minor hassles, really. From what I have seen and read and heard I don't think the question of equal rights or feminism or women's liberation has been maltreated in the science fiction field. There have been some mistakes made in the past, and I suppose there will always be mistakes to be made in the future, but the majority of writers, editors, and fans do not seem to have much trouble dealing with these new levels of awareness and consideration.

Now maybe I have had my head in the sand all these years and there are vicious and terrible injustices going on that I, in my male chauvinist piggotry, have blithely refused to see. Well, if the feedback brings some of this kind of thing to my attention, I would be happy to see where I've been wrong. You see, that's the nice thing about being rational and intelligent and elitist--it's easy to admit you're wrong sometimes, because you know you're still better than most people.

All right, but what about the future? Well, there is one thing that I would hate to see happen and that would be for science fiction to fall prey to the national malaise that is fucking up everything from education to employment: the quota syndrome. I would truly be sorry to see a novel panned because there were no women included as main characters. I would be incredibly pissed to see an anthology criticised because it did not contain any stories by female writers. I would be incensed by demands that there be a certain percentage of female editors doing magazines and original anthologies. And so should all of you. The concept of a quota is a case of good intentions being implemented in the worst possible way. It is the tail wagging the dog. It is, ironically, a total disavowment of the whole equality issue. But then, who among you is going to stand up and say that you honestly believe that we are all created equal? People should be admitted to medical school or given a particular job, or allowed to live in a particular neighborhood, or publish a story, or whatever, solely upon his or her qualifications, talents, skills, etc., and not merely because he or she is a he or she, or is black, red, white, scotch plaid, etcetera, etcetera.

God this is prosaic stuff.

Look, the whole thing is simple: if you can earn it, you deserve it. So what is going to happen with sf and the whole question of feminism/women's right's/women's liberation? Probably the same thing that has happened with most of the other causes celebres, ideologies, trends, and au courant urgencies that surface in our culture: i.e. it will be pounded and prostituted and bilked for all its worth by the media until its "trendiness" has lost all possible commercial value, and then (and only then) it will be slowly, subconsciously analyzed, redifined, distilled and assimilated into our amalgam-culture.

Actually, I'm not holding sf as an establishment that is guilty of the above crimes, but rather the more commercial interests who are necessary for sf to exist at all. Like I said before, I don't think sf and feminism are at all strange bed-- ah, persons (arggh! gag! rrrack!).

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It's funny, but when I started this particular column, I thought I would have a lot more to say on this subject than what has actually come down. Maybe I'm getting more precise in my declining years, I don't know, but it seems like I have just about worked everything out of my system for now.

What I would really like to see would be some commentary on this so that I can feed some new fuel to the flames, generate a little new energy and talk about it some more.

But that will be up to you. Later.

-- Thomas F. Monteleone

THE VIRGIN, THE BULL, AND THE IVORY TOWER INTELLECTUALS

((The following article, "The Virgin, The Bull, And The Ivory Tower Intellectuals", is Jerry Pournelle's reaction to C.L. Grant's column on anti-intellectualism in sf that was printed in KNIGHTS 16. "You may do it as an article rather than a letter," Jerry says in an accompanying note, "so long as you make it clear that it was written as a letter, first draft, and I apologize for the too-great length and the somewhat disorganized presentation." -- MB))

Charlie Grant's column in KNIGHTS 16 disturbs me. I am particularly worried about this "junk" that we all decry; for I fear that much of what I think is "junk" turns out to be what others think is "literature"--at least in the science fiction field.

It's not merely a matter of taste. It is partly a matter of expectations: I would not, for example, read a LASER book with the same expectations that I would have when I opened a new Silverberg collection. The LASER line is not intended for hardcore fans. Moreover, and this I think is important, it is not intended for hardcore READERS. LASER books are, in my judgement, written for an audience that would rather watch television; many of whom have never been exposed to "literature" in any form (except to be vaccinated against it by a high school English teacher doling out MacBeth in 40-line doses over a period of several weeks and asking trivial questions about unusual grammer).

For such a readership one must write a very different book. One must explain many things which fans will already know. The book must be filled with action--in fact, I begin with action scenes and write the book around them, rather than the reverse. Complexities of character are not merely a waste of time, but counterproductive. NO. I do not mean that one "writes down" to such people, anymore than a Nobel prize physicist "talks down" to a non-technical audience. Surely it is worthwhile to interest young people--and the vast majority of LASER buyers are young people--in ideas as fun?

A recent review of my LASER book, BIRTH OF FIRE, spoke endlessly about the "cardboard characters" (and ye gods, can any phrase be more trite when uttered by a trite-phrase-condemning critic) and the like; about how familiar the characters are, not a new one in the bunch; and then, in a couple of sentences praised the discussion of Mars and the scenery, wishing I'd spent the entire book on those subjects.

Well, I've got news for the critic: I did that in an article for Ben Bova's new book on the planets. Had I written a scientifically accurate discussion of Mars and had no action and characters with whom readers may quickly identify, would that book have been published by LASER? And would any of the target readership ever buy another

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JERRY POURNELLE

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if by some chance it had been and they'd bought my travelogue?

I don't say all the LASER books have been done well. I know of a couple that are just plain terrible, under any criterion you like, just godawful; but I think it silly to condem the concept of LASER books. Surely it's worth trying to induce people away from their TV and back to books? And surely the way to do that is to write so that the new reader doesn't find too much that's too hard too quickly? I have always said that my LASER books are not for fans, although I find that many fans do enjoy reading them (and I think many of my fans will care for WEST OF HONOR if only because it gives some of the early career of John Christian Falkenberg). (On that score, any critic who dares describe Falkenberg as "cardboard" had best avoid the Sergeant Major, who is not only flesh and blood, but lives right here in the 20th Century not too far from me.)

However, Charlie is more than correct when he condems sloppy workmanship. It is plain inexcusable for a writer not to use decent English no matter for what audience his book is intended--in fact, the less familiar the target readership will be with good English (by good I mean sound, grammatically correct, standard communicative English, not in literary quality which I can't really judge) the more the obligation on the writer. If the intent of a book is to interest non-readers in reading, then the book must be well-written. Some of the most precise writing done today appears in Harlequin's romances; and the Toronto people are, I find, a bit upset by the inability of many science fiction writers to construct decent sentences. (Since this letter is first draft and intended for friends, I do not offer it as an example of well-crafted writing. I would that I had time to rewrite fanzine communications, but I do not, and the alternative to lengthy and sometimes clumsy first-draft fanzine letters is no letter at all; possibly preferable, but less fun.)

But beyond the target audience problem there is another, also a difference in expectations. I do not attempt emotional assaults of the kind that Harlan does so well. There would be no point in that. I am not volatile, at least not in the ways Harlan is. I am far more concerned with the intellectual content of stories than in "characterization" and the like. I like things to happen in stories; whether stories I read, or stories I write. If they happen to relatively simple folks who react in relatively predictable ways and who have sufficient self-control that they do not go into emotional pieces when confronted with difficulties, that to me is much preferable to the most complex characters who sit in a small room underground and think grey thoughts until the writer feels enough words have been written and types "end". (NO: Harlan does not write that way. But many of his imitators do.)

Worse: I confess that no matter how finely drawn the characters, no matter how complex the plot, if the story does not make sense then I do not enjoy it. If the background technology is self-inconsistent, or worse, consists merely of dabs and spots randomly drawn from books on futurology, I cannot enjoy the story. If the society in which the story takes place simply cannot exist--if it depends, for example, on soldiers who are the most cardboard of characters for they always act in ways both stupid, against their own interests, and yet effectively to keep the society together--then I cannot care about the fine-drawn characters.

It has been said that I am basically a non-fiction writer illustrating ideas with stories. I might accept that were it not that I've also been accused of being a mere story-teller. I suppose I must do something right, since I've collaborated on two books which are minor best-sellers and my other works sell (sell all too well; I

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have contracts for the next four years of my time); and I think I'm rather proud of being a "mere" teller of tales. Certainly a generation needs its Homers; but is there not room for the lesser bards, who drop in at the campfire and say "Give me some of that stew, lads, and fill my cup with wine, and I'll tell you a story about a Virgin and a Bull that you just wouldn't believe."?

True: I do a lot of non-fiction; and because I do, I read a very great deal of non-fiction. I think there are few sf writers more familiar with what's going on at the frontiers of science. I also have this quirk: I cannot write a story that I do not believe could happen. Not will happen; fortunately, or I'd never get anything written at all; but I must believe the story is possible (at least while I'm writing it) or I can't do it. That colors my tastes in fiction as well--I generally don't at all care for stories that I think can't happen, and I spend a great deal more time with hard sciences than do most writers. But: I do not condemn those who write another kind of science fiction. In this house there are many mansions, and can't we all find one in which to be comfortable?

I find a lot in Grant's column to agree with; but I find it disturbing as well, because the temptation to intellectual arrogance is strong within me as it is within most who read fanzines or write for a living. It is a temptation which in my judgement must be resisted.

Junk is junk, saith Charlie Grant. "Strewth, Lord, but who shall be junkman? Must all commercially successful writers be apologetic? It is a rapidly growing custom, make no mistake about it; one beats one's breat and cries "forgive, for I have done an unclean thing;" but is the sentiment truly meant? Or is it merely a way to get along with other writers?

Out there in the real world there are a great many people. Some are complex, full of words and thoughts and dreams and self-doubts, siklied o'er with the pale cast of thought. Some fix cars for a living, and go to motorcycle races. Some drill holes in teeth and look down on root-canal specialists because "Who wants to spend his life twirling files?" as my dentist put it. Some are clerks in stores, and some build boats. Most are not, sad to say, science fiction fans. Is it a crime to write for them?

Is it junk to write stories that say the universe can be fun; that there is yet adventure; that the age old problem of providing harmless institutions for the warriors remains with us yet; that if we cannot control our warriors they will control us; that foxes may be smater than lions, and foxes may often rule, but the fox had best beware of the lion when aroused; that wealth awaits us if we lift our heads out of the muck; that wealth does not solve all problems?

Is it a crime to depict characters that many readers are familiar with, can identify with?

I do not think, from conversations I have had with Charlie Grant about my own work, that his article referred to me; and perhaps, were the examples made specific, he and I would agree. Of course the Executive Secretary of a writer's association cannot be specific in examples; I don't mean from fear of losing his position (we would be the greater losers, not he) but from simple good manners. I know there is much junk out there. The problem is, again, which is junk? For I see many stories which win high acclaim, gather much attention from fan audiences, which in my judge-

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ment are pure junk because they don't make any kind of intellectual sense. They are not only not consistent with what's known about the universe, they are not even consistent with themselves; and that, to me, no matter how well done, is with few exceptions Junk, and dangerous junk at that: it invites the reader to sloppy thinking; it invites the reader to accept the proposition that ideas have no consequences; it invites the reader to reject prudence; it invites the reader to act from purity of motive without regard to the probable real consequences of the action. Dangerous junk indeed.

I think I had a point when I began this. I may have lost it along the way. What I intended was to defend a particular kind of anti-intellectualism. I have enormous sympathy for those who condemn the "intellectuals"--when they look at the examples often thrust forward as typical of the breed. I do not believe that writers should be "intellectuals", certainly not of the ivory-tower variety. I am damned certain that much of the "the characters are cardboard" school of criticism is born of a contempt for all men of action, for all people who are not "complex"; for writers who are not "intellectuals" of the kind that most critics become. To our great benefit, Charles L. Grant, Jr., is not one of those; and I suspect he and I would agree on a lot were we to discuss his column; and if not, he can tell a tale with the best of them--and he damned well succeeded in getting a reaction, which is more than many of us can do.

And now I've got to get to work. You see, there was this Virgin who encountered a Bull, and...

-- Jerry Pournelle

YOUR MAILING LABEL

A number tells you when your last issue will be.

? - we trade all-for-all or have some similar arangement.

! - you seem to have gotten on my 'forever and ever' list. A friend, perhaps?

X - this is your last issue. A responce would be nice. It would also get you next issue.

"MISSION IMPOSSIBLE" AND AMERICA THE MECHANICAL

JOHN M ROBINSON

There is a belief prevalent, held by many more perceptive than I, that television, because it attempts to appeal to the largest group of people at once, is the most direct reflection of a culture. It tells us what held our general interest and what didn't; it certainly describes America's remarkable capability to not only withstand but to enjoy repetitiveness. Furthermore, occasionally a little more truth creeps into the set than one realizes. This seems almost always an accident because such a show rarely is able to maintain its quality. This is because no one was quite sure what was "right" about the program in the first place! However, because of the vulgar quality of nearly all television we must be quick to understand that it is only telling us of our worst side; it is hardly a complete picture. Television is rather like a battery of medical tests that tell us what diseases we are susceptible to, whether laughing at Carol Burnett or cheering Joe Friday (if you are prone to the latter, you are especially in need of care).

"Mission Impossible" seems to fit all of our descriptive characteristics: its hallmark was repetition, its triumphs accidental, and if we had only watched more raptly we would have found a horrible truth creeping into our orthicon tubes. Yet for all that, "Mission Impossible" remains distinctly unique as a rare and jewel-like twentieth century horror story.

In its early days, the first season or two, "Mission Impossible" was the most thoroughly produced show on television. Let me explain that further: by thorough what I mean is no show was so consistent with its own objectives. Presumably its producers might have subtitled the series "The Joys of Automation" since its intent was to once again falsely reassure the public that criminals are always dealt with by justice in the end. In its guise of semi-science fiction "Mission Impossible" smugly said, "We have so many sophisticated and technological tricks at our disposal that it is now absolutely impossible for evil to ever triumph again," a message that doubtlessly assuaged the fears of many, especially loyal Birchers. The squad usually was involved in defeating pseudo-Communists with vaguely Russian names.

It occured to no one then to ask the vital question "What happens to good guys with that much power at their disposal?" "Mission Impossible" answered that long before CIA and FBI plots were uncovered. That answer was far from a pleasant one: technology supreme was like a cancer which rapidly spread to the human system as well. And this is what "Mission Impossible"'s producers could not have known: that they had made their heroes more repugnant than the villains. Absolute technology corrupts technologically.

The show displayed this in nearly every facet of its production. The theme music by Lalo Schiffrin, a catchy number that falls short of being an actual "tune", had the erratic rhythm of a computer read-out. The stories themselves fit together like

cogs and gears; the writers were wonderfully facile at this sort of thing. The characters could best be described as modular: when their respective assests were needed they were simply "plugged" into the team. The acting was even stiff and wooden. Everything was undertaken with the spit and polish of gleaming steel. The key word: Precision! as in "Swiss watch".

The "regulars" in the show were stamped from one mold. Barney the electronics whiz and Willy the strong man, Rollin Hand the make-up artist and Cinammon of the crucial (and rather sexist) feminine charms. Finally there was the leader, consumately non-portrayed by Steven Hill. Indeed Hill was the quintessential IMF member; faceless, soulless, amoral, machine-like automaton (never was the prerogative to veto a mission exercised). He was perfect for the role: big, stocky like a robot and an incredibly plain face, a prototypic face. One could envision thousands of creatures constructed just like him; there were the eyes, the nose, the mouth but without character, like Superman before he puts on Clark Kent's glasses.

And they worked together like a mechanical team, a well-oiled unit so perfect that even an occasional flaw was quickly restituted with little loss in effeciency or time. And this ability was only natural because they were little more than a machine.

They came together each week to perform their task and then...then where? We never ask that! They disappear again until the next week (barring no pre-emption of course); for all we know they may be kept in stasis during the interim. No show before or since had such an immediate quality, a sense of the present moment only. In other series, "Bonanza" or "The Dick Van Dyke Show" there was a sense of the past; many episodes would be entirely flashback. But "Mission Impossible", to borrow an expression from Mann, existed in eternity. With its eternal "Now" the characters not only had no life outside of their missions, they presumably had no past outside of it. The notion of these people growing up from childhood, of their having an infancy or adolescence is unthinkable, ludicrous. They quite apparently were fabricated out of whole cloth like a Kafkan character, and with the same distance and coldness of a Kafkan character.

Further, the thought of these people meeting socially takes on absurd dimensions. Imagine Barney, Rollin and Willy "hoisting a few" at a local inn after a successful mission. Or try to imagine Cinammon (a blonde frigid enough to incite frostbite in the Everglades) encountering any of them sexually. Impossible, eh? That's the name of the game.

In short the IMF was a quasi-fascistic squad of death-dealing mechanisms par excellence, with a sprig of amorality thrown in for spice. It was always tacitly assumed in the series that they are the good guys and their foes are the bad guys, thus they may use any sneaky tactic at hand to defeat the said badies. In an episode I viewed the other night an American envoy to a neutral country had been abducted. An imposter had taken his place, so Hill is made up as an importer of the imposter (James Daly in a triple role).[1] The first imposter is abducted by IMF, treated to electroshock, nearly driven mad, drugged, then finally shot. There is a perfectly indicative point, when the electroshock is being administered, of my thesis: Rollin asks the attending doctor if the imposter will be alright. We think perhaps a touch of sympathy creeps in, but it is only a concern with the success of the mission. Incredibly cold, yet somehow one does not notice it immediately. Perhaps because, inately, we believe in the validity of such a portrait, after all it is simply the

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logical extention of both the CIA and James Bond.

Anyway, as is the usual case with television, the show rapidly deteriorated. Steven Hill soon left the series, replaced by Peter Graves. I have nothing particular against Graves' acting abilities; they were slight enough for the role's demands. But Graves' face screamed visually from the home screen. You couldn't miss him in a crowd of a thousand whereas Hill could have disappeared in a room with himself as the single occupant. Graves was more personable and his face had the quality of handsome ugliness now prevalent on the screen with the likes of Charles Bronson. Graves was a person and though the producers tried to overcome this handicap, it proved insurmountable. As the series wore on the characters could not keep up their aloofness while entering our homes so frequently. Eventually we see episodes involving the characters personally, like the rescue of Cinammon from enemy agents. Admittedly there was never the amusing banter as between the three principals in "Star Trek"; but there were occasional smiles and winks or stilted congratulations. This signalled the death of the series, precipitated by the departure of Landau and Bain. After they deserted, the ship quietly sank.

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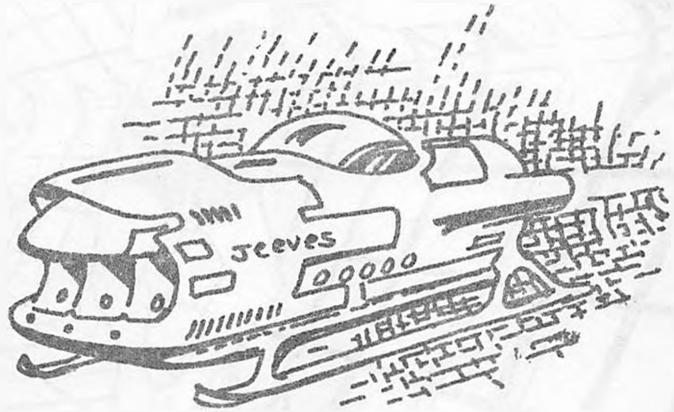
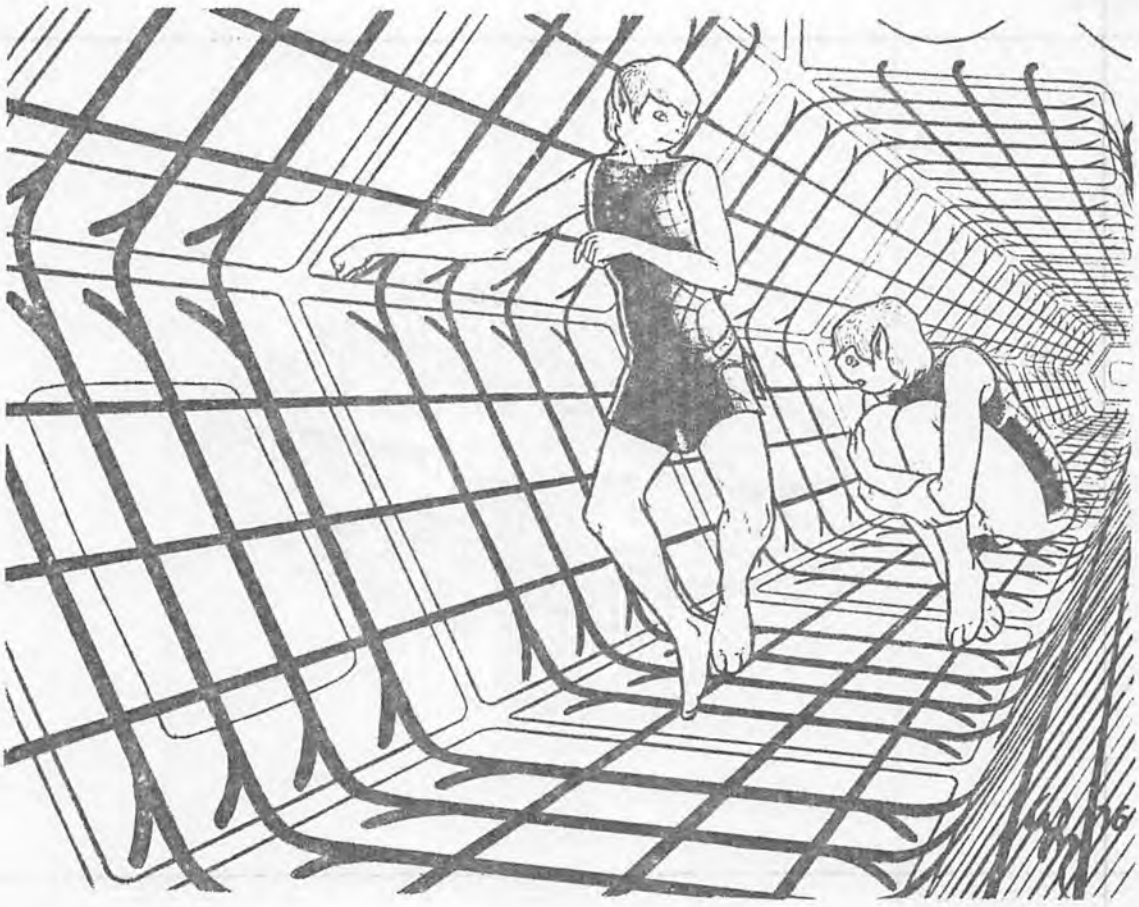
1 It is altogether remarkable with what ease the people in the world of the IMF are able to assume varying identities. Surely at least half the shows involved this face-changing facet. This, like everything else, fits in perfectly with the show's consistency: because these people have no depth how natural that they should aquire new identities easily. In the "Mission Impossible" world there is nothing but this surface identity of appearance. The people <u>are</u> what they look like; a mask and a few rehearsed mannerisms are able to fool anyone because there is nothing deeper to impersonate.



JUST ANOTHER NAME ON THE MASTHEAD: AN INTERVIEW WITH GRANT CARRINGTON

MIKE BRACKEN



Even though his name has been on the masthead of AMAZING/FANTASTIC since the April 1972 issue of FANTASTIC, and even though he has written a number of memorable stories for the two magazines, the person behind the name Grant Carrington is an almost unknown entity in fanzine fandom. Other than a few book reviews for LOCUS and a very rare letter to ALGOL, Grant has managed to avoid the whirlwind of fannish activity that has caught pros from Ted White to Jerry Pournelle and back again.

The reason he gives for this is that he "reads too much as it is". However, if Tom Monteleone's assesment of him is to be believed, Grant Carrington is plain bashful. Indeed, when asked to do this interview, Grant listed nearly two dozen authors he thought would be "of far more interest to readers" than he thought himself to be.

Because of this bashfulness, Grant is shocked, "not surprised, downright shocked!" when someone recognizes his name, and he finds it hard to believe that anyone would be interested in his views on writing and the science fiction field in general.

What Grant fails to realize is that any regular reader of AMAZING and FANTASTIC can instantly recognize his name and his writing style, which, incidentally, owes as much to his musical background as it does to the influence of such writers as Thomas Wolfe, Jack Kerouac, and Robert Sheckley.

Not only is Grant the author of numerous pieces of fiction, both in the science fiction field and out of it, he is also a competent muscian, having had three of the songs he's composed published in BROADSIDE before that magazine's apparent demise; a poet whose works have appeared in over fifteen different magazines; and a playwright whose most recent work, a collaboration with Thomas F. Monteleone called "U.F.O.!", will be produced by WEAR, a radio station for the blind in suburban Maryland.

Like a number of other sf authors, Grant has an extensive science background. He received a B.A. in math from New York University in 1962 and since that time has worked as a computer programmer for a variety of employers. He has also received an M.A.T. (Master of Arts in Teaching) in math from the University of Florida.

The second of three children, Grant was born on June 4, 1938 in New Haven, Conn. Still single, Grant lives in Gainesville, Florida where he is currently unemployed.

Grant made his first sale at 15--an article on astronomy for the NEW HAVEN REGISTER (which was founded around 1820 by a many-times-great grandfather of Grant's), and, although he had a number of things published after that, it wasn't until "The Long-Distance Loser" appeared in the May 7, 1967 issue of VISION that he again was paid for writing. His first professional sf story was sold to Harlan Ellison's yet-to-appear LAST DANGEROUS VISIONS, and his first sf story to appear in print professionally was "Night-Eyed Prayer" in the May 1971 AMAZING. Since then most of his sf has appeared in one of the two magazines edited by Ted White.

The following interview was conducted by mail from August to November 1976, and is only a small sampling of the many questions answered over that period of time. It is unfortunate that space does not permit the inclusion of the many interesting digressions that took place during the interview.

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Bracken: I understand that you offered your services to Ted White as a slush pile reader in 1971. How did you wind up becoming the Associate Editor of AMAZING and FANTASTIC?

Carrington: It was easy. Alan Shaw resigned.

The Associate Editorship was nothing more than a title. The real work of the magazine was (and still is) done by Ted White and Sol Cohen. The rest is just busywork. Shaw was looking in old issues of AMAZING for "classics" to reprint when I started "work" as Assistant Editor. When Shaw gave up, Ted promoted me to Associate Editor, with no change in pay or work. (The change came in the October 1972 issue of FANTASTIC.)

Bracken: You say you were promoted with no change in pay. Exactly what were you paid?

Carrington: I consider myself "paid" in three ways: (1) Ted gave my stories some slight prefernce--also, he could work with me to correct not-quite-right stories (but he also rejected quite a few); (2) I got a free subscription to AMAZING/FANTASTIC; (3) the title made my name a little better known than it otherwise might have been. But not much.

Bracken: What did you look for in those slush pile stories? What made one stand out above the others so that you'd be willing to recommend its purchase to Ted?

Carrington: I didn't look for anything in particular. Of course, it had to be written reasonably well, but that only eliminated about 10%. I tried to decide if it pushed my buttons (I'm partial to Fifties GALAXY-type stories), and if there was any doubt I asked Tom Monteleone to read it. Toward the end, no story reached Ted unless both Tom and I agreed on it. (Well, almost--if one of us was adamant that it was brilliant, a sure award-winner, and the other was just plain dumb, ignorant, and thick-headed not to realize it, it would be passed on. But there were damn few such stories. Maybe three all told. And, no, I don't remember which ones they were. But I bet Ted rejected them.)

Bracken: How did reading the slush pile for AMAZING/FANTASTIC affect your own writing? Did it help you spot your own mistakes, or did it make you numb to your errors?

Carrington: I don't think it made any difference at all.

I felt that the average quality of slushpile submissions to AMAZING/FANTASTIC was higher than the average quality of Clarion Workshop manuscripts, which surprised me. Where I learned most about writing, especially how to spot my own mistakes (by first seeing them in other manuscripts), was at the workshops.

Bracken: Then you feel the Clarion Workshops are an important step in becoming an sf author?

Carrington: If you want to be an sf writer, I suggest you try to get into one of the Clarions. Creative writing classes in college aren't usually much good. I don't think anyone should go to college to become a writer or an actor. Being with writers, good writers, who can criticize your work and teach you how to criticize their work (and later your own), is the only school that will work, in my not-so-humble opinion. And if you want to be an actor, go to Hollywood or New York, pound the streets, enroll in classes at the Pasadena Playhouse, or any theatre school

that can take you.

Bracken: Since you've brought it up, and since Ted White notes in the March 1976 issue of AMAZING that you've been involved with the stage for years", I'd like to know for how long, and in what ways you've been involved.

Carrington: Roughly, I was first exposed to the theatre in 7th grade (Spring, 1951) and was in my first play in December, 1952. I was primarily an actor until 1964, when I got involved with lighting, which I now prefer. I've been involved in 34 productions (several productions of the same play) as an actor, and 19 productions as a lighting crew member.

Bracken: How has your involvement with the stage affected your writing?

Carrington: I don't think it's affected my writing very much. When I was seriously involved with the theatre, I always wanted to write plays (much as what later happened with science fiction) but I haven't been very successful. I've written several (five, if memory serves me correctly, including two very short and unoriginal ones--the first was an adaption of Stephen Tall's "The Lights On Precipice Peak"), but only the most recent, "U.F.O.!", a collaboration with Tom Monteleone, is even halfway producible. It's going to be produced as a radio show by a radio station in suburban Maryland that broadcasts for blind people.

Bracken: How did your collaboration with Tom Monteleone on "U.F.O.!" come about? And how is it that a station in suburban Maryland is going to present it as a radio play?

Carrington: In December 1974, I stopped at Tom's on my way north for Christmas. He told me the story of the flying saucer hoax he had pulled while an undergraduate at the University of Maryland. While he described one of the investigators to me, standing in front of his own window and basically acting out tha part, suddenly it occured to me what a tremendously dramatic moment that would make in a play. So, when I returned to Gainesville in January, I wrote the first draft of it. Then Tom changed it a bit (he knew very little about plays, I knew very little about flying saucer hoaxes), and sent it back to me, I rewrote it a little more, and sent it back to him.

Tom submitted the play to the writer's workshop we had going up in Maryland, which included Ted White, Dan Steffan, among others--quite a few people passed through it. Anyway, everybody liked it and Mike Moynihan, who was working for this radio station, WEAR, decided to put it ont over the air. Nobody is making any money off the thing, so far, incidentally.

Bracken: Has your involvement with the stage as an actor helped you to "get inside" the characters in your fiction? In other words, has acting helped you when it comes to characterization?

Carrington: No.

I was a lousy actor because I could never forget who I was and was always worried about looking like an asshole on stage.

Bracken: How often is the theatre used in your fiction?

Carrington: I never wrote a story about the theatre until I wrote "His Hour Upon the

Stage" in 1969. In all, I think the theatre is involved in four of the things I've written. Perhaps I needed the distance. It was difficult, maybe impossible, to write about the theatre while I was really involved with it, while it was still vitally important to me.

Bracken: Unless I'm reading something into "His Hour Upon the Stage" that isn't there, the story seems to contain a bit of autobiography. Would you care to comment on why this is so?

Carrington: This is so, because a writer writes only about what he knows. That's why I find Harlan Ellison's work so interesting. I know enough about him and have been around him enough times (which isn't very many) to see how he incorporates things that happen to him into his fiction...which isn't all that easy in science fiction.

Last weekend, I went to the DeepSouthCon in Atlanta. At the pros' panel (de Camp, Freas, Mike Bishop, Jerry Page, and Bob Maurus) I asked them if they used autobiographical material in their fiction. I asked this because I find a dichotomy in my non-sf and in my science fiction.

First, what is autobiographical? It is one thing to use the knowledge that you have, such as I have of the theatre. Every writer does that. In that sense "His Hour Upon the Stage" is autobiographical in that I use my fairly wide knowledge of the theatre world in it.

On the other hand, we have the quasiautobiographical novels of Jack Kerouac and Thomas Wolfe, for example. In my non-sf writing, I have used events that have happened to me and people I have known almost whole-cloth, unchanged, very frequently. (I have several unfinished Kerouac-style mainstream novels.) But I have found this very difficult to do in sf--whenever I've tried to base a person on someone I've known, it has just never worked.

There are some minor exceptions: Paul Denesha in "His Hour Upon the Stage" is based on Paul Scheib, who was the cheif lighting person at the American Light Opera Company (ALOC) when I worked with them. The theatre in "His Hour Upon the Stage" is almost completely the Trinity Theatre in Georgetown where ALOC put on most of their shows when I was with them. But the other characters--Stuart, Vikki, Tim--are essentially whole-cloth constructions, except, of course, they are all extentions of me or my dreasm.

"His Hour Upon the Stage" is the only successful theatre story I've written and it was written over four years after I'd essentially dropped out of the theatre world, and certainly from ALOC, the most intense theatre experience I've ever had. It was also written shortly after I read for the first time Walter Miller's "Darfsteller" and the influence of that in the tone of the story, if nothing else (and many people consider it to be just a rewrite of "Darfsteller"), is obvious.

Bracken: Music plays a big part in your writing too, doesn't it? Unless I'm mistaken, a number of your story titles are taken from Grateful Dead song lyrics.

Carrington: To the best of my memory, only one story, "Stella Blue," is taken from the Grateful Dead. But that one is rife with lines from the Dead. ("It all rolls into one..." "...the eyes of the world had been upon her..." "In the wake of the flood..." "all the rest stored and forgotten in the attics of her life." "Garcia was...not yet the dire and fearsome wolf...") Well, enough of that. I had tried (and failed) to use all the lyrics of "Stella Blue" as part of the narrative. Tom Monteleone considers it to be my best story (and is reprinting it in his anthology THE ARTS AND BEYOND) but I now find it to be very pretentious and clumsy and em-

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barassing.

On the other hand, many of my stories are taken from song lyrics. My first published professional sf story was "Night-Eyed Prayer", which is a corruption from an old gospel song: "Won't you meet me in the night, I pray?" which I kept corrupting in my mind to "Won't you meet me in the night-eyed prayer?" I finally got rid of it by writing the story.

"There's No One Left To Paint The Sky" is a line from a Pat Sky song, "The Loving Kind," and "Annapolis Town" and "Night Again" (which appeared in the first issue of a short-lived men's magazine, REGENCY) are the titles of songs I have written myself. In addition there's a story currently making the rounds, called "What Are You Going To Do When You See Your Lady Strolling On The Deck Of The Starship?" (from the first Jefferson Starship album, BLOWS AGAINST THE EMPIRE) and another one, "Like An Umbrella That Has Seen Too Much and Forgotten Nothing" (from WAR WHOOP, by the Holy Modal Rounders). And my latest story, "The Worm Beneath the Skull" (which is its third title), was inspired by the album cover for the Dead's BLUES FOR ALLAH.

All of this may have begun at a Clarion party in 1969 when Robin Wilson said to me, "I like listening to your songs, but sometimes I wish you'd put as much emotion into your stories as you do your songs." That winter I wrote "Annapolis Town", and all of the others (except "Night-Eyed Prayer") followed.

Bracken: In your review of HELL'S CARTOGRAPHERS in LOCUS 192, you mention the fact that 4 of the 6 people represented in the book are only children. Then you ask, "Could it be that this is a prerequisite for a successful sf author?" How about if I throw that question back at you and ask if you were an only child.

Carrington: No, but my brother is. (Sorry, I couldn't resist that.)

Actually I have an older sister, Marilyn Esposito, who is 4 years older than me, has 3 kids, and has made almost as much money writing (for family magazines and the like) as I have--in fact, for all I know, she may have made more.

My brother, Wayne, is 6 years younger than me and works for the Navy in some capacity, I don't know what. It's hard to think of him as supervising other people; he's a kid. And most of my friends are younger than him!! It's a weired world, Mike.

Actually, that statement of mine was kind of a sour grapes, an excuse for not being a successful sf author. In addition to those mentioned in the book, Tom Monteleone is an only child and I'm pretty sure Harlan Ellison is too. But I don't think Isaac Asimov is. I don't know about Sturgeon, Bradbury, or Heinlein. I wish someone would do a survey on it, though; I'd be curious to see what percentage of sf writers are only children. (Of course, it could be stated with considerable accuracy that all sf writers are only children...none of them are adults.)

Bracken: You say the end lines of your review of HELL'S CARTOGRAPHERS was "kind of a sour grapes, an excuse for not being a successful sf author." Do you in some way resent the fact that you haven't sold as well as some of the other authors who began writing and selling at about the same time as you?

Carrington: Hey, that's a nasty, Mike.

I not only resent the fact that I haven't sold as well as some (some? most) of the other authors who began writing at about the same time as me, I resent the fact that I haven't sold as well as some of the other authors who were born after I started writing.

Seriously, yes, there was a time I resented it. I was particularly jealous of

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Tom Monteleone's success. But a year of being a so-called full time writer cured me of all that. I know now who's responsible for Tom Monteleone's success, for George R.R. Martin's success, for George Alec Effinger's success, etcetera, ad nauseam. Those who are responsible are Tom Monteleone, George R.R. Martin, and George Alec Effinger. And Grant Carrington is responsible for all of Grant Carrington's success and all of Grant Carrington's lack of success.

I'm a lazy man, Mike, and that's strike one. What's remarkable is not that I haven't sold more, but that I've written and sold as much as I have. But I haven't been able to develope the knack to write to order, as Tom Monteleone seems to be able to do. (I'm sure Tom would argue, quite honestly and realistically, it's not a knack--it's just sitting down and pounding out the words, what Robin Wilson called "crapping rocks," or "applying the seat of the pants to the chair in front of the typewriter".) While I could argue that that's not how great works of literature are created, that would be a pile of bullcrap. Most of the great writers in history were plain and simple hacks. They just happened to be brilliant hacks. Shakespeare, for example, pounded out (with a quill pen, not a typewriter) three to five plays a year for twenty years. Name me a playwright who does more than one a year today. And not only that, but he had to write comedies, tragedies, histories, as needed, with a part for each member of his troupe, written to order for the acting capabilities of that member.

Anyway, the answer is, Mike, yes, once I resented it, but I no longer do. I'm not happy about it, but I know where the fault lies. (The San Carrington fault lies slightly to the north of my typewriter, facing the keys.)

Bracken: How do you measure success anyhow, in quantitive terms or qualitive terms?

Carrington: Neither. In financial terms. That's really all you've got to go by. Not that quality doesn't count. But what's quality to one person is garbage to someone else. To return to resentment, I really get pissed off when a "dumb" story by an unknown gets published--to me, it's an insult that one of my stories gets rejected by that same editor who accepts a piece of writing that to me is pure shit. It infers that my writing is worse than that piece of shit, and I can't accept that. Of course, it's all really a matter of taste anyway, and if the editor prefers the taste of shit, there's not one hell of a lot I can do about it.

I know that writing for "posterity" is a sterile task. It doesn't pay the bills. And, more often than not, it results in very pretentious writing. I think we've seen plenty of that in sf in the past ten years...although part of this is simply growing pains. You can't grow (or, at least, it seems you can't) without stumbling and making a lot of painful errors.

So the only way I can measure my success is the number of pieces of silver that cross my palm. But I still write for myself and my own pleasure. Otherwise there would be no sense in it. It's too painful otherwise. You'd have to be a masochist. Being a target in one of those baseball-throwing games in the sideshows would be more pleasant.

But there's no denying the fact that I get more pleasure from seeing a story like "Annapolis Town" published than I get out of seeing a story like "The Log at the Center of the Universe" published, even if I were to get more money from the latter (which I didn't). I even get more satisfaction from seeing someone that I pulled out of the slush pile get published than I got from "Log".

Just got a copy of THRUST, the University of Maryland's sf fanzine, recently. It contains an interview with Harlan Ellison and he says it (as he so often does) more eloquently than I can: "no, I don't give a shit about communicating with anyone. I write to please myself, you nerd!"

Bracken: you mentioned spending 14 months at full time writing, and yet you've only sold one of the stories you wrote during that time span. Why is it that you haven't been able to make it as a full time freelance writer? Do you think perhaps that you were trying to force yourself, during those 14 months, or do something you weren't yet prepared for?

Carrington: I didn't make it because I'm bloody lazy. I'm not a Harlan Ellison or a Jerry Pournelle, who spend 10 hours a day at the typewriter; I'm not a Robert Silverberg, who can make an office routine out of the bloody thing. I'm not a Thomas F. Monteleone, who can work eight or more hours at a job he bloody well hates, come home to a screaming wife and kid (well, not always, but sometimes) and spend two hours putting up with one of his asshole friends, who complains that he doesn't get the recognition as a writer that he thinks he deserves, and yet manages to punch out two hours on the typewriter after everybody goes home and the wife and kid are in bed, and gets about six hours of sleep (if that much) day after bloody day. I don't know how he does it.

No, I certainly wasn't forcing myself, although I did manage to knock out a novel in five weeks and a full-length play in two. But in between I just didn't do much work.

I think perhaps I was doing something I wasn't yet prepared for. But...the only way I could prepare myself for it was to do it. Now that I've done it, the next time (if there is a next time), I'll know more. I don't think I ever would have been ready for it, and the longer I waited the worse it would have become. Perhaps if I had done it ten, fifteen, twenty years ago, it would have worked. But, while you can teach an old dog new tricks, it's one hell of a lot harder.

In that sense, I envy Tom and Piglet and Ed Bryant and people like that--they had the advantage of meeting writers when they were still young and supple, still capable of learning relatively easily (I don't think learning is ever easy). They hadn't gotten into the bad habits that I have, or at least they weren't as ingrained--they saw the writing a lot closer to its unromantic reality whereas I still had those arteestique dreams.

Pat Meadows, despite all our dissimilarities as people, is very similar to me as a writer, in that sense. Both of us have sold a handful of stories but we didn't meet successful authors until we were in our thirties. It made it that much harder to change and approach the writing business in a more realistic manner.

Bracken: Could it be that you're the type of writer who does his best writing after coming home from a hard day's work, as opposed to a Silverberg type of writer who views writing as a 9 to 5 occupation?

Carrington: That's answered to some extent above, but I don't think the answer is an either/or proposition for me. I did just about the same amount of work when I was writing "full time" as when I was writing "part time". It seems to make no difference. I seem to get only a limited number, two or three, of "good ideas" each year, and I defining a "good idea" not by whether it's a salable one or not, but just by the fact that I'm able to finish the bloody thing. Sometimes I finish two or three stories and they all suck; other times all threes stories are quite good.

But let me get one thing straight, Mike. I'm not really all that resentful or jealous or sour grapes as I may have made it sound. The resentment and jealousy and sour grapes are there, yes, but I feel that the best way to get rid of them is to vent them. If I held them inside me I would quickly become a rather miserable person...and I don't think I am. Not if such people as Tom Monteleone, Ted White, Harlan Ellison, Robin Wilson, and so on like me.

I've really been pretty lucky. Just getting a story published and paid for puts me in a pretty select group. To have done it ten or more times puts me in an even more select group. I feel like Sibby Sisti or Cass Michaels or any of hundreds of utility baseball players who bounced around in the majors for several years, never becoming stars and being ignored by most of the fans...but God almighty, do you realize what incredible athletic ability those guys had to have just to make it to the major leagues? So, maybe I'm not a superstar or even a just plain star, but I'm still pretty damned good, just to have been published in the first place.

You see, you've got to balance it out--if you look at the bad ("I'm not as well known as Robert Heinlein, sob"), life can be pretty miserable; if you just look at the good ("Hey, I sold a story!"), you probably won't get much higher. So I try to juggle them both, and be happy when my friends are more successful (and usually deservedly so) than I am.

I don't think I'd want to trade places with anyone. Not Tom Monteleone, not Harlan Ellison, certainly not Will Shakespeare. After all, Shakespeare's dead. Life's been pretty good to me, all things considered, and though it's kind of scarey right now, it's also kind of interesting...just like the ancient Chinese curse.

Bracken: Do you write strictly to please yourself, or do you try to make the story fit the market?

Carrington: Yes.

I write for myself, which is a mistake. I know that several times Tom Monteleone has written to order. I wish I could do it. I've tried several times (like, for Laser Books) but couldn't do it. It's a good knack to have, if you want to make a living from your writing.

I can't do that. I wish I could. I keep trying, and maybe sometime I'll figure out how to do it.

Meanwhile, I get an idea that excites me, and I write it down, trying to make it fit some market, and not usually succeeding. (At least, the market I tried to write it for rejects it.) For example, over ten years ago, I got an idea for a story about long-distance running. I decided to slant it to BOY'S LIFE (it was about a high school student). BOY'S LIFE rejected it and I eventually sold it (my first fiction sale) to VISION, a church teenage magazine.

So, the answer is, I write for myself, but I try to find a market toward which I then slant the story.

Bracken: You say that you "haven't been able to develope the knack to write to order" yet your story, "Half Past the Dragon," was done specifically to accompany a cover illustration for FANTASTIC. How does this relate to what you've said about writing to order?

Carrington: It doesn't. I didn't write "Half Past the Dragon" to order.

In his introduction to it, Ted White wrote, "When I showed Joe Staton's cover painting to Associate Editor Carrington a small light bulb flashed into existence over his head and he proclaimed, 'I want to write a story to go with that painting!'"

Well, it didn't happen that way either, but it's closer. What happened was this:

An issue of AMAZING had just come out, in which Alexi Panshin (I think) had written a story to go with the cover. Most cover painting stories suck, but Pan-

shin had done a pretty fair try, and so I thought I'd have a try at it. (I like the idea of having the cover illustrate an interior story, or vice-versa.) So I went over to Ted's and he showed me a number of paintings--there was the Staton and another Staton that appeared on the Sept. 1973 issue.

I went home, mulled it over, had a couple of false starts, and finally wrote "Half Past the Dragon" (which was originally titled, "Kimono, My House"). I call it my "shaggy dragon" story.

But I have written to order, however. At the 1968 Clarion Workshop, Harlan Ellison had us write a story a day, according to a theme or subject which he chose. The first day, he ordered us all (except me) to write a hard science story; since I had already written a hard science story, "Fountain of Force", I had to write a story with people in it. I don't remember the other assignments--but the last day, Friday, we were to write a story around a painting that either Jim Sutherland or Neil Shapiro had brought with him. It pictured a deserted alien city with some objects in the foreground, like a rusting aircar or something like that. I suppose it was meant to represent Mars, because it was mostly in reds; I don't know who the artist was. Anyway, I wrote "A Sky the Color of Anger, A City Full of the End of the Universe," around it, which Evelyn Lief published in her fanzine SEEDLING--all of the pro magazines have rejected it.

Bracken: You've never sold any novels, have you? Have you even put one on the market, or are you sticking to short stories for the time being?

Carrington: Nope, I haven't sold any novels. I've only completed one, DOWN AMONG THE IPSIES, which has been rejected by Dell, Fawcett, Popular Library, and Putnam/Berkley. Right now, I'm trying to find an agent to handle it for me--it will save on postage, if nothing else.

I have at least three half-fininshed mainstream novels, and when I say half-finished, I mean at least 200 pages each. One of them is 800 pages long and only half-done. I've started two other sf novels (IPSIES is sf) but neither of them got as far as page 50.

There's a big difference between writing short fiction and novels. Some people can only handle one form. Since I'm very weak on plotting, it's easier for me to write short fiction than it is to write novels--but there ain't as much money in it.

Bracken: What do you see as the future of Grant Carrington in regards to writing--sf in particular? And what would you like the future to be?

Carrington: Grant Carrington's future, as a writer, as an anything, is unpredictable, as far as I'm concerned. I don't see myself making any kind of name for myself or any large percentage of my income through writing in any forseeable future. If I'm lucky, I'll continue to sell one or two stories a year, and enjoy the ego gratification that brings. And they'll slowly sink into the west and never be heard from again.

I would like to make enough money from writing to continue to live the way I'm living now (which would take a minimum of $3600/year).

At the Discon II's Meet the Author party, two people came up to me, looked at my badge (I was wearing the author's straw hat), said "Oh," and walked away. But I got my free drinks, all the writers (most of whom I respect and like as people) treated me as an equal, and most of the fans left me alone. I don't think I could ask for any more than that.

-- Mike Bracken

FROM THE FIRE ON THE MOUNTAIN

On this the first anniversary of this column's appearance in KNIGHTS, I thought it appropriate...rather, I decided to make it an appropriate occasion to ramble a bit on various odds and ends, to answer some of the questions put to me as a result of past columns, and generally just sit down in the hall and talk awhile. Nothing special, nothing exciting, just a relaxacol to clear my head of a few things which I've thought over the past year but haven't been able to fit into other FIREs.

For example. You will notice the by-line below. Charles L. Grant? Didn't he used to be C.L. Grant? Well, sort of. What happened was, simply, that I've grown tired of explaining why I use my initials (I dislike my name), why I've allied myself to C.L. Moore (I haven't--at least, not intentionally), and why I'm not a woman (no comment).

The coversations generally went something like this:

"C.L. Grant? I thought you were an old lady living in Nebraska."

"C.L. Who? Funny, I thought you lived in California and used to write those neat sf things back in the 30s and 40s."

"C.L. Grant? No kidding. You don't look like C.L. Moore."

"C.L.? What do I call you, Seal?"

Sigh.

So I finally decided that my full name was best: for my sanity, and for the people who wondered why I always walk around a con with a rather pained, expectant expression on my face. And now I won't have to introduce myself twice. To wit:

"What's your name?"

CHARLES L GRANT

"Charlie Grant."

"Are you a writer?"

"I'm C.L. Grant."

"Oh! Well, why didn't you say so?"

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A word for those who wondered why I called my first novel THE SHADOW OF ALPHA, thinking that perhaps I was either into the Greek alphabet or had forgotten that the "Alpha" (a starship in the novel) is only mentioned a couple of times therein.

All right. It works this way.

First, ALPHA is an introduction to a series of four or five novels which I'll be writing over the next couple of years based upon the Parric family. As such, then, it serves mainly to introduce characters, situations, and themes which will be expanded upon in the other books. (ASCENSION, by the way, is the next, and deals with a Parric grandson) The original title for this novel was TO PASS THIS WAY AGAIN. I thought it terribly profound, quite poetic, and actually had something to do with what happened inside the covers. Unfortunately, the editor (David Hartwell) thought that it smacked too much of the nostalgia craze which had just begun to swamp the bookstores. I ranted in my best writer manner, raved and wept and demanded a recount as is due a true artist whose child is being tampered with...and after a few hours of this, decided that Dave was right. So I had to come up with a new title.

The alternative (I was told...threatened...pick a word) would be THE REVENGE OF THE ANDROIDS. This, needless to say, was spur enough.

So I came up with seven or eight options.

And that isn't easy. Because, once you have written a book in its entirety and it's been bought and ready for production, the original title, no matter how lousy or inappropriate, seems to FIT. The book isn't the same without that dumb title.

Lordy, but it was hard.

And that list went something like this: IN THE DUST OF THE PLAGUE, LEGACY OF THE WIND, INHERITANCE, PARRIC'S TOWN, ABDICATION, DESCENDING, THE CHILDREN OF PARRIC, PLAGUEWIND, THE SHADOW OF ALPHA.

It's obvious I was reaching when I came up with some of those, but I had no idea Berkley would pick the last one. It was the furthest from my mind. And yet, it does seem to fit, now that I've gotten used to it.

All I have to do now is find a book that will fit TO PASS THIS WAY AGAIN.

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In my last column, I mentioned a number of people that I would like to meet eventually, because I admired their style, their criticisms, their general fairness

when tackling something they did not like. I did not expect to have part of that wish fulfilled quite so soon. But at MidAmericon, in that swinging town of Kansas City, I was sitting on the windowsill in someone's room talking with a few people about this and that, mostly that, when this bearded, Aussie-hatted man came up to me and shook my hand. Nice. It was Mike Glicksohn. Nicer. And definitely a sharp person. Would, Mike, that you put all that letter writing time into fiction.

And thanks for seeing me. At least you didn't wonder why C.L. Moore was a man when all the time you thought she was a woman.

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Also in the last column, I had a do about anti-intellectualism. In sf. And about reading, watching tv, and all that other good stuff you all might recall. It seems that I struck a spark somewhere out there, because I did get a number of thoughtful letters on the subject, most of them agreeing with me and most of them saying, in effect: "But wouldn't you rather have kids reading a Laser book than watching tv? At least they're reading, and maybe they'll get interested in reading and carry on to something better." I found it, frankly, rather difficult to answer that point. My first reaction was: if the reading is no better than watching tv, why bother? On the other hand, I think I've been properly matched there. Perhaps it is my particular and obviously personal aversion to the earlier Laser books which made me respond with: why bother? At any rate, until I can come up with something that is rather more telling than the question, I think I'm going to have to concede that point. But I haven't given up, either, so there'll be more on that once I get it together.

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I've been catching up on my reading this past summer, both in and out of sf. A lot of garbage, a few gems. I think it well worth your time, without going into the specifics of craft and whatever, if you could look into some of the more rcent Doubleday titles. For my money, you're going to have to travel a long way to find more interesting novels than John Crowley's BEASTS, and Gordon Eklund's THE GREYSPACE BEAST. Also, Crowley's THE DEEP, which I can say without fear of contradiction is a hell of a lot better written, and far more fascinating, than another book of the same title by the grandson of Robert Benchley (not mentioning names, of course). THE DEEP, (a Berkley book) isn't the easiest reading in the world, but that young man do know how to write!

And I'd like to call that attention of yours to something that will be out from Doubleday by the time you read this. It's a new sf novel from Gene Snyder and William Jon Watkins. No matter that one looks like something (or someone) from a Vincent Price spooker and the other looks like a nineteenth century Mountain Man, they have, in THE LITANY OF SH'REEVE, come up with a novel that is bound to be contraversial. To tell you the story would, I think, do it a great injustice, both for its effect and for the theme, so you'll just have to take my word for it that it's worth the loot you can sheel out (or the time it takes to steal it) to find yourself a quiet corner and read it. Carefully. I don't know that it's important (whatever that means), but for myself it was both moving and stimulating. SH'REEVE is not as simple as it seems, which as you've gathered is rather my cup of tea, but it's worth the effort and the time. If you like it, remember you heard it from me first; if you don't, I'll quote an ancient philosopher from my youth, one Knucklehead Smith, who said in a similar situation: "I don't know you, and you don't know me..."

(and if you're old enough to remember that, thank God! I thought I was the only one left)

I would also like to steer you to FRIGHTS, edited by Kirby McCauley, a St. Martin's Press anthology of 'horror' stories. Besides having a better than average ratio of good stories to mediocre, it also proves, to my mind, that Ramsay Campbell is one of the best fantasy/horror/terror/pick-it writers going today.

You see (he said, digressing, sort of, into another topic), the major point fantasy fiction (of the type mentioned above) has over science fiction is: in fantasy fiction, there is no fright, no real terror, no honest reaction on the reader's part unless there are two elements within the story done better than simply competently.

First, atmosphere. Or mood. Or seeting. Whatever your Lit prof/teacher calls it. Without an adequate development of such a factor in the story, the story itself will fall flat on its face. Because the entire focus of that story is that reader's reaction. If you're not sucked into the setting so that you can respond emotionally to what's happening, it isn't going to frighten you.

Second: characterization. Science fiction is not based on characterization. True, the characters are there and, if done properly, they react as they should to whatever stimuli they're confronted with. But in short fiction especially, sf characters are primarily vehicles for the theme, idea, scientific (pseudo or otherwise) extrapolations which are the foundations of the material.

In horror/terror/supernatural/etc fantasy fiction, your h/t/s is not going to work at all unless the characters are drawn in more detail than in sf, so that the reader can more readily identify with (pro or con) them. If there is no identification, if the reader cannot place himself in the shoes of the protagonist, there isn't a story. A fantasy writer, then, must work harder to create character in order that his ultimate purpose--the shock, the shudder, the raising of the hair on the back of your neck--will be successful. In sf, if the characters don't make it, at least the writer has his science in the fiction to fall back on for reaction.

Novels are something else again. And it should be made clear that we're not talking about the sensationalism for the sake of sensationalism which is evident in such monumental works as THE EXORCIST or THE OMEN or the ilk. Shock for the sake of shock is a cheap way out. But a well-written, carefully paced fantasy novel will absorb its reader far more than any sf novel will, for the same reasons given above. But there aren't that many floating around today. Which gives, I think, the edge to sf here. But only because of sheer numbers.

Try, for example, Shirley Jackson's THE SUNDIAL, and see if that ending doesn't make you want to open a window when the wind blows.

And what, you may well ask, is a discussion of fantasy doing in Bracken's sf zine?

Because, simply, I am primarily a fantasy writer, as you probably know by now, and the most successful (commercially and otherwise) of my things have been in that particular field. Also, I would wish (and do wish) that sf writers could take as much time in those two areas I mentioned above as do the fantasy writers. The trouble, however, lies in the nature of the field itseld, and I don't know whether it will

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ever be resolved. Perhaps. Perhaps not.

I rather think: not.

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I can't pass this up. MidAmericon again. It seems to me, perhaps because of the way I have been brought up, that booing is scarsely a way of marking one's intelligence (on a scale from 1 to 10) higher than 1. It's the kind of reaction I would have expected from a high school audience attending an auditorium program of classical music, or anything else for that matter. There are legitimate points of disagreement that one may have with what Mr. Heinlein said in his Guest of Honor speech the night the Hugos were awarded. There are also better ways to voice those disagreements than, for God's sake, booing. Is it any wonder fans, who are supposed to be intelligent, reasonable and reasoning human beings, have a bad name in some quarters?

I felt badly for Mr. Heinlein.

And I also felt more than sad for those idiots who could not control themselves.

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One final note and then we'll go looking for a party.

A good thing: a number of high schools across the country are adding science fiction/fantasy courses to their English and/or History curricula.

A bad thing: from what I have seen personally on a number of distressing occasion, and from what I have heard from fans at cons, a goodly number of these courses are mere trend-fillers. You know what I mean. Some department chairman or erstwhile teacher notices that sf is getting a big play in the press, in book clubs, in colleges, in (fill in the blank), so they decide that this will be the way they will snare more students into taking mini-courses (or whatever they call them where you are). Sf, after all, deals with monsters and lasers and transplants and all that good gorey stuff, and how else are you going to reach today's kids? Certainly not through decent teachers and meaningful planning of programs--give them what they think they want, show them tapes of "Lost In Space" and "Star Trek" and have important discussions based on the reading of MORE STORIES FROM THE TWILIGHT ZONE.

Fact: the teachers in the school where I used to work, those teachers who taught the sf courses, had never heard of Le Guin or ANALOG...Lord, I can't go on. It's depressing.

Anyway. You have come across this yourself, I'm sure.

There's little we can do about it, except: if you're not in the class but know the teacher, talk to him (politely, folks, teachers still fall for that courtesy routine) and see if there's anything you, as a fan, can turn that teacher on to. You can also drop me a card with the name of the teacher and the address of the school on it. I can send him a few things from a few different places which may, or may not, make a difference. If it does, fine. If it doesn't, at least we can say we tried. Being defeatist only brings on defeat.

Till next time, then, I hear there's a party in 1045. Seems that the beer has run out, but Haldeman is bringing the jello.

-- Charles L. Grant

LETTERS

Jerry Pournelle, Studio City, CA 7/7/76

I find myself compelled to comment on Tom Monteleone's column.

First: I did not enjoy SEEDS OF CHANGE. I think it badly needed a rewrite. There is a reasonably good story in there, but I don't think it is told anywhere near as well as Tom Monteleone could tell it. I'm now speaking of the mechanics, the craftsmanship: I think it ill behooves the author of SEEDS OF CHANGE to comment on "all the godawful writing" in Van Vogt's books.

In addition, the plot is badly flawed, because there is never any reason for the underground to rescue the protagonist. He does nothing whatever for the revolutionaries.

Second: For a first novel, it ain't all that bad. I didn't care much for it, but I don't care much for the whole LASER series. They weren't written for me. Or for sf fans. I've covered that elsewhere. Picked up in the expectation of a straight action-adventure novel with lots of "new" ideas (new meaning to the target readership, not to the fans or to me)the book can be read with some enjoyment; I know, because I've spoken with the man who paints my boat and he did read SEEDS OF CHANGE as his first sf novel, liked it enough to read some other LASERS, and went out and bought--bought, mind you, for $9.95--THE MOTE IN GOD'S EYE. So I've some reason to be grateful to Monteleone.

Third: Zelazny's right. People only remember the good stuff. I once advised Tom to rewrite SEEDS OF CHANGE at the first opportunity LASER would provide, as an act of professional pride, but the book hasn't "ruined his career" or anything like that. There are far worse books in print, some of them in the LASER series.

Fourth: Why, then, all the shouting and consternation? Because SEEDS OF CHANGE wasn't just another LASER book; it was the typical LASER book, the one given away, the only one seen by large numbers of fans--and it wasn't anything like the craftsmanlike work that such a promotion-piece ought to have been. In my judgement Tom ought to have fought like a tiger to prevent his book being used that way.

Fifth: I fear that either Roger Elwood misrepresented things, or Tom's memory has slipped: he DID have the opportunity to refuse. That book could not have been used as the giveaway promotion work without Monteleone's at least tacit permission; certainly not over his violent objection. No violent objection was made.

How do I know? Because I am precisely the man to whom such objection would have been made. I am, for my sins, the Chairman of the SFWA Grievance Committee. I am responsible for a very long (17 points) legal agreement between Elwood and SFWA (an

agreement that to the best of my knowledge Roger has scrupulously kept).

The giveaway deal was discussed with me from the very start--by Elwood. I never heard from Tom Monteleone. Roger asked what would be fair, whether it would be reasonable to pay the author of the promotion book the average of the royalties received by the first six in the LASER line, etc., etc. I told him that that seemed a very reasonable proposition--PROVIDED THAT THE WRITER AGREED. I told him specifically that I was not "blessing" the agreement or authorizing it, and that if the writer objected it would have to be changed.

Roger said that the writer had not objected. I received no objection, either in person or in writing. I conclude that Monteleone's reservations were pretty well kept to himself, since I am certainly not very hard to reach.

Sixth: As a result of both fan and SFWA objections, LASER no longer prints "Series edited by Roger Elwood" in color different from the author's name; and a short bio-sketch of the author appears in each of the books.

Seventh: Tom's comments about the publisher's reactions disturb me. They damned well should have edited the book more carefully. It was, in fact, the worst thing they did to Monteleone: to let the book rush into print without calling to his attention some of the less well advised constructions and sentences. (I will not forget the mental image of an elevator door opening, a character's mind racing forward, and the door closing...) One can, I suppose, mildly reprove the author for not catching them (but one had better be damned careful about doing that; I can think of real howlers that my editors have caught for me--and a couple that slipped past everyone and into print...)

I am not at all sure how the sloppy editing happened. Harlequin, LASER's parent, produces romances which may not be the world's greatest writing, but are certainly in very good English; I suspect that Toronto thought Elwood would "edit" the books rather than merely selecting them, and Elwood thought Toronto would do the line-edit job. However it happened, there was almost no editing at all; and that is a very dangerous thing to do when buying a first novel. Me, I had the benefit of two enormously competent editors for my first--a write friend kind enough to criticise the hell out of it before I submitted it, and Jean Kritz at Berkeley who did it to me again, Deo gratia. It's unfortunate that Tom didn't have that kind of help.

For all that--he produced a book that seems to have met the publisher's requirements, and as far as I can tell was enjoyed by a lot of people who never read sf before; and who can possibly condem him for that?

I have one minor quibble with D'Ammassa: he says those familiar with Dante will find INFERNO minor. I will point out that the book has received considerable acclaim from professors of English who teach Dante: perhaps what he meant was those somewhat familiar with Dante, etc., since Larry and I are rather proud of the favorable comments we have received from Dante experts...

We're also told that INFERNO has started a minor revival of interest in Dante himself. The book has sold very well.

((Note: Tom Monteleone told me in a phone conversation that he has been paid royalties for SEEDS OF CHANGE, based on an average of the royalties received for the

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first six books in the LASER series. Exact dollar amounts were not discussed.

((According to LOCUS 197 (Dec. 30, 1976) LASER BOOKS has suspended publication--or will soon suspend publication--of their titles. So it goes.))

Christopher Priest, England 8/19/76

I felt a certain amount of sympathy for Tom Monteleone, although his writing-style in this article alienated me. He was probably correct to publish his feelings about the incident...but there was one startling omission from the article (that for all I know he has since corrected). Since, to the best of my knowledge the Laser Books series is still going, and presumably Elwood and the firm he works for are still commissioning and buying novels, would it not be in the interests of many writers for details of the Laser contract to be published? If it was felt inappropriate to publish such details in KNIGHTS or any other fanzine, surely SFWA should be informed? It isn't that the contract sounds crooked, but that it sounds incomplete... and as Tom Monteleone wasn't the first writer in the world to sign an incomplete contract, and certainly won't be the last, there must be several SFWA members who could learn from Monteleone's experience.

For example, when I first heard that his book was being given away, the first thought that crossed my mind (long before I had any idea that Monteleone was dissatisfied) was to wonder how the contract had been worded. I imagined, for instance, that the publishers would have worded the contract to the effect that ex gratia payments would be made in lieu of royalties...or some such agreement. But it would seem, from the few things Monteleone says about the contract, that there was no contractual obligation even for the publishers to sell the book. (Most contracts I've seen have stated that the publishers will publish the book, and that they will set a such-and-such retail price on it.)

It might interest Monteleone to hear that royalties could still be payable. If his contract has a clause covering the payment of royalties, and the book was published with a retail price on the cover...then the decision to give away the copies would be the publishers', and they will have to account to Monteleone for the disposal of the books. If they've given away half-a-million copies on their own initiative, they could be liable to pay royalties on those copies.

Is it worth re-reading your contract, Tom?

You understand, I hope, that I have no conceivable vested interest in this matter? It's just that I belong to the slightly old-fashioned school that believes that once a contract is signed by both parties, then it should be binding in letter and principle on both parties.

I'm sure every writer gets experience of similar things at least once in his career. If it's any consolation to Monteleone, he can congratulate himself on the fact that such an unhappy incident isn't likely to occur again, and that it happened with a both for which he felt no great artistic commitment.

As I said at the beginning of all this, I have slightly mixed feelings about the article as a whole. On the one hand, I think it was interesting to read--and there's

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always a grain of hope that someone reading it will learn enough to avoid falling into the same bothersome situation himself--but at the same time I'm not so sure. I like the style (either of the approach or of the writing...but the latter's a personal thing, which I hope Tom Monteleone won't take too much to heart). There's been a tendency I've noticed in American fanzines (interestingly, it's been more marked since Watergate) to tell the whole story. We Brits play our cards closer to our chests, so I suppose we notice it more. I suppose the intent is a commendable one: to leave no questions unansweared, to be candid (even if it has to be at the expense of the writer's pride), and to show the good intent of clarifying an otherwise clouded issue. I think the effect, though, is the converse: that injured parties find themselves being wounded in many more places than they'd anticipated, and if they make a reply they respond with equal intensity to everything they see as a jibe at their good name or good reputation...and the issue ends up more clouded than ever. It will be interesting, then, to see what other responses Monteleone's article provokes.

Barry N. Malzberg, Teaneck, NJ 6/27/76

I'm somewhat bemused by Thomas Monteleone's belated discovery (in his interesting piece) of the fact that "Laser Books were intended from the very beginning...as 'Brown Goods'...expendable material pulled off great rollers with measured indifference, cut, wrapped up with cold efficiency...individual links of sausage in a long chain". True enough I suppose but Monteleone's youth and relative inexperience is revealed here because in no way do Laser's policies toward writers and their work differ from that of abc, def, ghi, jkl and other publishers, hardcover and paperback of science fiction toward the category or toward almost all writers.

He will learn this in due course but for his sake I hope it won't be for a couple of years; he's a talented man and it would be nice to see him relatively at peace. For a while.

George Flynn, 27 Sowamset Ave, Warren, RI 02885 10/21/76

Mike Glicksohn on Hugo-winning is sadly all too right. Yet I think there has been some change over the past ten years, primarily in the sheer increase in the number of voters; this probably at least makes it harder for special-interest zines to win, but the growth of large-circulation genzines more than makes up for that.

The evidence of anti-intellectualism that C.L. Grant describes is obvious enough, but I wonder to what extent it really is a trend. After all, intellectualism has never been really popular. On some particular points: Asimov is right to the extent that readers - not sf readers specifically - are more intelligent than the general public, most of whom do not habitually read at all. (Some would have in an earlier generation, but only to obtain what they can now get from tv.) The drop in college grades is to some extent simply a matter of dilution, with more (and less qualified) people getting into college in the first place. And as for the amount of "junk" in sf today, one has merely to look at what got published in the '20s and '30s to feel reassured. The flood of anthologies failed, I think, because most people couldn't afford them all - and also because many of them were full of the sort of "hard reading" that Grant wants more of. A sort of Gresham's Law applies here: those with bad taste

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are always in the majority. But that's not the main reason Grant's "crusade" is bound to fail: Even if all of fandom shared his taste and could be organized (fat chance!), there simply aren't enough of us, compared to the mass of readers who'd never even hear about it. "You ARE the marketplace"? No, just a commercially insignificant fraction of it.

Some thoughts on John M. Robinson's loc: The lack of "scrupulous meanness" in sf may be because this is sifficult when one has the added task of inventing a background. And I rather doubt that Faulkner would be much read either if he'd written nothing but "book'length sentences"; he did it as a tour de force within an otherwise relatively conventional narrative.

I can understand Pournelle's position on the relationship between writers and cons, but the situation is much more complex than I think he appreciates. There is such a wide variety of cons, and of groups that put them on. Some do depend heavily on the presence of writers, others would get on nicely if none came (except, of course, those who are there primarily to see their friends). Some make money and others don't; none can count on it. And as for the arguement that the writers should have a voice in the distribution of funds, a better arguement could be made for giving the atendees a say; after all, it's their money. Certainly no system would work everywhere, and most people are afriad of creating nasty precedents in this area.

Rick Wilber, 712 Hale, Edwardsville, Ill 62025 7/20/76

About your latest issue. C.L. Grant continues to, quite frankly, just impress the shit out of me. The latest article was the most enjoyable thing in the issue. He's hitting on a point that I struggle with constantly, whether to write what I know I can sell or whether to write what I want to write. As a successful freelancer (for national, regional, and local magazines and newspapers) I am faced with the decision of spending my typewriter time pounding out a sports story (or something else) that will make me hundreds of dollars, or spending the same time writing a science fiction short story that will probably make me nothing. It is not an easy decision to make, and all too often I sell out -- but then one has to eat doesn't one?

Now as to Mr. White's comments about my comments about Keith Justice's comments about the demise of Vertex. My contention remains that Vertex dies because it was too damn good. Starting with paper and production costs that high with little expectation of advertising support and a low per signature price left the publishers little room to work in -- so when trouble came, in the form of a paper shortage that boosted prices for coated stock (although the real shortage was for newsprint--as Mr. White should know) there was no cushion for an already troubled publication. I highly doubt that even without the excuse of a paper shortage Vertex would have survived. As Mr. White notes, the other publications produced by the publishing firm had a much higher per signature cost--which helps offset low advertising support . Selling Vertex for $1.50 meant a loss of income that the publishers had to hope would be eased by advertising and gross numbers (although simple numbers are no proof of success, ask Life, Look, The Sturday Evening Post and others). So, when no advertising came up to help, and the numbers, while perhaps nice by science fiction's standards weren't really awesome enough to cut it (like perhaps a few hundred thousand--so web offset can become an economical way to print) the publishers resorted to a cheaper way to produce the product, the tab format. I still say that if they had started with the tab format

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and made that work first (which it may have done, since tabloids no longer have the instant connotation of trash, to wit--Rolling Stone and the Christian Science Monitor among others) they could always have slowly gone up in quality. There is an old saying in this business (although I don't know if it's as old or as true as the maxim about West Coast science fiction magazines and their distribution problems) that you can always go up in quality--but readers won't buy a move down. That isn't always true perhaps, but a move down is tough to sell a reader.

In short, lower quality to start with (perhaps the same size but cheaper, uncoated, stock, not unlike Knights) would have given Vertex a better chance to survive the first few very critical years. As Mr. White points out, the first months and years are tough--it took Sports Illustrated six (not ten) years to break out of the red. But then Henry Luce had a little more to work with then did Mankind Publishing.

If I sound a little imperious in my opinion (which is, after all, just that), well too bad. I lived and suffered through the death of two 15,000+ magazines that the publishers didn't have the sense to try low and go high with. And when the paper shortage hit, I was working on a magazine that had a press run of 280,000, and we found out fast where the shortage really was, since we were printed on newsprint.

Upon reflection it seems to me the point is you can't sell it high enough (like $3.50 or $4.00) because nobody will buy it (not like they buy naked ladies), and you can't get advertising support, and you can't get a really high press run--so how can you afford that kind of quality? Beats me.

((So far we've heard from Ted White (an editor inside the sf field) and Rick Wilber (an editor outside the sf field) on the death of Vertex. We've also heard from a number of other people with much less valid qualifications for commentary. There doesn't seem to be a whole hell of a lot of agreement on why Vertex collapsed, and what might have saved it.

((Now, though, it's time to hear from someone who was a lot closer to the publishing end of Vertex than anyone else who's thrown in their two cents worth. And, after William Rotsler has had his say, maybe we can close out the whole Vertex discussion.

((After all, Vertex is dead, and nothing can save it now. Not even a miracle.

((In the meantime a number of new sf magazines have sprouted up: COSMOS, ISAAC ASIMOV'S SF MAGAZINE, as well as semiprozines: UNEARTH, GALILEO, and MULTITUDE. Let us hope that none of them befall the same fate.))

William Rotsler, Los Angeles, CA 6/12/76

Ted White's letter about Vertex prompted this reply. There were many resons for the failure of Vertex--perhaps including the mythical "Ne West Coast mag has made it" --but the main one was distribution. I am very close to the operation of these publishers, as I have been selling them photos since 1958 and articles since 1970. I go there several times a week, and when Don Pfeil was editing there, almost every day. Some of the secretaries actually think I am an editor in some odd way.

But it was the fact that one of the two publishers has his own distribution company that sunk Vertex. It was not the fair to good stories (with a few stinkers and a couple very good), nor the fact that they publish men's magazines. The same publisher does Players and is suffering the same troubles, although Players is doing pretty well, it would do better with a bigger distributor.

But this company does not publish porn ("hard and soft-core pornography" as Ted put it). It does publish Adam, Knight, Swingers World, Film World, Pix, Players, and in another division, Mankind, a popular history mag, as well as a line of paperbacks. I suppose if you think naked ladies are pornographic then they publish porn. But I am getting very weary, in print and in film, of people not knowing the difference.

Vertex did get very high sales--one issue sold 90%!--but when the paper crunch came they diverted what they could get to their better selling mags. Vertex was always a marginal operation as far as these publishers were concerned. There was always a better chance of selling a copy of Adam than Vertex and Vertex cost more to produce.

At one point Don Pfeil (the editor and the man that thought up the magazine) had his choice: raise the cover price to $1.50 or have it at a buck and pay the authors less. He chose the $1.50 ticket.

But the publisher did not and does not publish $10 pron books as Ted suggests. Never did, may not. In fact, this publisher has been so careful and backward that he didn't start using pubic hair in his photos until two years after everyone else!

Of course, the moment (one Monday morning) that the publisher told Don they were going to tabloid size we knew the mag was dead.

The sad thing is that Don Pfeil was just beginning to get the hang of it, just starting to get good stories. I rarely agreed with his choices, but I also know that he was not getting first line stuff submitted for the most part. I also asked to have my name taken off the masthead as "Artistic consultant" or whatever it was, because he kept using one artist (husband of an executive there) because I thought he was bad.

He was just starting to reach out--prodded by me, I must say--to get writers to submit, to expand on ideas submitted and so on. But the publisher never knew what the hell sf was all about and kept coming up with idiot ideas. At one point he wanted a continuing space opera character (ala Cap Kennedy, et al) with a novelette in each issue and the whole thing a kind of updated Planet Stories. It was only when I pointed out neith I (who he looked to for this) nor any other writer was going to sell all rights, did he let it die.

But fans have never understood the basic approach of Vertex. It was not for fans, not even for regular sf readers. They wanted to tap a wider audience--thus the graphics--and is why the science articles were of the "popular" kind, why they tried to get BIG names (only a few sf names are really known to the Outer World), and why they went to tabloid.

But if the publisher had given the mag to a big national distributor it might have survived. Might.

((Unless I've misread something, it seems that Vertex and Laser Books are/were aimed at the same audience. Handled differently, they both seemeto have died. Odd.))

Brett Cox, Box 542, Tabor City, NC 28463 7/26/76

The production values (oh thank you, mighty multiple-award-winner with the wierd hat--I've grown righteously tired of the term "physical appearance") haven't fallen from the high level you've maintained since #14, so any further comment on them would be redundant. I do have a word to say about Thomas Canty's cover, though, and the word is beautiful! It's not stunning or brilliant or awe-inspiring or anything like that there--it's just simply beautiful. I was particularly taken with his rendering of the girl --I virtually never find myself attracted to a drawing of anyone, so I have the utmost respect for any artist who can make me so. Were that lovely creature to materialize before me, I fear I would make a complete fool of myself.

I enjoyed "Bracken's World," not only because of its own merits but because of the simple fact that it was longer than usual. In my review of #15, I said that the main fault with Knights was that you didn't put enough of your own personality into it. You're a good writer, and you have interesting things to say, so there's no reason for you not to put a little more of yourself into your zine via longer editorials and more editorial reply in the loccol. (Especially the latter--this issue's loccol was plenty good, if a bit short, but even the best lettercol is somewhat sterile when the editor is totally absent from it.)

Congratulations on your finish in the Locus Poll. Even as I was disapointed not to find Title or Mythologies or Prehensile among the finalists, I was greatly pleased to see Knights there. I'll bet that was a hell of a rush. (Which means that when you get nominated for a FAAn Award next year, that ought to make for a positive stampede.)

Glicksohn's piece was highly amusing, of course, and Sirois' illustration of it was excellent, also of course. (Though Al disappointed me by missing out on a perfectly putrid pun--instead of having "Rosebud" engraved on the foot of the fan's bed, why not "Rosebed"? Sam Long will never forgive him for this.) However, when you stop and think about it, the prospect of "a general-interest mass-circulation offset newszine aimed at Perry Rhodan fans" winning the Hugo doesn't seem all that unlikely.

((Especially considering that the former co-editor of Knights, Joe Walter, has read nearly every Perry Rhodan book ever written. He also was quoted on the back cover of one issue, calling Rhodan something like 'the greatest space opera ever written' or some such bull.

((If Joe wanted to, and had the time, etc, he could probably publish a readable and interesting Perry Rhodan zine. And considering the things Glicksohn pointed out in his article last issue, if Joe kept them in mind he could have a pointy rocket to use for a doorstop within a couple of years.

((And last I heard from Joe, he wanted to get back into the swing of fandom. I wonder what will happen...))

I'm not quite sure what to say about C. L. Grant's column. I heartily agree with his denouncement of the anti-intellectualism which pervades our society today, and I applaud his demand for higher-quality sf, but I'm not so sure about his comments on readers and fans. Obviously, there is a huge market out there for junk, as Perry Rhodan and its ilk prove. But is it any bigger than it's ever been? Educational sys-

tems may have their ups and downs, but the fact is that there always has been and there always will be a heftly market for simple, fast-read entertainment a la Rhodan. I don't think that if the people who buy that stuff were better educated that they would be more likely to read the higher-calibre fictions of Silverberg, Tiptree, Le Guin, and others.

As for there being a new generation of fans who, due to their crummy educations, will cry out against literary experimentation and "hard" books--well, I don't believe it. Both history and my own personal experience tend to prove him wrong on this. History, because most of the people who enter fandom belong to the "cream of the crop" to which he referred (in their heads if not on their report cards). My own personal experience, because I think I know most of the younger (say, under 21) people in fanzine fandom, and while some are better educated than others and some are more intelligent than others, none of them reject anything simply because it's "hard", and few cry out against "deep" or "literary" sf. Those few who choose to go the "pure entertainment" route do so out of personal choice and not as a result of deficiency in their formal education.

What I'm trying to say is that although what Charlie says about declining educational standards is true, and even conceeding that the fen who are recent victims of formal schooling aren't as well-educated as those of the past (which I'm not, necessarily), I don't think that this will have any effect on the amount of "junk" consumed by the sf reading public. There will always be an audience for junk, and formal education or lack of same really won't make that much difference. (And while I'm at it, I might as well point out that it could be argued that, considering the innundation of the mass media and the growing movement away from books, we ought to be grateful that the products of our school systems are reading anything at all, even if it is junk.)

Once again, I am totally unimpressed with Neal Wilgus' poetry. However, I did enjoy "Just Piddling Along"--if nothing else, it was a nice bit of diversionary nonsense.

Gary Grady's article on manned space exploration was wonderful, and I agree with it completely. (Bet you don't get too many comments like that, now do you?)

John A. Purcell, 3381 Sumter Ave. So., St. Louis Park, MN 55426 11/11/76

You made the comment in your editorial that Tom Monteleone's column was the most controversial because of his portrait of Roger Elwood. That might very well be, but I don't happen to think that Tom's views might spark the flames of discussion. I'm more impressed and shocked by the treatment Harlequin gave him. Tom Monteleone got burned royal! Not only because of the treatment he got--not being told that his novel would be, how it was to be distributed, etc.--especially when it turned out that complimentary copies are not truly sold. His amount of pay wasn't much, and he lost out on royalties.

((For information on Tom's royalties, see the reply to Jerry Pournelle's letter.))

Now, that's not Elwood's fault entirely. I got the impression that Harlequin withheld infor from him, too. In which case the publisher was shafting everybody left

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and right. Summarily, then, Tom's view of Elwood comes as no real suprise, and frankly it's about time. The man has put together a lot of good collections and given new writers a chance to be published. I don't think we should hold a collective grudge against him, but perhaps we shouldn't be so hard on him. Whether we like it or not, Elwood has brought a lot of new writers into the field, writers who normally wouldn't have had the chance otherwise.

Dave Vereschagin, RR2. New Sarepta, Alberta T0B 3M0 CANADA 7/22/76

Away from Elwood, the only thing that marred the MAFIA column was Tom's use of the word cheque in quotes. It reeks of the cheap shot and seems below the man's dignity. I do not slur (as putting cheque in quotes did) Americans because they leave the "u" out of humour, colour and many other words, or because all their bills are green. I would wish that he would not do the same to Canadians (or any others, for that matter) merely because we do use "u"s, spell things differently, or have multi-coloured money. A trivial point, perhaps, but a point, nonetheless.

Greg Benford, Irvine, CA 7/8/76

Every once in a while, between my other important hobbies--such as finding a cure for the common prostitute, or translating the works of Harlan Ellison into English--I mull over why Larry Niven has been so enormously popular. I think it's because his problem-solving is erudite yet understandable, and his prose points at the problem constantly--there are no distractions such as heavy character emphasis, backgrounding for mood, et and cet. Like the Holmes yarns of Doyle, all things are subserviet to the problem, and yet by concern with it somehow the reader is drawn into the reality of the author's universe. This same element makes some of the Star Trek pieces interesting, and of course the appeal of Spock is precisely that of Holmes; they're plainly minted from the same die. Niven has done this without a continuing character (Schaeffer isn't that different from any other Niven figure), but rather through a continuing attitude. Also, you know what you're getting in a Niven story--a good read, usually of the same sort as last year. When he rises to near perfection, as in Inconstant Moon, he's still playing that same theme. I'd like to see D'Ammassa deal with the inner workings of Niven's craft, and hard science as a subgenre, sometime; nobody has really verbalized why it's so popular with a big chunk of the readership.

Don D'Ammassa, 19 Angell Dr., E. Providence, R.I. 02914 7/20/76

I finally had a chance to read the latest issue of Knights, and it was more thoroughly enjoyable than any of the previous, even if it does contain my mistake about Niven's "Bordered in Black". Well, we're none of us perfect. Would you believe I made that mistake diliberately just to see if anyone was really reading my article? You won't believe that? Oh well.

I suspect it's coincidence that the columns by Thomas Monteleone and C. L. Grant seem to be commenting on each other this time. For what it's worth, I found Seeds of

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Change deadly dull, for pretty much the same reasons that he himself mentions. I think that he should believe Zelazny though; they really only do remember the good stuff. Why else would everyone keep asking when Zelazny's going to write another Lord of Light? I've read a good chunk of the Laser books myself, and if I were going to classify them as a lump, I'd say they were better than the sf lines published by some paperback houses (Belmont-Tower, Popular Library, Pinnacle), but nowhere near comparable to Ace, Ballantine, DAW, Berkley, Signet, Bantam, Dell, or even Pocket books. There are a few that stand out a bit; there are others that stand out in the wrong direction.

While I am in sympathy with Charlie Grant's intentions and in general with his stated goals, I think he's wrong in describing anti-intellectualism--even anti-intellectualism in fandom--as a recent movement. I've been reading fanzines for over a decade now, and the names change, but the same basic arguments are repeated over and over. Few of us recall the controversy that raged over publication of Bug Jack Barron, fewer yet remember a similar controversy over Davy, and still fewer remember the heated letters attacking David Bunch's fiction in the Ziff-Davis Amazing and Fantastic. Now it's Malzberg instead of Bunch, but otherwise, nothing has changed.

I'm complimented, needless to say, that I'm numbered among the people he'd like to meet. We narrowly missed each other at a convention here in Providence, and maybe we can corrent the situation in Kansas City. For his information, I'm 30 (over the hill, as he implies), and an ex-English teacher. Glicksohn is about a month younger than I, Geis apparently older, and I believe Keith Justice once mentioned being in his mid-twenties.

Obviously the intellectual level of the public is decling, at least in the terms with which we usually measure it. When I was teaching school, I once asked a college bound, senior honors English class how many people had read Romeo and Juliet. One hand. Only three people in the class had ever read anything by Shakespeare, and some couldn't name any play by him other than Romeo and Juliet. How can you be a college bound senior and not have read Shakespeare? I'm not that long out of school, and we were forced to read at least two every year from ninth grade on. And, generally, they were among the more popular selections we read.

((Judging from personal experience, I'd say it's not hard at all to get through high school without having read any Shakespeare. By the time I had graduated from high school, I'd seen Romeo and Juliet performed on stage. That was the extent of my experience with Shakespeare.

((Sine that time--I graduated about a year and a half ago, and am now in college --I've managed to read a couple of Shakespeare's sonnets. And then only because my girlfriend, who happens to be a high school senior, had to write a paper about one of the sonnets, and I wanted to see what she was doing.

((Draw your own conclusions.))

I'm now a middle level business executive (it pays much better), and I receive possibly a dozen memos per day, most from college graduates. And the English is atrocious, the spelling terrible. In many cases it is impossible to tell what they even intended to say, and in others, major mistakes have been made because it was easy to misconstrue a poorly constructed sentence. I have adopted a custom of red-lining, grading, and returning memos which I consider inadequate, a practice which

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has not made me popular with a particular advertising manager who, in our annual catelog, spelled "liquere" as "liquer" and "receipt" as "reciept".

D. Gary Grady overlooks the pragmatic problems with the manned space program, at least the manned space program as we are used to thinking of it. There is, naturally, a danger that shortsightedness will delay unnecessarily man's advance into space. It would be wonderful and Utopian is everyone saw the advantages and agreed that we should have a big manned space program. But it won't work that way. One of the biggest dangers is that a mismanaged space program will turn enough public opinion away from space that it will be done irreparable harm. NASA's crewcut, characterless astronauts, with their deadly dull dialogue and public relations man image, coupled with missions obviously aimed to arouse public interest, but without the means of fulfilling the promise of continued fascination, did more to harm the development of space travel than anything else.

But there's potentially a more dangerous threat. We face an imminent colossal energy shortage. Not imminent in terms of you and I, perhaps, but imminent in terms of the space program, which necessarily spans decades, centuries. If something isn't done very soon to ameliorate the energy problem, energy will be too dear to "fritter" away on space travel. You and I and Gary Grady might say that even then it would be worth the sacrifice, but you and I and Gary Grady aren't going to be making that decision, and realistically we have to acknowledge that the great unwashed will vote it down.

To a lesser, but no less real extent, overpopulation and the current international situation pose the same threat. Now no one is saying that we have to come up with a perfect, total solution to all of the world's problems before we have space travel. But many of us are concerned that some of these problems are going to achieve critical mass before we can realistically expect space travel to provide any solutions. We're not going to establish a viable, self-supporting colony in space within the next twenty years (barring some miraculous and unlikely breakthrough) but we may find ourselves in a limited or unlimited nuclear war, facing an economic war by means of an embargo on raw materials from the third world countries, or even faced with a worldwide energy shortage a lot sooner.

Those who favor manned space programs in an unrealistic manner often refer to those who have doubts as the ape who was afraid to leave the trees and walk the ground and become man. Maybe this is a good anology. On the other hand, maybe it is they who should be fitted into an analogy; possibly they are like the technologists in Clarke's story "Superiority", who kept looking for a more and more sophisticated weapon with which to defeat their enemy, only to find that they had come up with a host of fantastic weapons, but had lost the war.

Richard A. Lupoff, Berkeley, CA 8/17/76

I was prepared to give your magazine, Knights 16, a quick flip under my eyes and then a quicker flip into the wastebasket, but the contents really stopped me. Actually, the first thing that stopped me was Ted White's letter. Ted seems to operate in either of two modes when he writes to/for the fan press. Sometimes he engages in fan-feuds (just like twenty years ago, f'hevvin's sake, when I first met him). These I find demeaning to Ted, distressing to me, and I try to avoid reading them

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although I'll confess that they have a certain morbid fascination for me and I usually give in and read 'em and wind up with stomach cramps.

But Ted's other mode of discousre, that of commentator on the publishing scene, is far better! He always says fascinating, thought-provoking things. I don't always agree with them, but they are intelligently worked out and always worth considering, and I make a bee-line for the magazine that contains them.

Ted's comments on the demise of Vertex fall within this latter class, and I found them fascinating. Ted's notion that West Coast-produced sf magazines always fail is typically intriguing (add Fantasy Book and Gamma to his list, plus several others that only "failed to fail" because they never got as far as a first issue; I have known of at least four such just in the past couple of years...mmm, six now that I think of it for a little...no, damn it, seven!). But the question is, why do West Coast-produced sf magazines always fail? It's true that the main center of the US publishing industry is New York, but there's a respectable amount of publishing done in and around LA, with smaller centers in San Diego and San Francisco. Any number of book and periodicals publishers operate successfully from the West Coast, and if you look at an SFWA membership directory you'll find that more sf writers live out here than in the East. The past few years it's been almost embarrassing that anywhere from 75% up to all of the Nebula winners have been West Coast residents.

Why isn't there a science fiction magazine--a first class one!--published out here?

Regarding the collapse of Vertex, I must say that I regarded that as a major tragedy for sf publishing. For decades fans and pros had been waiting and hoping that somebody would come along and put out an sf magazine on slick paper, with color art, elaborate graphics, highclass production values, a decent editorial budget, etc. It looked as if Vertex was going to be that magazine, but it never liver up to that potential. On this point I have to agree with Keith Justice.

Despite its slick paper, color artwork, and relatively high pay-rates, Vertex was generally unappealing visually, sloppilty produced, and featured an uneven but generally mediocre level of stories. (Lest the question of sour grapes be raised, I did once send some material to Vertex, rather late in the magazine's career..two stories. I received a response to them by telephone, saying that Mr. Pfiel liked both and wished to buy them but that the magazine was going to go out of business ((the official announcement had not yet been made but was about to be)) so the stories were being returned. I promptly sent them off to another publisher and they were bought at once.)

I don't blame Don Pfiel for the unsatisfactory quality of Vertex. Despite the slick paper and high pay-rates, the magazine itself was grossly understaffed and Pfiel monstrously overworked. He had to do everything on that magazine, from reading slush and picking stories to editing copy, correcting proofs, even pasting up repro's. And all of this as a part-time assignment--Mankind had him putting out several other magazines at the same time he was editing Vertex! It's a wonder that the magazine wasn't worse than it was, no less any better!

Well, a tragedy. Maybe one of these days another publisher will come along and do it right for a change. I'd certainly like to see it. Meanwhile, most of our better writers are aiming their material at the book market, or at the slicks, and using the

old-line sf magazines as salvage or--to be slightly more charitable about it--"supplementary" markets.

Congratulations to both Monteleone and Grant for first-class pieces in the issue. Reading Monteleone's article I kept swallowing hard and thing "There but for the grace of God..." Better luck next time, Tom, and remember: Illegitimus Non Carborundum. As for Charlie Grant, I agree 100% on a "feelings" level, but I'm afraid that I don't see too much that can be done about it. The customers will buy what they like, and the publishers will produce what the customers buy.

D. Gary Grady writes well and persuasively, but I'm afraid that he's "preaching to the saved" (to borrow Sid Coleman's phrase). Hell, you and your readers already want spaceships. Let Grady go out and convert some heathens. That's what needs to be done. It's a lot harder task, sure, but you don't need to tell Quakers to be peaceful or Birchers to dislike Communists, you see?

Mike Glicksohn, 141 High Park Ave., Toronto, Ont. M6P 2S3 CANADA 8/1/76

Gee, Don's going to get the impression I don't like him, and that my typing fingers are stuck in a groove, but I'm afraid his article on Niven really didn't impress me. His plot summaries are fine, but what else is there? Practically nothing: no real criticism, no particular insight, none of the meat that Don is emminently capable of giving us. You cut through the light flaky crust and it's empty underneath. Of course it's competently done, because Don has a fine mind and a lot of writing skill but I get the definite impression that he's overextending himself. Going for quantity at the loss of quality, and trying to cover as many authors as he can rather than covering the ones he does properly. It's a shame, because Don is capable of giving us some excellent critical work; but as long as he tries to live up to his image of Writer Man ("He's everywhere, he's everywhere") we're not going to get it, and Don is going to continue to turn out competent uninspired work. Which editors will print, for some perverse reason, because they lack the clarity of vision to realize they'd be doing themselves, Don and science fiction fandom a great service by sending it back and asking for a rewrite.

Having seen poor Tom trashed so severely in the fan-press for his Laser book it's a real pleasure to get his side of the story. Although it doesn't really excuse his having written a pretty poor book, it certainly explains it, and one can only hope that the entire rather sordid affair will eventually pass by and leave Tom at least moderately unscathed. This really excellent column should have been enormously cathartic for him in working towards such a state.

As for Elwood himself, well I've never had too much sympathy for the man and Tom's descriptions of his practices as an editor certainly don't raise his stock in my eyes. I can understand, though, why he'd look on each Laser book as at least partly his but that justifiable pride in having created the series hardly exonerates his rather mealy-mouthed editorial stands or his obnoxious convention behavior. Ah well, Elwood has served his time as fannish whipping boy and I for one am reluctant to give him any more notice, however unfavorable. Let's drop him and go on to more pleasant things.

Damn, wish Al hadn't done such fine illos for my piece. Thay make the writing

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look bad. Still, I'm rather inordinately pleased to have a small part in a fine fanzine like Knights. The only thing that still bothers me is not knowing if I'm the (a), (b) or (c) in the reasons for printing it in the first place?!

((Uh, is it possible to be all three?))

There's nothing basically wrong with what Charlie Grant says but I think he's being a little soft headed if he really thinks the few hundred readers of Knights can have any influence whatsoever on the publishing industry. All of fandom could hardly have an effect through Charlie's proposed scheme, and the great majority of the intelligent fans have been doing it for years anyway. (How many of your friends buy Perry Rhodan, Mike?) ((At least two of my friends--and two or three more people that I know, as well.)) Charlie's concern is very valid, but I don't think he has a reasonable solution. Joe Haldeman's The Forever War has sold close to two hundred thousand copies in North America. Perhaps two percent of those have been bought by fans. Oh, let's be generous, let's say five percent. But it's still a drop in the bucket, I'm afraid.

Charlie's criticisms of the educational system are also valid. (I can just imagine the eight page letter you'll get from Don D'Ammassa agreeing with every word and adding thirty of his own for each one of Charlie's!) But I have no intention of getting into a debate on that topic once again. I will point out, though, that in a way Charlie is as guilty as many of the students he writes about in at least one small point. He very flatteringly says he'd like to meet me and three other honest serious critics because of our integrity of our reviewing standards. This is fine and dandy where Don and Keith and Dick are concerned, but I haven't reviewed any science fiction in ages (one book in maybe the last five years) and although my words may be all over fandom, they are very very seldom about science fiction. I don't review and I don't write criticism. At least not of sf. Tsk, tsk: a slight touch of intellectual laziness there, Charlie.

((I don't want to put words into Charlie's mouth, or anything like that, but I think he was justified in singling you out as one of the four. You are a critic of the critics (witness your own words on Don D'Ammassa earlier in this letter), as well as a fanzine reviewer of high caliber.

((As a loc writer, you happen to be among the most perseptive ones I know. The best example of this I can give is the response to my own editorial way back in Knights 13. You happen to be one of the very few people who read what I thought I wrote in that editorial. And you've done the same thing with pieces published, not only here, but elsewhere as well.

((Just because the other three people Charlie mentioned happen to concentrate their criticism on science fiction itself is no reason to exclude you. After all, fandom is based almost entirely on the written word, is it not? Somebody has to be its critic.))

Ted's thoughts on the possible reasons for Vertex folding have a ring of emminent sense to them and it might very well have happened as he suggests. However, I'm sure Ted didn't mean to imply that all of the science pieces were written by Pfeil. As Joe Haldeman remarked when he read Ted's letter, there was at least one article written by Greg Benford, who's hardly likely to be a pseudonym for Don.

Mike's connected portfolio was fun, although not quite up to the high standards of his usual work I think. The usual painstaking attention to detail seems lacking. But it's kind of fun anyway!

Robert Runte, 10957-88 Ave., Edmonton, Alberta T6G 0Y9 CANADA 7/16/76

I rather like that Thomas Canty cover. A whole lot. It did take me a minute to figure out that she was supposed to be sitting on a horse, what with its head being cut off, but on further reflection I decided that the exclusion of the horse's head was probably a wise decision, in that it might otherwise have distracted from the girl--and I certainly wouldn't want to detract from the girl. Besides, that double border effect tends to give you the impression that the inner one is a window through which you are looking at a passing rider, which is sort of neat. You know, that double border and the way he has written "Knights"...well I don't know why exactly but I think that would make a really striking painting etched in silver on a mirror. You know the effect I mean? Like those (admittedly kitsch) mass produced mirror-paintings that read "Drink Pepsi cola" and crap like that. Only I think Canty's painting here has just enough class to carry it off properly. In any event, I've been sort of leaving it out for visitors to stumble upon so as to impress them with the high class/quality of my reading tastes (which of course they judge by the cover). Unfortunately, one such visitor managed to touch it before I could casually put it out of reach, and as a result it now has these huge grubby fingerprints all over it. (My friend wasn't dirty exactly, it's just that he'd been handling the local newspaper and had their cheap newsprint type smuggy ink all over his hands). But anyway, the point of all this is that they too were impressed with the cover.

The back cover is pretty impressive too. Good idea that, having a full page photo of the "spotlighted" writer. I really like Niven's Mucha shirt too.

Inside covers are fine, but you had better explain about your old KPSS title if you expect your newer subscribers to get the humor in Joe's cartoon. I did not, however, care for the first and third drawings in the Streff folio. The hero's face is too something or other.

The Mothers and Fathers Italian Association is producing great material again. I agree with your assesment of this article: It's clearly a fair portrait of Elwood (I mean it gives that impression; I obviously am in no position to know what Elwood is actually like. Somehow though, it's so "shades of gray" sounding a portrait that you just know it's a reasonably balanced assessment of the man.), and an insightful glimpse into the writing/publishing world. I am looking forward to Monteleone's next couple of columns if this and the topics listed in #15 are any indication. Great stuff. I don't think he has to worry about bad repercussions from Seeds of Change though. If a non-sf reader reads it and likes it, he may, after becoming bored with the Laser sameness, seek out real sf. This is a good thing for sf (bigger market and all that) and for the kid (the joys of true sf) and for Monteleone (because the kid, remembering his name will look to his books first (perhaps) after he escapes Laser Books). If the non-sf reader hates Monteleone's book, well, no loss right (except maybe to the kid, but then most of them miss out on classical music, Goya paintings and other such higher things in life too, so what's one more?). If a real sf reader likes the book there's no problem. So the only danger is that a real sf reader will read it and on that basis dismiss Monteleone as a hack. But I ask you, how could that

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ever happen? I mean, we all know by now that Laser is aimed at the juvenile/non-sf market, that Elwood is, well you know, Elwoodish, that Laser does not go in for depth, description, etc., and that a writer writing for such a series is obviously going to adjust his style/level accordingly. So, either the sf reader has decided that he likes the occasional Laser book as a light break between heavier reading, or whatever, or else he has given up on Laser; right? But the key phrase is "given up on Laser". On Laser, not Thomas F. Monteleone. Anybody who still fails to make that distinction is too much of a twit to worry about. (Originally, of course, some critics could be excused for believing that Laser books represented a typical sample of a writer's work. Now they surely must all realize that you don't write the same way for Laser as you do other sf publishers, anymore than you write the same way for, say, a children's book and academic journal.) There is nothing dishonorable about writing for the masses, either.

Glicksohn's thing was his usual witty piece. I don't quite know how he expects to get away with all those "zingers" though. Some pro will say some very minor thing about another pro just in passing, some insignificant comment that I as a reader went right over without even noticing, and the next thing you know there will be one God-awful bloodbath with flying law suits and mindblowing accusations and shocking revelations... And yet Glicksohn can get away with insulting everyone in fandom, including himself, and I'll bet you nobody will even bat an eye.

I must disagree with C. L. Grant's column on a number of points. He is right, of course, when he speaks of the decline of the level of education in North America, but he does not stop to ask why this is the case. He seems to imply that it's due to some sort of copout on the part of teachers and/or a general drift towards decadence on the part of the American (and Canadian) peoples. Well, to a certain extent this is true. Teachers are not as quick to beat the living daylights out of kids as they once were, and are more concerned with such things as being "relevent" and "creating a good learning environment" and even with "being with it" than they perhaps should be. If my grade school teachers had been a little more willing to beat me regularly, I just might have learned to spell before I got to university (I still can't spell very well), but on the other hand, I don't think I would have cared for that idea much at the time. Adults are all in favor of cracking down in the schools and emphasizing the basics--once they have graduated and are safely out of the reach of teachers, that is. (Like the guy who say the Army will make a man out of you--you, not him; he's too old for the draft.) People tend to forget that today's laxness is a reaction against the evils of yesterday's strictness. All they see are today's problems and the good points of the old way, and fail to realize that one system's strengths is the other's weaknesses; you pay your taxes and takes your choice.

And there is some truth to the accusation that people are getting lazier: A friend of mine from Hong Kong who consistently got the top marks in all his university classes told me that he was shocked by North American students, none of whom seemed to do any work at all. He had spent five years as a construction worker doing ten hour shifts in order to save up enough money to come to Canada and attend university (and he took two part time jobs here so he could afford to stay a sevod and third year to complete his degree) and he wasn't about to waste it all by goofing off. He wasn't exceptional, either: all the first generation Chinese and most other immigrants worked their asses off (much to the annoyance of lazy Canadians) and got the best marks. Sadly, the third generation are as lazy as the rest of us.

But is that the whole answer for falling standards? No way. First of all, there is

that mindnumbing addiction, tv. By the time a student has graduated from high school he has spent between 11,000 to 12,000 hours in the classroom--and more than 22,000 in front of the tv set. That's two to one odds against the teacher; for every hour she spends trying to encourage her pupils to think, they sepnd two hours in front of the tv, not thinking. For every hour she tells them that they should aspire to the highest cultural levels, tv feeds them two hours of pabulum. But it is pabulum with a message and that message is this: Heroes are two-fisted he-men who save the day by being even more violent than the bad guys rather than through any sort of reasoning ability. Heroines are beautiful but dumb, easily seduced and totally dependent upon the hero. The only people in tv Land who seem intelligent, play chess, like Shakespeare and classical music, speak literate English, and the like, invariably turn out to be the villians. Nowehere is anyone ever portrayed reading, or even owning, a book. (And Grant wonders why American society is anti-intellectual?) But worse even than the effect of watching 22,000 hours of inappropriate role models is the simple fact that that is 22,000 fewer hours available for reading than was the case a generation ago. Think about that for a moment. Even if we assume that tv has also cut into baseball practice and homework and creative daydreaming, a good part of that 22,000 hours taken up today by the boobtube must have come from our reading time. And remember, that 22,000 hours is only what's been lost by the end of high school; in a whole lifetime the figure would be closer to 150,000 hours, or approximately one fifth of your lifetime. If a hundred and fifty thousand of your leisure hours are taken up watching tv, how much is left for reading? Anything at all? And if you only have an hour or two left for reading, and if you have become used to the effortlessness of tv viewing, which are you more likely to choose to read, Conrad and Rilke and the classics, or a Harliquin romance? Do you still want to blame the fall in standards solely on the schools?

(Maybe we should be thankful that television has yet to produce a decent sf series. If potential sf readers could find what sf had to offer on the boobtube, would they still seek out books?)

(Speaking of which, have you even wondered why tv can't do it, why tv plots always seemed geared for six year olds? Well, for one thing, an Australian research group recently found that watching color tv for three or four hours at a time induced a state in the viewer closely resembling catatonia, except of course, that it's temporary. Your mind is so busy changing the perception of multitudes of little colored dots into a single coherent picture, that there is practically nothing left of the average viewer's intelligence with which to follow the plot. For the duration of the program at least, (they aren't sure yet whether there is any permanent damage) the average viewer is a six year old! (Which casts new light on Bowers' statement that he watches Space 1999 for the pretty colors...))

On the other hand, I am not trying to pin everything on television. Another major factor in the apparent decline os standards in education is that everyone now goes to school. Obviously the average achievement level must go down if schools are no longer restricted to the top twnety or thirty per cent of the population. Instead of an educated elite maintaining a 'high' cultural level while the peasants remain illiterate, we have a sort of blah average somewhere in between these two extremes. Our high cultural attainments may not be as high as they used to be, but neither is the bottom of the society quite so low. Or, to put it another way, instead of thinking of the average as sinking to the level of Perry Rhodan et. al., maybe we should think of it as coming UP. (I mean what's better, being unable to read or reading Perry Rhodan?)

And so on and so forth. I don't intend to bore you with further details of the many factors involved, but I think you get the point that things are not so cut and dried as the black picture Grant paints.

My other major criticism of Grant's column is his insistance that I am the market place. I'm not. In fact it's a standing joke in my family that whatever we like, they stop making. We decide that we like this brand of cookies or that brand of appliance, and the next day it will be announced that said company has gone bankrupt because their product didn't appeal to the masses. The same thing with books. I've never bought a Perry Rhodan book, and Laser is not making any money off me either, but both seem to prosper regardless. Why is Grant telling us, the readers of Knights, to stop buying junk. I don't buy the rubbish, and I don't imagine that you or any of your other readers buy it. Grant is preaching to the converted, a small elite of sf fanatics who have always been selective simply because they know the field, who's good and who's not, and what the genre is capable of. But we are not the market. We are but one very tiny per centage of it, and short of organizing picket lines around book-counters, we are quite powerless to stop the masses from buying anything they damn well please.

Nor should we try. If someone likes Perry Rhodan, we are we to question his right to buy it or his taste in liking it? It is unfortunate that the garbage (as we see it) tends to fill up the counters and push the good stuff off the shelves. But would it really be better if we could somehow force all those lesser series into bankruptcy? Would it really force the publishers to turn to quality, or would they simply abandon sf altogether and turn instead to Westerns and mysteries and porno? Better the kids have Laser Books. We should of course do everything in our power to raise both the literary tastes of the masses and the standard of writing, but our power is very limited, and our approach should be through education, rather than boycott.

Glicksohn's letter is great as always, but I can't agree with his twice made suggestion that one show appreciation of an author's work by buying him a drink. That's fine if (a) you're a dynamic BNF who is likely to be known to, and accepted by, said pro, and (b) a famous lush. But what do you do if you're an unknown neo teatotaler? I mean even if you could find a big name pro who was tolerant enough to accept the boring attentions of strangers (most of whom are probably obnoxious and intent on telling him what he is doing wrong in his stories) when he should be talking to his friends (namely BNF's who have just offered to buy him a drink), and even if you could elbow your way through the resulting flock of fellow neos, and even if you could tell him how much you liked his books without gushing (as opposed to intelligent remarks of the sort he gets from witty Mr. Glicksohn), even if you could manage all that, do you really want to buy him another drink when you're stone sober? Me, I'll send a postcard if it's all the same to Glicksohn.

Also heard from were:

Simon Agree, Harry Andruschak, Jennifer Bankier, Alan Bosco, Richard Brandt, Bill Brummer, Theodore R. Cogswell, Jean Marcel Cusson, Tony Cvetko, James Diederichsen, Brendan DuBois, D. Gary Grady, David Griffin, Dave Haugh, Hank Heath, Arthur D. Hlavaty, Ben Indick, Neil Kvern, Eric Lindsay, O. Paul Maness Jr., George R. R. Martin, Shayne McCormack, Stella Nemeth, Jodie Offutt, John M. Robinson, Mike Shoemaker, Lindsay Randall Stuart, David Taggart, Ira M. Thornhill, R. Laurraine Tutihasi, A. D. Wallace, and Joe Walter. I hope no one was left out.

(continued from page 3)

I arrived three days and too many miles later, here in Edwardsville, Illinois. There is no bus station in this town. I was dropped off at the park in the center of town, and Rick Wilber picked me up shortly after I called him from a near-by gas station.

I stayed with Rick for a week and a half as he showed me around the university and the town.

This is a colleg town, but it has very little to offer in the way of student housing. The best places tend not to want to rent to students, and the worst places I wouldn't want to live in. I finally found an apartment south of town. Roughly, my apartment, downtown, and the university, form a triangle--each side of which is approximately six miles in length.

I don't have a car.

The first quarter, fall, I hitch-hiked to the university. Winter quarter, which just ended, Rick took me into school. The upcoming spring quarter I haven't worried about yet.

I've been on my own since mid-August of 1976. Sometimes it has been rough, other times it has been ridiculously easy. There were times when I'd gone two or three days without eating (thank goodness those days seem to be over!) and I plummeted from 195 pounds down to 165. I look a lot better for having lost the weight, but my weight-loss plan is not one I would recommend to everyone.

I've seen a number of fans fall by the wayside after venturing off to college, and I promised myself that I wouldn't let this happen to me. Unfortuantely, it seems to have occured. I just don't have the time to do as much fanac as I used to, nor do I always have the inclination.

My first quarter here I made the Dean's List. I may even make it again winter quarter--I don't know, though, becasue I haven't seen my grades as I write this.

Not only am I a full-time student, I also work part-time. I work for the campus newspaper, and was just recently made the Assistant Production Manager. My basic job is to see that the newspaper, which comes out four days a week, is pasted-up and ready to go to the printer. What I actually do on the staff is much more than that: I've done layout, newswriting, commentary writing, headline writing, typesetting, and other odd jobs. At the moment, I would say that I'm an all-around man. ("I'm a jack-of-all-trades and master of none.")

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In all, though, I would say that I have made a successful change from frightened mother's boy to independant college student. The change from child to adult happened and I barely even knew it had taken place. If everything was only this easy.

I'm still adjusting to this new life, and trying to sort out my priorities. Fandom sort of got shoved in the background for a while, and I don't know how much it will occupy me in the future, but I see no death of Knights, just a slowdown in

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how often issues come out.

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March 22, 1977, noon:

Since moving here I've learned to do without a lot of things most people take for granted.

I don't own a car and so have been walking or hitch-hiking nearly every place I want or need to go. I do have a bicycle, but it has been broken since shortly after I arrived. I haven't been able to get it repaired yet, but I've been able to manage without it.

I also don't have a television set--which was a strange adjustment for me to make. I used to watch tv from the time Harry Reasoner came on at six until Johnny Carson signed off at one in the morning.

I still watch tv on occassion. I can't say that I've managed to break the habit entirely, but I doubt if I see more than five or six hours of television a week now.

I do have a radio, but I didn't acquire it until just recently. Before that I had nothing to make background sound with, and I find it very hard to work without a tv, radio, or record player making background sound.

Since acquiring the radio, I have discovered the pleasures of the "General Mills Adventure Theatre" and of someone else's "Mystery Theatre". Fantastic stuff.

I can't remember all the way back to the heyday of radio--I'm certainly not that old--but I do remember, way back around the time I was eight years old, sitting up late on Saturday nights with my mother and listening to similar programs. I enjoyed it then, and I enjoy it now.

It's all a matter of having to adjust, I suppose, and so far I've been able to.

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part of an editorial first-drafted on 10/24/76:

"Somebody mentioned in a letter to me recently about the difference between 'success' and 'achievement': success is when everybody agrees that you've done well, and achievement is when you know in your own heart that you've done well. I want to be both successful and I want to make great achievements. It's hard to do both. In fact, it's hard to do just one.

"Mike Glicksohn said something recently, which I'll quasi-quote: 'If you're not striving to publish the best fanzine you can, you shouldn't be publishing at all.' And he's 100% right."

--Mike Bracken, lettercolumn, Stardate #10

I couldn't have said it any better myself. In fact, were it not for Terry Whittier's adept editing of a long and rambling letter, I wouldn't have said it in the first place.

I guess the basis for what I said above, and for what I've said about editing and publishing in past "World"s comes from the fact that I was raised in a house where one of the standard rules of operation was the old saying, "If anything is worth doing, it's worth doing well."

The truth of the matter is that I don't consider too many things worth doing. That, in itself, has caused me a number of problems with relatives and friends. For example: when I was living with my grandparents it was more or less my job to keep the lawn mown. Mowing the lawn is something that must be done every now and then, but because I don't pay any attention to the length of the grass, and since it really doesn't have any effect on my life, I don't consider mowing the yard a job worth doing. Once every month or so suits me just fine. I'm not the type of person to get out and mow the yard every week, spread cow shit all over to make it grow better, or to trim the edges up nice and fine.

Of course, an example like that instantly leads to the parental reply of "There's lots of things in this life that you won't like to do, but you'll have to do them anyhow." Sure, I know that--I should know that since nearly every relative I've got over the age of 30 has fed me that same line in one form or another at some point in my lifetime.

However, that isn't the point, really. Just because I have to do something doesn't mean I have to consider it worth doing. Do I?

This fanzine is something I consider worth doing, and so I try to do my personal best at it. At the same time I'm doing my personal best, I'm hoping that I'm doing better than other people's personal best. This comes from having been brought up, partially, in a middle class atmosphere of competition. Upward mobility and all that crap. It has been induced in me, since a rather early age, that I must be better than my peers. Whether I am or not is almost beside the point, since the basic thrust is in the competition.

Luckily I don't think the competition ethic is as firmly attached to my inner psych as it is to other people's--mostly because it was expounded by the older males with whom I have come in contact and I was, and possibly still am, much more emotionally attached to my mother and her basic philosophies. Nevertheless, it's there and it plays at least a minor role in everything I do.

And so, as some of you have been able to notice in my other writing, the competition ethic plays a role in my reason for publishing and continuing to publish. (Why else would I have gone shit-crazy over placing in the Locus Poll?)

Another reason I publish is pure stubborness. In a review of issue 13, David Emerson, I believe, said of Knights, "One a crudzine, always a crudzine." I want to prove to people like Emerson that a statement like that is only so much crap--no matter whose fanzine is the target of such inept reviewing.

Even so, I do like publishing. I like the act of creation. I like looking back at old Knights and being able to say, "See, I created that." I suppose the reaction is similar to being a proud father.

In the end, though, my urge is still to publish the best fanzine I'm camable of. Luckily, with each issue I'm capable of something a little better or a little dif-

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ferent than before. If I weren't capable of growing in those respects, then the hours of hacking at stencils and swearing at ink-bloated mimeographs would become boring and meaningless. If that ever happens, and I hope it doesn't, then I shall fade away...

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3/22/77, 1:30 p.m.:

Unfortunately, from a production standpoint, I don't think this issue is comparable to past issues. Having worked on it off and on for more than half a year, I've seen myself, and my editorial ideas change. When I started typing this issue way back in September, I had one type of issue in mind. The hundred-plus stencils I have moldering in a box next to me are a different type of issue altogether.

Compared to past issues, I've used almost no art at all. And of the art I have used, most of it is stuff that has been sitting in my files for much too long. Which, of course, menas that the art I've received since then has now been sitting in my files for quite a long while. Luckily, however, I have very little art in my files at the moment and should, with luck, be able to clear them out with the next issue or two.

This issue, then, concentrates very heavily on words. From that standpoint, I think this is one of the best issues I've published. Hopefully you'll enjoy the contents as much as I do.

Richard Wilber's "The Themes of Robert A. Heinlein" was done as a master's thesis for Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville. According to Rick, this is the first master's thesis on a science fictional topic ever submitted at SIUE.

A four or five page condesed version of the thesis was published in Donn Brazier's Title in early 1975.

Rick is a free-lance non-fiction writer and an instructor of journalism at SIUE. Although he's attended a number of conventions, his connections with fanzine fandom seem to be limited to just two or three fanzines.

Cy Chauvin's "With a Finger in My Gerrold" follows. With due respect paid to the Shadowman, Cy evaluate's Gerrold's writing. I don't agree with everything that Cy says, but I must admit that he does a good job of backing up his views.

In his column, Tom Monteleone picks up on an issue that has nearly been beat to death: women in sf. While everyone else has been attempting to be objective, Tom says to hell with it and gives us a highly personal view on the topic. I find it refreshing that he isn't trying to hide behind "objectivity".

In "The Virgin, The Bull, and the Ivory Tower Intellectuals" Jerry Pournelle responds to C. L. Grant's tirade on anti-intellectualism in sf, and John M. Robinson takes a shot at "Mission Impossible", science fiction, and the state of America in "Mission Impossible and America the Mechanical."

"Just Another Name on the Masthead: an interview with Grant Carrington" was conducted during the last few month of 1976. This is my first effort in the way of in-

terviewing, but I think it turned out rather well. With any luck at all, I may be doing more of these in the future.

(Not only that, but I was able to use the information obtained in the interview to write an article for MULTITUDE. The $16 I received for it has been the biggest check I've received for any single piece of writing to date.)

Charles L. Grant, who we all used to know as C. L. Grant, uses his column this issue to wrap up a lot of loose ends from previous columns, as well as hint at a few topics that might come up in future columns.

The lettercolumn this issue is longer than most have been, and I still had to relagate a lot of good letters to the Also Heard From stack. I hated to do that, but this issue sort of got out of hand, and the lettercolumn was the easiest thing to cut...and it's still bloody long enough.

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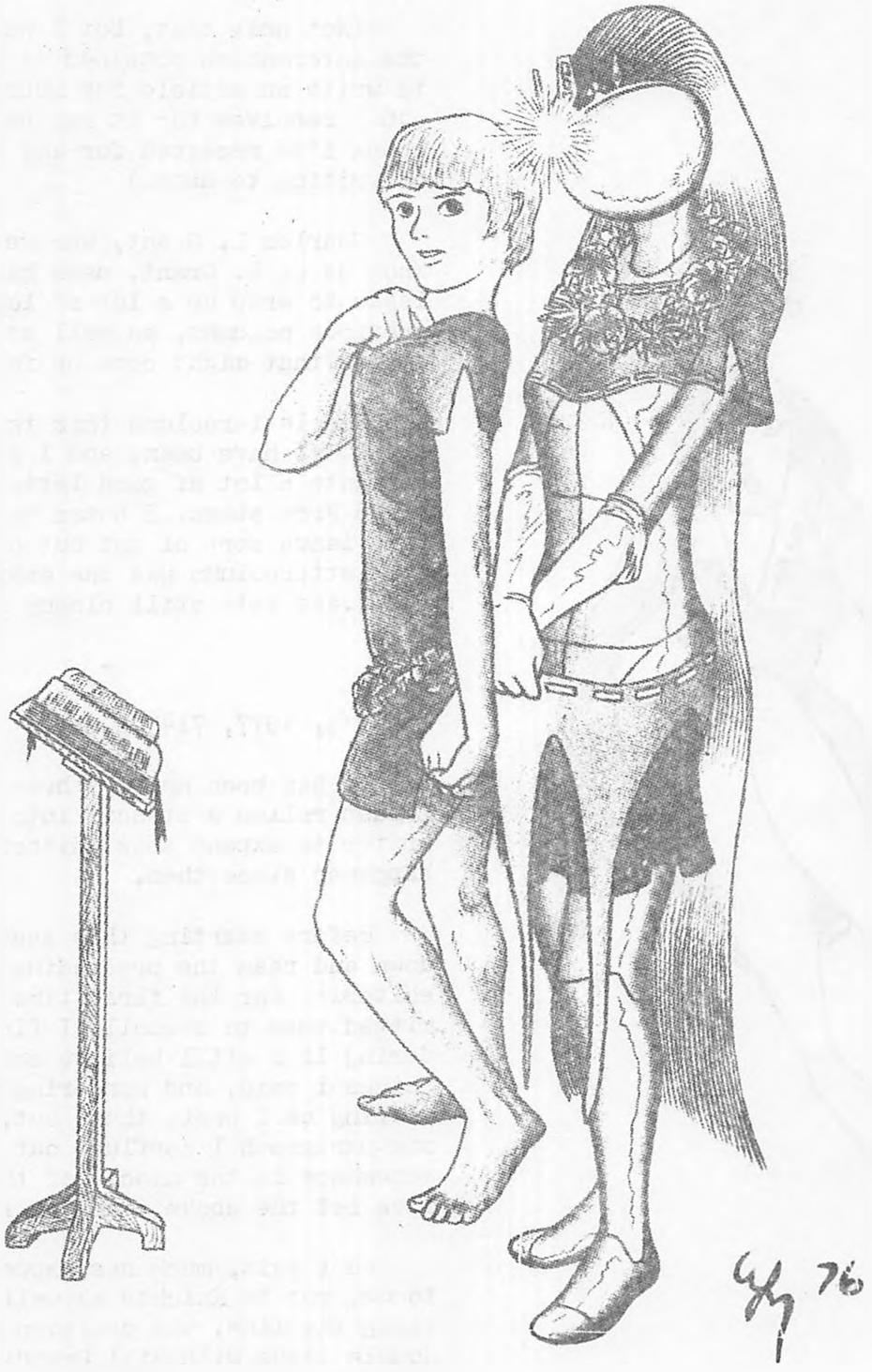
June 15, 1977, 7:45 p.m.:

It has been nearly three months since I last rolled a stencil into the typewriter to expand this editorial. Much has happened since then.

Before starting this section, I sat down and read the preceeding parts of this editorial for the first time since I committed them to stencil. I find myself wondering if I still believe some of the things I said, and wondering what I was feeling as I wrote them. But, except for one paragraph I corflued out of existence somewhere in the middle of the editorial, I've let the above stand as it was written.

As I said, much has happened, not only to me, but to Knights as well. Somewhere along the line, the decision not to do a double issue with Bill Breiding and Starfire happened. It was my idea in the first place, then I copped out. In any event, it seems as if I made the right decision for both Bill and I by copping out.



Bill managed to get Starfire out a few months ago, and I haven't been able to get Knights ready until now--whenever now happens to really be. The delay would have been as detrimental to Bill as I know it has been to me.

Sometime between the stenciling of the previous section and the writing of this one, I made the decision to give up on Knights. At that time I began mailing out subscription refunds. My reasons for this decision were many, but the primary one was financial. One Knights reader, who shall forever remain known only to himself and myself, sent me a letter when he received his refund. He asked how much it would cost to publish this issue and then told me to call him. I did, and he offered me the money to publish the issue since, after all, I'd already gone to all the work of stenciling everything so why let it go to waste? I fell on my ass and have since entertained the thought that this man should probably be locked up for an extreme case of insanity. When I actually received the check (after all, would you believe it if someone offered you the money to publish a fanzine?) it confirmed my thoughts as to his sanity.

Even so, I think I shall be forever grateful to the mysterious, and loyal, Knights reader.

However, this puts me in a strange bind. What is to be the real future of Knights?

I will continue Knights with a few necessary changes. The first is that this will become an extremely irregular publication. I will publish when time and money allows me to. The second is that Knights needs to become financially self-sufficient. To that end at least two things will happen: the subscription rates will go up (from 1/$1.25, 4/$4 to 1/$1.25, 4/$5), and the slick cover stock will go. I hate to give up on that cover stock but it has to go: it's either that or Knights itself.

In my effort to make Knights financially sulf-sufficient, another important event will occur: the number of fanzines I currently trade with will be severely curtailed. In a way I hate to do this--especially since I can still remember the days when I had to send ten copies of Knights out for every trade I would receive back--but I find it necessary. Besides that, I more than a month behind in just logging in fanzines received and farther than that behind in reading the damn things. It's to the point now where I flip through the pages and read whatever attracts my eye, and often times that isn't much.

So, if you like Knights--and I hope you do--and think you might be cut from my trade list, why not send a few bucks?

As for the college life, well, I'm now a sophomore; didn't make the Dean's List last quarter and won't for the quarter I just finished. At work, I've been promoted to the newspaper's Production Manager. My weight has dropped another ten pounds so that I now weigh only 155 pounds. I have a car and no longer have to hitch rides all over God's creation. I've been through a few emotional ups and downs, but seem pretty stable at the moment. The Army seems to have forgotten all about me (or just haven't found me yet).

And, after nearly a year on my own, playing the part of an adult, I'm still alive. Despite all my fears, I'm making it. I'm making it. I'm making it.

-- Mike Bracken

STILL AVAILABLE:

#'s 3, 4, 5, 6, 9: 25¢ each (limited number of each.

#14 ($1.00) - Second Anniversary Issue: "From The Fire On The Mountain" by C. L. Grant; "Vertex Survey" by Keith Justice; letters from Mike Glicksohn, Jodie Offutt, Jerry Pournelle. Strips by Al Sirois and Phil Foglio. Art by Grant Canfield, Phil Foglio, Marc Schrimeister James Shull, and a wrap-around cover by Al Sirois. Much more. 58 pages.

#15 ($1.25) - "The Mothers And Fathers Italian Association" by Thomas F. Monteleone; "From The Fire On The Mountain" by C. L. Grant; "Tenn Has Klass" by Don D'Ammassa; "Everything You Always Wanted To Know About Science Fiction But Were Too Narrow Minded To Ask" by Keith Justice; letters from Gregory Benford, David Gerrold, Barry N. Malzberg. Strips by James Shull and Al Siois. Art by Phil Foglio, Dave Haugh, Randy Mohr, Joe Pearson, James Shull, Al Sirois, and Mike Streff. Covers by Randy Mohr. 72 pages.

All other issues either sold out or presently unavailable (meaning they have yet to be shipped from my last place of residence).

Scheduled for the future: "Grateful To The Dead," a poetic tribute to The Grateful Dead, by Grant Carrington, "Lilies Of The Field," a look at racism and sexism within sf fandom, by Wayne Hooks, art by Barry Kent MacKay and Marc Schrimeister, plus the usual columns and whatnot.

Advance subscriptions are four issues for $5. Make checks payable and mail to: Mike Bracken, E-3 Village Circle, Edwardsville, Ill 62025.