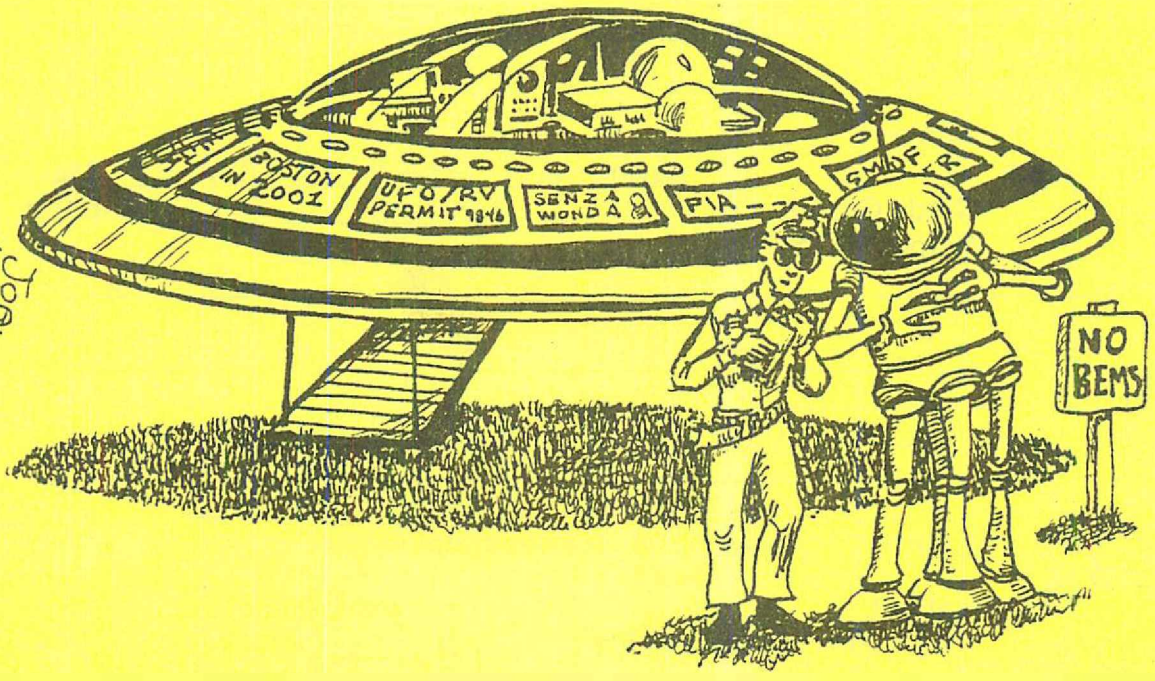
Proper Bostonian

38



Joe Mayhew 8-31-96

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Proper Boskonian 38

December 1996

Proper Boskonian is the semi-annual genzine of the New England Science Fiction Association. Send all contributions (writing, art, LoCs) to: *Proper Boskonian,* c/o NESFA, Post Office Box 809, Framingham, MA 01701-0203.

Editor: Kenneth Knabbe
Helper: Elisa Hertel
Proofreader: George Flynn FN

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Official Notices

This zine is available as part of NESFA membership ($16 a year for subscribing members); or for a contribution of writing, art, and/or LoC; $3.00 per issue; trade and/or editorial whim.

PB 39 will be out around January 1, 1997. Boskone 34 Guest of Honor John M. Ford will be highlighted. Reviews of his work are wanted **now.**

Non-members, an * on your label means you are about to be dropped. You must send me something or you will not receive the next issue.

Editorial Ramblings by Kenneth Knabbe

I expect by now some of you are wondering what is going on. Yes, this is *PB* 38 and it does say December in the ToC, but no, I have not dropped the September extra issue. Believe it or not, this is the issue that was planned for September, and you will be receiving another issue within five weeks.

What happened is this: back in July, I had material for one issue in hand and enough left over to do another, if half the additional material promised showed up before November 1. So I decided to try and get an issue out before Worldcon. I had most of the issue ready in mid-August when the "real world" decided I needed to spend some time on unexpected projects. So much for August and September. Beginning in October, I knew I had other tasks that would need my attention, but I am getting good at doing *PB*, so I thought I could catch up. October 14 I started a new job. It is a 70-minute drive each way and in the exact opposite direction from the NESFA clubhouse. This has made getting to weekday meeting and work sessions very difficult. It also meant a lag time in passing material back and forth.

This has hurt this issue in three ways. First, it is very late. Second, while I have Bob Devney's piece on James Blish, I did not have time to do the bibliography. Third, as I write this, I have only promises of John Ford reviews. None in hand. If I am going to get *PB* 39 out before Arisia, as I promised John Ford, I needed them **yesterday.**

PB 39 will be out around January 1. I am managing this only because: I am holding back some material planned for this issue (people complained my issues were too big anyway), and I am getting help. John Ford's agent has sent NESFA his bibliography. I will only have to format the information. Elisa Hertel will be editing the L.A.con III report and helping with a few other parts of the issue.

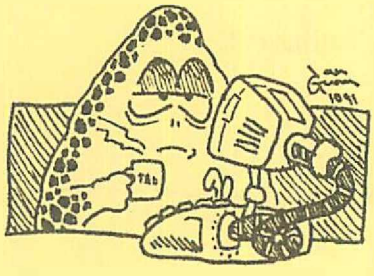
This is the ninth issue of *PB* with me as editor. Last July, I put out a call for help. Elisa Hertel has answered. Starting this issue, I will be doing less and less and Elisa will be doing more. Eventually I expect I will be doing only about 25% of the work each issue. **NO,** I have not lost interest. What I am is, tired of not having time for other things. Doing *PB* basically by myself (except for the excellent proofing by George), I have had to say "no" to most of the other projects that interest me. I am hoping that with Elisa gradually doing most of the work, I can continue helping to get *PB* out and still have time for other things.

For all of you who have had material rejected by me, this gives you another chance to be published; and for those of you who seem to think I am stuck in a rut, a chance for a change in direction. Elisa has a lot more experience than I do. She has worked on the design of several NESFA Press dust jackets and has done program books for conventions. I am sure you will be pleased with her issues.

At Worldcon I told Elise I felt funny soliciting material for *PB* when she would be taking over. She told me to go ahead and keep filling up my backlist folder. For those of you who thought I was slowly going to just disappear, keep dreaming. The impression I got from her is I am free to do as much work as I am foolish enough to. Starting with *PB* 40, I intend to contribute about two pieces to every issue.

Earlier I mentioned that *PB* 39 will be out in about five weeks (from when I write this). Please send me your reviews of the work of John Ford **now.** As soon as the L.A.con III report, Zineophile and the Ford bibliography are ready, I go to print. Any material not in hand will wait. I have a Brad Foster cover in hand and art from Brad, Anna Hillier, and Joe Mayhew already. Ian Gunn sent the next ten installments of *Space ☆ Time Buccaneers* and I have two pieces held from this issue.

Elisa will be the official editor of *PB* 40, but I have sent a short story by Gene Stewart to Teddy Harvia. He is going to try to do a cover based on it. Please start addressing any LoCs to Elisa.



Zineophile by Bob Devney

Critical Wave #44/45 April 1996 • The European Science Fiction and Fantasy Review • Publishers and Editors Steve Green, Martin Tudor • News items and review materials to S. Green, 33 Scott Road, Olton, Solihull, West Midlands, England, B92 7LQ; letters and listings to M. Tudor, 24 Ravensbourne Grove (off Clarkes Lane), Willenhall, West Midlands, WV13 1HX, England • 40 pages including covers • 8 1/2 x 11 11/16 • Five issues per year, U.S. subscriptions $33 per year

It's your first day attending an SF convention in another country – say Britain. There are little rooms everywhere filled with people talking about cool subjects. But ... You can't find a schedule or a hotel map or a program book. Your feet hurt. You haven't slept in 47 hours. And as you wander around dazed, it's as though a gray mist were settling over everything in sight.

As the Brits might phrase it, thus *Critical Wave*.

The problem is probably just the tiny type and the fact that the copier job wavers back and forth between gray and light gray over 40 packed pages featuring way too many lists. It's not that *Critical Wave* lacks an editorial focus or a point of view, although about that "European" in the subtitle – except for listing a few cons in Poland or Spain and actually reporting a con in the Netherlands (plus reprinting a Dutch interview with a U.S. author), it's the U.K. first, the U.S. a distant second, and a polite bow to Japan.

Critical Wave is really a quite respectable British news and reviews zine with a raft of good contributors writing well on many interesting topics. All somewhat dampened by a small grayish layout. And even there they have the smarts to break up text columns with large callout quotes, which more zines should learn to do. So I don't know why I'm caviling here; go and read the thing, chances are you'll find much to like.

Such as almost five pages of fine material on Bob Shaw, the beloved Northern Ireland/U.K. SF author and fan who died in February. Included are a useful bibliography and an article from 1975 wherein Shaw explains his invention of one of the most poetic and beautiful ideas ever to grace SF: "slow glass," which by tremendously slowing light's travel through itself enables you to view scenes from past years. Editors Martin Tudor and Steve Green join pros and fans Stephen Baxter, Keith Brooke, David Wake, and Greg Pickersgill in tributes to works such as *Orbitsville* and *The Ragged Astronauts;* to Shaw's classic fanwriting; and to his good-guy preeminence. Green notes that he first met the author at a convention venue where Shaw reigned supreme: "it was in a Novacon bar – which is on a parallel with joining John Huston on safari or Ernest Hemingway at a bullfight."

The issue also features agony and ecstasy, as in Jan van't Ent's interview with Vonda McIntyre: "My career has been attended by a good deal of luck; I sold the second story I ever sent out. (On the other hand, the first story I sent out was rejected 27 times, and though it finally was accepted, the magazine disappeared without a trace, taking my story with it.)" And just plain agony, as in Green's review of short fiction collection *The Eyes* by Spain's Jesus Ignacio Aldapuerta: "The war-maddened masturbator of 'Necrophile' stumbles out of *New Worlds* via the films of Jorg Buttgereit....these are dark tales of insanity and madness, foul splinters in the mind's eye." Sounds like a good bet for your bedside table. And look for this Buttgereit dude as GOH at your next media con for sure.

Eight pages of other good book reviews produce – in Roger Keen's piece *The Third Alternative*, a leading British short story zine – another rave for "Last Rites and Resurrections" by new U.S. writer Martin Simpson. Kiersten Stevenson of *CLF Newsletter* also loved it when it appeared in the U.S. small-press mag *The Silver Web*, as mentioned in *PB* 37. Remember? The story about grief counseling from talking roadkill? When two disparate sources go nuts over a dark-horse story like this, could well be worth checking out. As apparently is *The Reality Dysfunction* by Peter F. Hamilton, a 950-page space opera series opener that Martin Tudor found "every bit as grand, as wonderful and as fascinating as Iain Banks' 'Culture,' but...even more readable."

And in four pages of chatty, stream-of-consciousness fanzine reviews, Mike Siddall anoints *Anorak Redemption* from Nigel E Richardson as "a classic....the best single zine I've ever seen." He notes that Antony Shepherd's *The Disillusionist* #1 & #2 have it all: "Books, worldcons, cars, Creuzfeltd Jacob Disease, music, apazines, it's all in there....even caters to the fetishistic...with a Betty Page cover." In a look at *Pips* 1 by Jim Trash, he even sums up what we all want from fanzines: "something I had a vague 'I'll get around to it one of these days' interest in, being transformed by someone else's enthusiasm into a real desire to get in there and experience it for myself."

The Freethinker #5 June 1996 • Edited and published by Tom Feller • Box 13626, Jackson, MS 39236 • E-mail: Internet CCWS74A@prodigy.com; Prodigy CCWS74A; World Wide Web: http://pages.prodigy.com.trfeller/cover.htm • 28 pages including covers • 8 1/2 x 11 • the usual

The Freethinker isn't quite a perzine. But per this issue, if the title were *Tom Feller, Freethinker* or *Feller and Friends* it wouldn't require any change of content. Of the 17 pages of article space, 12 are filled by Editor/Publisher Tom Feller himself. (There are also 8 pages of letters from many of the usual freethinkers.) Luckily, he's got an interesting, well-stocked mind and varied tastes, so the diet doesn't really pall.

In covering a New Orleans conference of the International Association of Hospitality Accountants, Feller attends a presentation by freethinking scientist Clifford Stoll, who is flogging his newish book *Silicon Snake Oil*. Stoll doesn't totally buy into all the e-excitement around. He describes an experiment wherein he compared snail- with e-mail, arranging for a postcard to be sent from New York to California (same addresses each end) every day for 60 days, while also sending e-mail to himself from 5 different remote accounts. Average delivery time of e-mail: 12 minutes.

Postcards: 3 days or thereabouts. But, Stoll points out, every card came through, whereas 5 of the 60 e-mails were lost forever....

Later Feller sees a show by a French Quarter musician (Ed Peterson), who admits what we've all suspected: jazz song titles don't mean a damn thing. They're "just a way for the group to stay on the same page."

Farther on, Elizabeth Osborne reviews a scabbardful of movies from an historical POV in "Swords of Last Summer." Like *Rob Roy:* "a wonderful film....Even the cattle were the traditional shaggy haired breed from the Highlands." And *Braveheart:* "a great film, but there are some problems....Wallace spent the 7 years after Falkirk not as a guerrilla in Scotland's countryside but in [presumably comfier] exile at the French court."

Feller celebrates *Apollo 13*, the movie that "makes heroes out of techno-nerds," and compares the story to lead astronaut Jim Lovell's own words in his book *Lost Moon.* He also looks fairly favorably at *Toy Story, Goldeneye, Twelve Monkeys*, and *From Dusk Till Dawn.*

By the way, the zine's pretty good graphics are topped by a wicked guitar-playing lizardman showing his chops on the back cover (John Martello), and a cool full-page piece (Stephen Lewis Skeates) that sets four elaborate, muck-raking 1907 definitions of "imagination" to zippy modern toons.

Elsewhere, contributor Johnny Lowe tells the story of an ad agency colleague, a writer, who made fun of Lowe's Mississippi background and supposed illiteracy. So Lowe pointed out that Faulkner was from Mississippi. The writer's response: "Who?" As an ad agency writer myself, I hereby reveal a trade secret: literacy's got zip to do with advertising.

Speaking of books, in reviewing one called *Cultural Atlas of the Viking World* (editor: James Graham-Campbell), Feller disappointingly reveals that those horned helmets "have no basis whatsoever in historical fact." ... Fred Moody's *I Sing the Body Electric* paints a portrait of a Microsoft project team "so miserable, so angry, and [talking] so incessantly about frustration and disappointment" that you'd almost think they worked at my ad agency.... And in discussing a trade magazine article on insuring satellite launches, I guarantee Feller will make you feel better about your homeowner's bills: "An Ariane 5 may need as much as $600 million in insurance for a single launch."

Fearfully Tremulous Tiggers (*FTT* 20) March 1996 • Judith Hanna & Joseph Nicholas, 15 Jansons Road, South Tottenham, London N15 4JU, United Kingdom • 38 pages including covers • 8 1/4 x 11 11/16 • the usual or £1 per copy

Apparently the name of this impressive British zine changes every issue, always keeping the initials *FTT*. Which stands for a short imperative sentence that urges you to do something rude to (or perhaps nice with) The Tories. The politics here, like those of, say, the giant U.S. rightist zine *FOSFAX*, are certainly in your face. It may be just my own lefty leanings that find this face altogether more pleasing to gaze upon.

Not that this thing is gussied up. Listen to *FTT*'s attitude toward illustrations: "We do not believe in breaking up the text with scads of completely irrelevant little pictures which seem intended for no other purpose than to give the readers' brains a rest between all the dreadful long words." Take that! trivial fanworld artists.

So you have nice white paper with lots and lots of words, long and short. But while the body copy size is a little small to run the full width of the page, the type treatment otherwise is quite readable and sophisticated.

Besides the lettercol, with its 13 beautifully edited pages containing thoughtful stuff from luminaries like our own George Flynn, there are really only five articles here. But the mix is rich, and each is meaty and extremely well-written.

For instance, here's how Editor Judith Hanna leads off her lead article: "Telling your boss he's worse than Stalin is very satisfying — but it's a thing you can only do once." Turns out this one isn't just another crowd-pleasing bash-the-boss diatribe (although who won't throb with sympathy to lines like "Management by tantrum, backstabbing and changes of mind"?). It's also the saga of how Hanna canned the full-time grind and is reinventing her life via part-time work plus volunteerism plus self-improvement. "I can say from experience that having more time and less spare money is a lot more fun than mortgaging the days of your one and only life."

Especially if that life is spent in the America of the next two pieces. It's clear pretty quickly that we're not exactly talking about America the shining city upon the hill here.

First, Marjorie Thompson contributes a tart little memoir entitled "Under the Age of Consent: Growing Up With The Republican Right." For this daughter of a prominent California GOP activist, "Dinner table conversations [concerned]...the misdemeanours of the Kennedy family, the antics of trade union barons, and the audacity of Cesar Chavez who wanted lettuce and grape pickers to be paid a living wage." Eventually, Thompson no longer accepted, for instance, that "pre-Civil Rights Act, black people had been 'happy in their own restaurants.'" So in a happy-ever-after ending, she now works in London at the Commission for Racial Equality.

Things may not end so well for Judith Hanna's younger brother Julian. All through his fascinatingly dark account of the U.S. leg of his ramble around the world, he keeps saying things like, "I jumped out of the raft among all the exciting rapids, exclaiming, 'Hey everybody, I think this is where I die!'" Like Hunter S. Thompson's younger Aussie brother, with vivid prose and wild eye Hanna finds paranoia, race hatred, and police hassles from the slums of L.A. to the slums of New Orleans to the slums of Nuevo Laredo. He does take time out for a rodeo, a Native American sundance pain party, a homicidal chat with a cockfighting matron, and a drive straight into a hurricane which disappoints by failing to kill him. And he did like the Grand Canyon (despite the pollution) and the Alamo. You end by being glad "Deathwish" Hanna made the trip and wrote so interestingly about it – and ecstatic that you didn't go with him.

Seek out this issue in the NESFA archives for other interesting pieces. Like Editor Joseph Nicholas' meditation on the value of green landscape versus a (considerably

subhyperspace) highway bypass. Or Yvonne Rousseau's reprint of a 1953 historian's essay about an artifact suggesting that the great 15th century fleet of the Chinese admiral/eunuch Ch'eng Ho may have visited Australia before the Europeans.

I told you this zine was rich. It strikes that rare, just-right note between serious and lively. Although it's "a science fiction fanzine with scarcely any mention of science fiction — and scarcely any mention of science fiction fandom, for that matter..." So be warned. Or intrigued.

Opuntia 28 March 1996 • Published by Dale Speirs, Box 6830, Calgary, Alberta, Canada T2P 2E7 • 16 pages including covers • 5 1/2 x 8 1/2 • $3 for one-time sample, or the usual

To paraphrase an old Larry Niven passage – "Have you noticed in me a tendency to use profanity for emphasis?"

"Not really. Why?"

"The type in *Opuntia* is goddam small."

The typeface itself is a decent serif typewriter, the two-column layout is good, the half-size booklet format is interesting and theoretically easy to read (although running all text sideways to the gutter keeps you wanting to read down to the next page instead of up to the next column), even the margins are spacious. But to continue the Niven riff, at this type size even a Puppeteer would have trouble reading the thing. And a Puppeteer has eyes in its hands.

From what I can (dimly) make out, Editor Dale Speirs has here fashioned an austere little personal fanzine concentrating mostly on SF fandom itself.

He takes fandom pretty straight, at least in this issue. The zine jumps right into 3 1/2 pages of letters from several of the usual lettercol mafia. Coulson, Warner, Major, Penney et al. are obviously not real people at all, but each a rival worldwide omnipresent letterbombing army. Each grappling for world domination. Their only weapons keen insight, encyclopedic information, and mutant anteater tongues supernally adapted to licking stamps. Subjects this time include why fans are fat, what to do with your fanzine collection when you die, why there are more fan funds ("DUFF, CUFF, SNUFF, FLUFF") than actual fans, why fans are bearded (and fat, too, did we mention that?), and how to tell when a fact from the Internet is accurate (you can't).

By the way, my own explanation for why fans are fat I hereby entitle Burgeon's Law: Because "Ninety percent of everything is fat."

In any case, next Speirs includes a one-page article on a thought by *Apparatchik* Editor Andy Hooper – that e-mail is closely analogous to telegrams – and, running with it, imagines a world without e-mail but with cheap unlimited-length telegrams.

The rest of the issue continues mining this vein of communications technology back in our own world. A long article by Ken Faig Jr. presents an overview of amateur magazines. You know, zines.

Over 6 closely written pages plus a 2 1/2-page bibliography, Faig traces the form from early "manuscript magazines" issued in youth by Hawthorne, R. L. Stevenson, and the Brontes; through the boomlet created by the cheap hand press in the 1850s; to the big boom years of amateur press associations in the last quarter of the 19th century; and on into the 20th century with mimeographs, gelatin hectographs, and other enchanted duplicators. Plus a new hobby group, science fiction fans, that latched onto the idea in the 1930s and helped keep this quirky pastime alive into the present PC era.

There's plenty of interesting stuff to see here and in Speirs' concluding article on carbon paper etc., if you squint: One of the world's largest collections of amateur magazines may be found at the American Antiquarian Society in Worcester, Mass....The "bundle" or group collation system used for many SF fanzines was adopted primarily for the sake of "reduced expense and fewer hurt feelings"....*The Origin of Stencil Duplicating* by W. B. Proudfoot (London, Hutchinson & Co., 1972), a major source, also deals with the history of carbon paper, typewriters, and the hectograph...."Proudfoot was a retired employee of the Gestetner company, and his book largely deals with the times of David Gestetner.... Carbon paper failed until the typewriter arrived in 1873. Hectographs struggled until the invention of aniline inks in 1856 and the importation of long-fibre paper from Japan circa 1868."

And then there's my favorite thought here, in Speirs' closing: political revolutionaries, who could be jailed for possessing a printing press, "liked hectographs because the secret police could not arrest them for possession of a few packets of gelatin and a cake pan..."

Proper Boskonian 7 • April 1971 • Editor Richard Harter • For copies, query current PB address • 60 pages including covers • 8 1/2 x 11 • $3 or the usual

Return with us to the thrilling sensawunda days of yesteryear, when Richard Nixon and John Campbell ruled. When young lions Suford and Tony Lewis, Joe Ross, and Leslie Turek had only dared to dream of the galactic conrunning/publishing empire that NESFA would become. When letters to the editor raved about the great art Jack Gaughan was creating for *If* and *Galaxy*. Or criticized reviews of Ace Doubles. Or anticipated better service once the Post Office became a corporation.

This is the world of 26 years ago, when *Proper Boskonian* 7 was first published. Feeling nostalgic, current Editor Ken Knabbe recently ran off reprints of many of the early issues – which I'm sure he'd appreciate my mentioning are ON SALE NOW – and, in the spirit of this year's Retro-Hugos, presented two issues for review.

A first impression of *PB* 7 is how mainstream it is, with all the names one grew up reading from the early 60s on. The answers given to an SF quiz from the previous issue are works like Clarke's "The Star" and "The Nine Billion Names of God," Bester's *The Stars My Destination*, Heinlein's *Glory Road*, Rudyard Kipling's entry in a Groff Conklin anthology, and Eric Frank Russell's "Allamagoosa."

Guess the New Wave hadn't washed over Boston yet.

Because nowhere in this issue will you find a single mention of Ursula Le Guin, who'd published *The Left Hand*

of Darkness the year before. Or Samuel R. Delany, with *Babel-17* (1966), *The Einstein Intersection* (1967), and *Nova* (1968) all out. Or Harlan Ellison with his *Dangerous Visions* (1967). Or John Brunner and his *Stand on Zanzibar* (1968). Or Roger Zelazny, who'll live forever for *This Immortal* (1966) and *Lord of Light* (1967).

Well, enough diving for dates. You get the picture. Good thing a brash young letter-writer from Toronto named Mike Glicksohn recommended a new Philip K. Dick book called *Ubik* (1969) (though "admittedly it's confusing and there is no resolution"), or this issue would have approximately zero 1996 spec lit crit cred.

Enough higher criticism: let's wallow in nostalgia, shall we? Here's Young Tony Lewis at play in the fields of Philcon: "I walked in and was met by Andy Porter yelling: get out of town Boston hippies....All drinks were 75 cents mixed, beer, or tonics....That's high for tonic or beer but seems reasonable for mixed drinks....The pros started drifting in: Harry [Stubbs], Ben Bova, Tom Purdom, Gordy Dickson, Bob Silverberg (and Barbara), David Gerrold....I think I saw Keith Laumer....Lester [del Rey].....Alex and Cory [Panshin] were there... [discussing] 'I Will Fear No Evil'....[The hotel] was a Sheraton and the chain is very anxious to get ALL sf conventions since we are good people, cause little trouble, don't barf on the rugs, pay lots money at the bars, and in general behave ourselves." Early days yet, indeed.

Youthful Joe Ross weighs in with a timeless discussion of why SF magazines are on the way out. "Why do so many protagonists in modern fiction have to be such incompetent, selfish [here Joe's editor lets him use a word my editor won't]?....We are subjected to that idiot who let himself get pushed around by Mrs. Robinson, and in SF we've got Jack Barron....It's about time someone running the prozines made things happen." Instead of holding your breath, I'd pursue that law career, young man.

There are also fake science papers, a puzzle, a word game, a fizzy piece on the art of Coke bottle stacking by Sweet Sixteen (or thereabouts) Sue Lewis, and lots of 1970 art by Mike Gilbert, William Rotsler, and others. Lastly, it wouldn't be a proper *Proper Boskonian* without a British Isles trip report. This one sends a young thing named Marsha Elkin to a European SF convention named HEICON, although it somewhat mysteriously begins with an account of a canoe trip on the Concord River by a group including whitewater ace Leslie Turek. Later, though, Marsha attends a party in London with U.K. writers E. C. "Ted" Tubb and Kenneth Bulmer, where "We talked, and talked, and talked. My hat was admired and I was chided for wearing slacks. Either Ted or Ken explained that while slacks were O.K., how could they tell how good my legs were if I didn't wear minis. I apologized." You've got a long way to go, baby.

Proper Boskonian 8 • July 1971 • Editor Richard Harter • For copies, query current PB address • 86 pages including covers • 8 1/2 x 11 • $3 or the usual

Comic genius Steven Wright describes the dictionary as a book about everything. From a fannish point of view, that's pretty much the story with *PB* 8. It's sort of the reverse of a theme issue: 86 pages of material on everything from 1971's hottest fan feuds to Yugoslav operas to surrealistic recipes to collecting tables of contents to the difference between Sherlockiana and Holmesiana to falling in love with a brass axe.

Surprisingly, the issue's charm is at least as Continental as *Critical Wave*'s, with contributions by several Brits. And an apparently serious rave review by Nathan Childers for something called *The Great Interstellar Marshmallow Conspiracy*, a classical comic opera "which is sung in Croatian and which was distributed only in Yugoslavia (except for smuggled copies)." So you may not recall the showstopper, "Marshmallow Moon Over Belgrade."

There's also Italian TAFF delegate Mario B. Bosnyak with the longest word in the German language. (You probably thought it was DONAUDAMPFSCHIFFARTSGESELLSCHFTSKAPITANSWITWE, but Mario says it's really HIMMIHERRGOTZAGGRAMENTZEFIXALLELUJAMILEXTAMARSCHSCHEISSGLUMPFAREGTZ. And adds "If you don't find out what it means, I'll be glad to translate it for you if I can make it to Noreascon." See you in 2001, then, Mario? Super.

Several old stalwarts check in with contributions. Marsha Elkin continues the Heicon report begun last ish. By the end of this second installment she still hasn't made it to the con. You do learn, however, that Heicon will be (was?) in Heidelberg, a fact that she lightheartedly neglected to mention anywhere in Part 1. This chapter covers outings to such Heidelbergian suburbs as Liverpool, Bristol, and Oxford. While shopping for snuff boxes, she falls in love with the aforementioned brass axe, "double bitted with a stiletto in the haft and lovely chasing on the haft and blade." Note that this fondness is never explained. Perhaps she wanted to give some Heidelberg student really interesting dueling scars.

From his cradle, Craig McDonough researches corollaries to techdom's beloved Murphy's Law that probably still come in handy for Craig's consulting work today. "All warranty and guarantee clauses become void upon payment of the invoice....Tolerances will accumulate unidirectionally toward maximum difficulty of assembly....All constants are variables....Interchangeable parts aren't."

Mike Glicksohn muses that "it is an eerie feeling to open a fanzine and read a letter that I appear to have written and of which I have no memory at all!" One recalls that substance abuse was perhaps even more prevalent among fans in 1971 than today.

For instance, Editor Richard Harter had clearly been abusing some kind of duplicating fluid. He has a good lead article making fun of a faction called The Fannish Insurgency, which author Gregory Benford may now be embarrassed he once supported. But at the end of the zine, Harter spends pages goofily giving and soliciting advice on fanzine printing technicalities: "You can get that kind of effect if the burn voltage is set too low. The proper burn voltage for cutting a stencil varies widely with the brand of electrostencil....If anybody knows where I can get 30 lb buff for under a dollar a ream, please let me know....If you pay four dollars and up for a quire of stencils, which is what most

people pay retail, you are being robbed." Noted, Richard. Now put down that crank handle and let's talk this out.

It happens to all fan editors sooner or later, I guess. Right, Ken? And for more in the Some Things Never Change Department, here's Harter again, with a timeless and pathetic plaint forming the last words on the last page: "This issue slipped about a month and a half for various reasons. I have enough material for another issue right away but I don't have the time. I just don't have the time. No way. Actually a quarterly schedule isn't possible – three times a year, yes, but quarterly, no."

Zina 1 June 1995 • Published by Barnaby Rapoport • 407 Noxon Road, LaGrangeville, NY 12540 • 14 pages including covers • 8 1/2 x 11 • the usual or $1

This charming, perceptive, pink, editor-created zine was accompanied by an addenda sheet, which introduces you to Editor Rapoport's light touch while touching on an apparent paradox of physics all too familiar to many fans. About his recent move to a new address: "That was an education. A paperback book seems so innocuously portable! So small, so light in weight! I suppose an individual army ant seems harmless too."

There's a lovely cover page, initially bewildering because there's no zine title, number, date, or any of the usual stuff. Instead, you get a page of small-set text attributed to Philip K. Dick's *The Divine Invasion*, with a breezy accompanying Diana Harlan Stein illustration. Reading this — let's call it, this overt meta-text — answers several questions. Why is the zine called *Zina?* What form will it take? What will be its attitude toward the universe? Why is it pink?

It's all embedded here in the Dick quote. A cool move, this. How many other zine covers ever make you think?

The inside confirms this favorable impression. First with design: good typeface choice and size in a classically readable two-column format, with clean use of rules and boxes, really pops off the hot pink stock. (Although it's awfully belt-and-suspenders to signal para breaks with indents plus line space between paras, no?) The credited "Design Goddess," Nevenah Smith, could definitely find other pubs that need her divine design intervention throughout the fanzine world.

Early on, Rapoport swears "zines are the main subject of *Zina*." Well, maybe next time. Because this 14-page issue has 8 pages of summer movie reviews (*Die Hard With a Vengeance, Crimson Tide, Johnny Mnemonic, Mad Love, Congo*, and *Batman Forever*, plus *Bar Girls*, a lesbian date movie which tops off this testosterone fest with a cooling draft of "subversive pop"). Plus maybe 3½ pages of fanzine reviews. (He approves the party line of *Apparatchik*, but dares to find bits of the revered *Mimosa* 16 stodgy and "hopeless," and questions (OK, slaughters) an "unctuous, self-serving" piece wherein popular SF writer Mike Resnick claims a close, selfless relationship with fandom). Add a 3-page introduction that mixes material on naming *Zina* together with CD reviews, a description of the new drink Zima (apparently just charcoal-filtered malt liquor covertly bottled by Coors), and heavy needling about *Apparatchik*'s Andy Hooper's failure to make Rapoport a lifetime subscriber despite a rashly published promise.

Hooper is featured prominently among Rapoport's nice clear goofy little line drawings. However, if Hooper does not in fact resemble a turtle-headed donut with flippers and pincers, let's hope he's a good sport.

There's a good mind at work (and play) here. Rapoport looks at things we all chatter about — zines, books, movies — and thinks his own thoughts. For instance, that puns and "tiresome wordplay" are way overdone in most zines. (Don't think he and I will reach a good rapoport on that one anytime soon.) He feels the latest *Die Hard* should have tried harder to give the heroes, not the villains, opportunities for what we really want from such flicks: "justified mayhem" like the amok cab shortcut through Central Park. And he gets off some good lines, which is what I really want from such zines. About *Congo:* "The cast is so bland I forget who they are...." Or *Johnny Mnemonic:* "all of Gibson's moody poetry has evaporated, leaving that now-inert shell of wit and coolness around what replaces it, stale generic subroutines." And on his own creation: "The great thing about first issues is that no one knows how late they are."

Unfortunately not true of second issues, though, Barnaby. We're waiting....

PROPER BOSKONIAN, THE GORY YEARS

by Richard Harter, FN

The current editor of *Proper Boskonian* seems to be under the unfounded impression that a recounting of my stint as editor of *PB* would be of value, either historical or possibly having entertainment value. I am loath to disagree with this amiable delusion, being an agreeable chap whose only fault is an inflated opinion of the quality of his writings. (I may have some other slight faults but none to speak of, so we shan't speak of them.) Said editor, who evidently is quite desperate for material, has taken advantage of my good nature and has induced me to write this account.

BIRTH OF A FANZINE

Once upon a time, in a cataclysmic event best left unrecorded by fannish historians, an SF club called NESFA came into being. The founding progenitors did conceive that it was right and proper that NESFA should publish a journal of fact and opinion devoted to divers topics related to science fiction, and did therefore decree the establishment of said journal and did set its title to be *Proper Boskonian*.

Such was the importance of this journal in the eyes of the founders that they did further decide that the editor of the *Proper Boskonian* should be an elected officer of the club. In due course elections were held and one Cory Seidman, now the good wife of Alex Panshin, was elected to be the first editor.

Cory served well and ably as founding editor, bringing out issues 1 to 4 of *PB*, volumes having inestimable collector's value. In truth Cory suffered under certain disadvantages. NESFA had not yet attained that glorious pre-eminence which marks it today as the marvel and wonder of fandom, nor were any of its members of that early day known as publishing giants of the fanzine press. In consequence Cory had to scrounge for material. In this effort she exercised her feminine wiles to good effect on susceptible young artists. None the less, early issues tended to be slender.

AN EDITOR IS BORN

Time passed (it has a way of doing that, you know) and Cory wished to pass on the torch of editorial glory. Thus it was that yours truly seized the moment (the poor thing was flopping around unattended), and volunteered for the post. It cannot be said that I had any qualifications for the post except for the crucial one of being willing, indeed eager to take on the job. Oh, I had written a few pieces for the *Twilight Zine* and for *Stroon*, but I had never been a fanzine publisher.

So there I was with folders of inherited material and a fanzine to bring out. By dint of pulling together material on hand and by reprinting a *Boston Globe* article relating Russell Seitz's acquisition of the components of an ICBM, I produced *PB 5*. I then went on to publish several more issues. Unlike the early issues these were fat rather than slender. They also had a quite distinctive style filled with editorial presence. (Every one agreed that they were filled with something—I prefer to call it editorial presence.)

In my efforts as editor I was helped no end by Marsha Elkin, who had recently divorced Charlie Brown (of *Locus* fame). Unlike myself, Marsha had worked on major fanzines such as *NIEKAS* (then in its glory days as a Hugo winner) and had extensive contacts throughout fandom. During the period when we were intimate associates she was *de facto* co-editor. It was she who taught a hapless farm boy some of the fancier tricks of fanzine publishing. I also wish to acknowledge the noble efforts of Mike Symes who acted as art editor.

I brought out issues 5 to 9 of *PB* and was associated with *PB 18*. Over time *PB* became fatter and more ornate, notable for its spectacular amount of artwork and an ever expanding letter column. This, by the way, is a normal phenomenon—boy editor does fanzine, does enthusiasm, fanzine grows, fanzine bloats, old man editor says the hell with it. From youth to age takes 2-3 years.

ACQUIRING THE GESTETNER 466

PB 5 and 6 were printed on the evil Arluis's AB Dick, a quite serviceable electric mimeograph. Subsequent issues, however, were published on a Gestetner 466, a fell machine that was state of the art in mimeography in those ancient days.

We acquired this machine second hand from a furniture store that had used it to print broadsides hawking their wares. We were quite fortunate to do so, for a new Gestetner 466 would have cost a great deal of money, far beyond the slender resources of the club in those days. Yes children, there was a day when NESFA was impoverished and virtuous, when it did not own real estate and swollen coffers.

All of this, mind you, was twenty very odd years ago, long before desktop publishing and Microsoft Word®. Inexpensive reproduction meant mimeography. One typed (using real typewriters) material onto stencils, wax coated sheets which were placed on a drum on the mimeograph. The drum rotated, ink from inside the drum went through a silk screen through the stencil

and onto the paper, said ink coming from tubes of ink paste which had to be changed from time to time. We also acquired an electro-stenciler which cut stencils from originals. This could, if one were patient, cut stencils with several hundred dots per inch. In practice the supply of patience was not that great, and the electro-stenciler was mostly used for cutting artwork.

The G466 had a number of merits. It was fast, something that you will appreciate if you have to produce 500 copies of a 100 page fanzine. The quality of the reproduction was good. The registration was reliable. And it was easy to change colors of ink. *[One is still used for color.—Ed.]*

Thus did NESFA acquire the machine which would be used to produce issues of *PB* and divers other publications, including many APAzines. As editor and fanzine hacker, yours truly provided a home for the G466 first in Cambridge, where it resided in the dining room, and then later in Concord, where it graced the basement.

THE MAGIC SELECTRIC

In these latter days of personal computers, laser jet printers, and all of the other electronic paraphernalia that has made Bill Gates disgustingly rich, it is hard to realize the primitive state of typography in the antiquity of the 1970's.

Your old fashioned typewriter only had one font. IBM, however, had come out with the Selectric typewriter which had a removable bouncing ball. You could remove the ball and replace it with another one having a different font. I acquired one of these magic typewriters and got several fonts, thus becoming a fanzine editor with a greater than usual number of balls.

This meant that *PB* had multiple fonts—generally the choices were Courier for ordinary text, and italics for editorial comments.

PLAIN AND FANCY REPRO

Those of you fortunate enough to have seen and read those early monuments to mediocre publishing will have noticed that it was printed in multiple colors, with exuberant amounts of artwork. This was no simple matter.

What we did was to make separate passes to print the artwork and the text. The artwork would be electrostenciled separately with separate small pieces on one sheet. We would then cut out said pieces with a border around the artwork itself. We would take blank stencils and cut holes in them where the artwork would go. The piece of stencil with the artwork was then pasted over the hole using Magic® transparent to tape it down. This was moderately tricky because the tape wanted to stick to everything; any errors of laying things down would cause the stencil to wrinkle.

The game was to run all of the text stencils off first, and then run the artwork in subsequent passes. There were odds and ends to take care of. Stencils which had a large solid area on one side tended to shift position during the course of a run. Mimeo ink is heavier than the ink used in offset press and modern printers, and hence had a tendency to leave ink tracks from one sheet to the next. You got around this by slip sheeting. This means putting something between each sheet as it comes off the drum. The G466 had a slip sheeting attachment which dropped pieces of cardboard onto the sheets as they came into the hopper. This bit of mechanics was on the rickety side and didn't work all that well at higher speeds, so I only slip-sheeted the artwork passes.

Mimeo ink being heavier meant problems with see-through and bleeding. We found the cheaper mimeo paper with the soft surface was actually better for avoiding all sorts of problems with repro quality. The one real problem with it was that it threw off a lot of lint, which meant that the mimeo had to be cleaned frequently.

CADGING MATERIAL

In theory *PB* was to be a showcase of material from members of NESFA and so it was, more or less. NESFA members such as Tony Lewis, Suford, Doug Hoylman, Jim Saklad, Cory Seidman and Joe Ross all contributed articles and reviews. There were odds and ends of anonymous humor pieces, most of which have been reprinted endlessly over the years in fanzines, in Usenet newsgroups and, of late, on the Web.

I picked up a few pieces from kin and friends. My sister Lois wrote a mundane con report on an SAA convention; fandom is a much nicer place. J.R.B. Whittlesey Jr. (the research director at a geophysics company that I consulted for) did a piece on LSD research. Whittlesey was an interesting duck; he used to meditate long-distance from Texas on the company WATS line with his guru in Colorado.

Marsha Elkin brought in her train new sources of material. Marsha was the author of the endless *Heicon Report*. Marsha also had numerous contacts in fandom, particularly among the LA contingent. She was a regular contributor to *APA-L* by long distance, and induced me to also become a contributor. Thus it was that we got a regular column from Tom Digby (he of *Chocolate Man-Hole Cover* fame), and some nice stuff from Dian Girard Pelz.

On the whole the printed material in those issues was so-so. It was fun but not exceptional. Like the buffet at an all you can eat restaurant, there was plenty of it and it was edible, but you wouldn't rave about it in a guide to gourmet restaurants.

ART WORK AND GILBERT MANIA

The art work was another matter. I had two excellent artists who were heavy duty contributors, Mike Symes and Mike Gilbert. Mike Symes was a Mattapan refugee. Mike Gilbert was married to Sheila, Marsha's sister. Both did elaborate art sequences. One of the nice things about having good repro equipment was that we could do reasonable justice to the art work.

The secret of getting fan art is to send copies of your zine to fan artists you want material from. A gentle letter asking for material doesn't hurt either. Fan artists like to have their stuff appear in fanzines. They particularly like it when it is treated well.

It is noteworthy that there are a number of Rotsler cartoons. Bill Rotsler has been generously contributing cartoons to fanzines for 50 years. At LACon III he won the 1996 fan art Hugo and the retrospective 1946 fan art Hugo - the only man to win two Hugos for the same category at the same convention.

THE NEVER ENDING LETTER COLUMN

One of the most notable things about my stint as editor of *PB* is the steady inflation of the letter column. The rest of the 'zine didn't get any bigger, but the letter column grew and grew. In part this was simply because it was being produced regularly and was being sent out to more people. There was a more insidious reason, however. As you may have noticed I babble in print a lot. What happened was that I started out in the world by making short editorial comments at the end of each letter. As time went on, said comments got longer and longer and more discursive, until well over half of the letter column was editorial comments. By *PB 9* the letter column occupied 36 of the 82 pages.

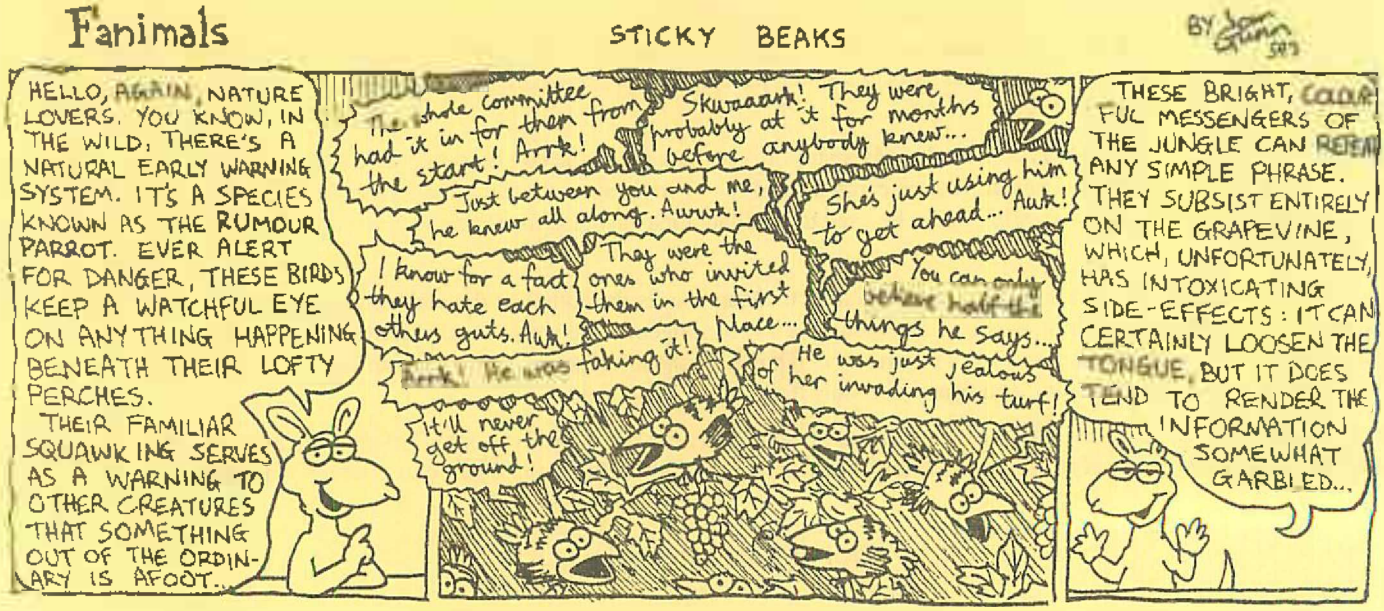
MARK ANDERSON

PB 9 was my last issue as editor. It did not end my connection with *PB* however; I continued to run off stencils on the G466. Other, saner people took over and produced shorter issues. In the late 1970's Mark Saler, a local Concord fan attending Concord Academy, and I, invented a fictitious fan, one Mark Anderson. We created APA contributions for him and enrolled him as a member of NESFA. (The fabrication of non-existent people is an ancient fannish tradition.) In due course Mark became the editor of *PB* and brought out *PB 18*, the Richard Harter retrospective issue, in which I was slandered shamelessly by my nearest and dearest.

PERSONAL NOTES AND OTHERWISE

After having burnt out on *PB 9* (the last page of which has a pathetic plaint about being tired of running off stencils) I decided that I really did want to do a fanzine, only what I really wanted was to do a small personalzine. I forthwith started a 'zine called *Personal Notes* which ran through nine issues. Nine seems to be an inauspicious number—if I ever break into double digits, I will be in the big time. The theory was that I wouldn't worry about getting art work and articles and such—I would just babble about whatever occurred to me to babble about. The theory was good but *PN* suffered from the same fate as *PB*. The letter column grew and grew and grew. *PN* started out as a sloppy little personalzine; it turned into a sloppy fat personalzine.

I had the material for *PN 10* and had run about half of it off when things slowed down, and then I started a company and time for fanzines disappeared. Years went by as I struggled with my long range plan to get rich slowly. Finally time reappeared and I said "Aha, I will finally bring out *PN 10*." But I didn't. Instead I took the material and created a Web site instead. A copy of this material may be found there at http://www.tiac.net/users/cri/pblist.html. *[There is a link from the NESFA Web site—Ed.]*

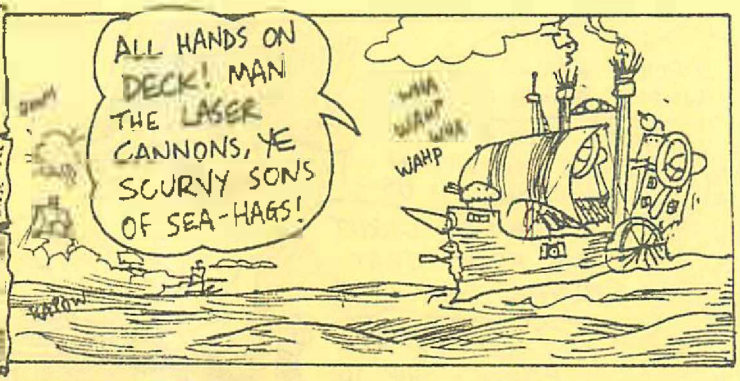


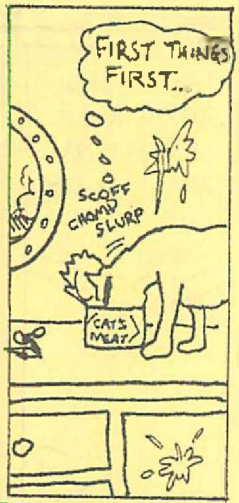
SPACE ☆ TIME Buccaneers

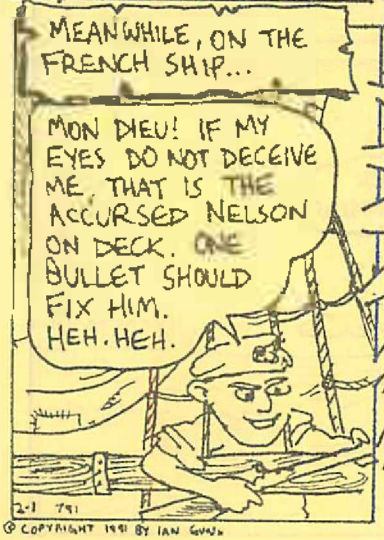
BY Ian Gunn

EPISODE TWO

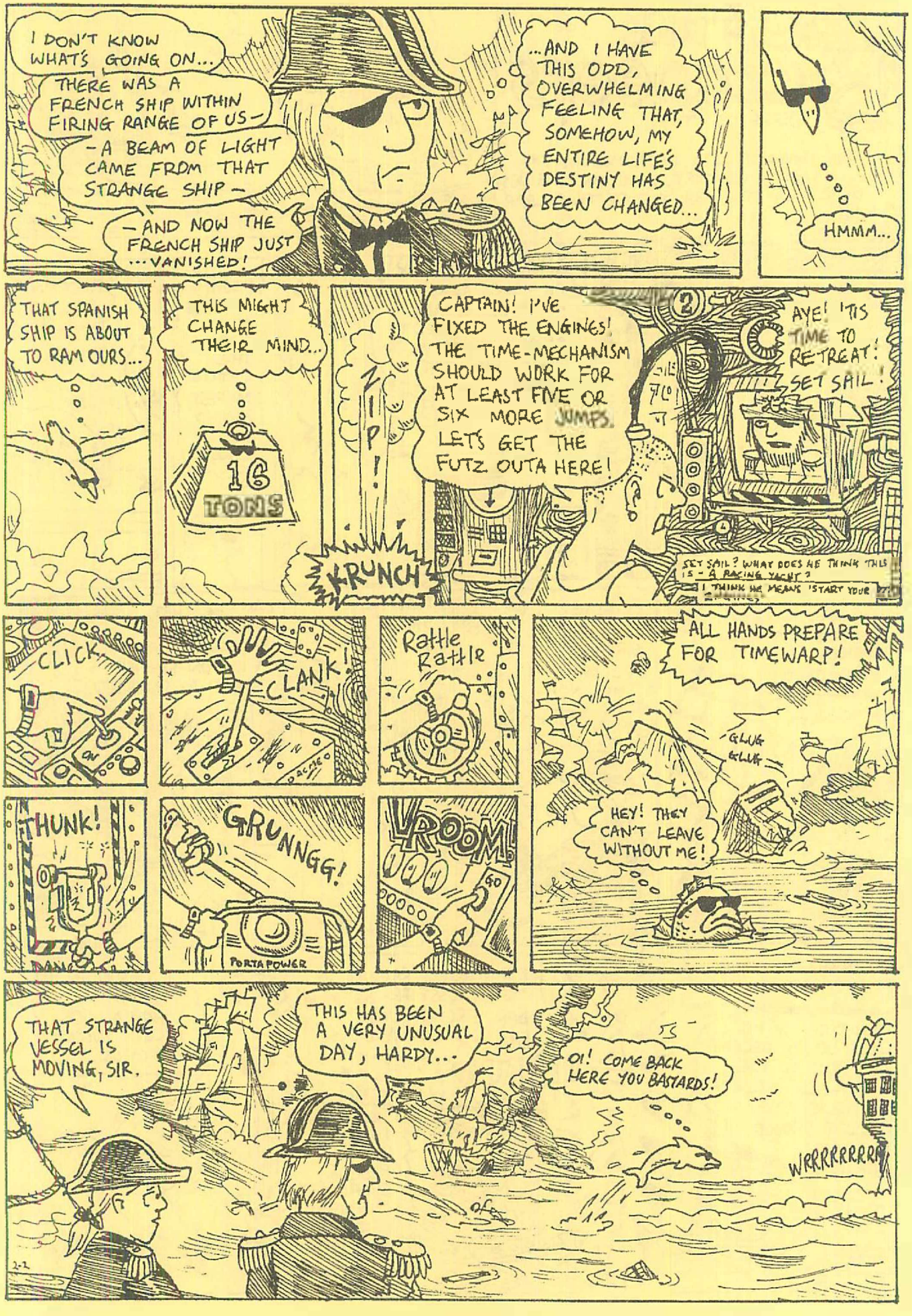
THE TIMESHIP LAYS BECALMED IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY, WITH ITS ENGINES DEAD AND THE BATTLE OF TRAFALGAR HEADING ITS WAY...

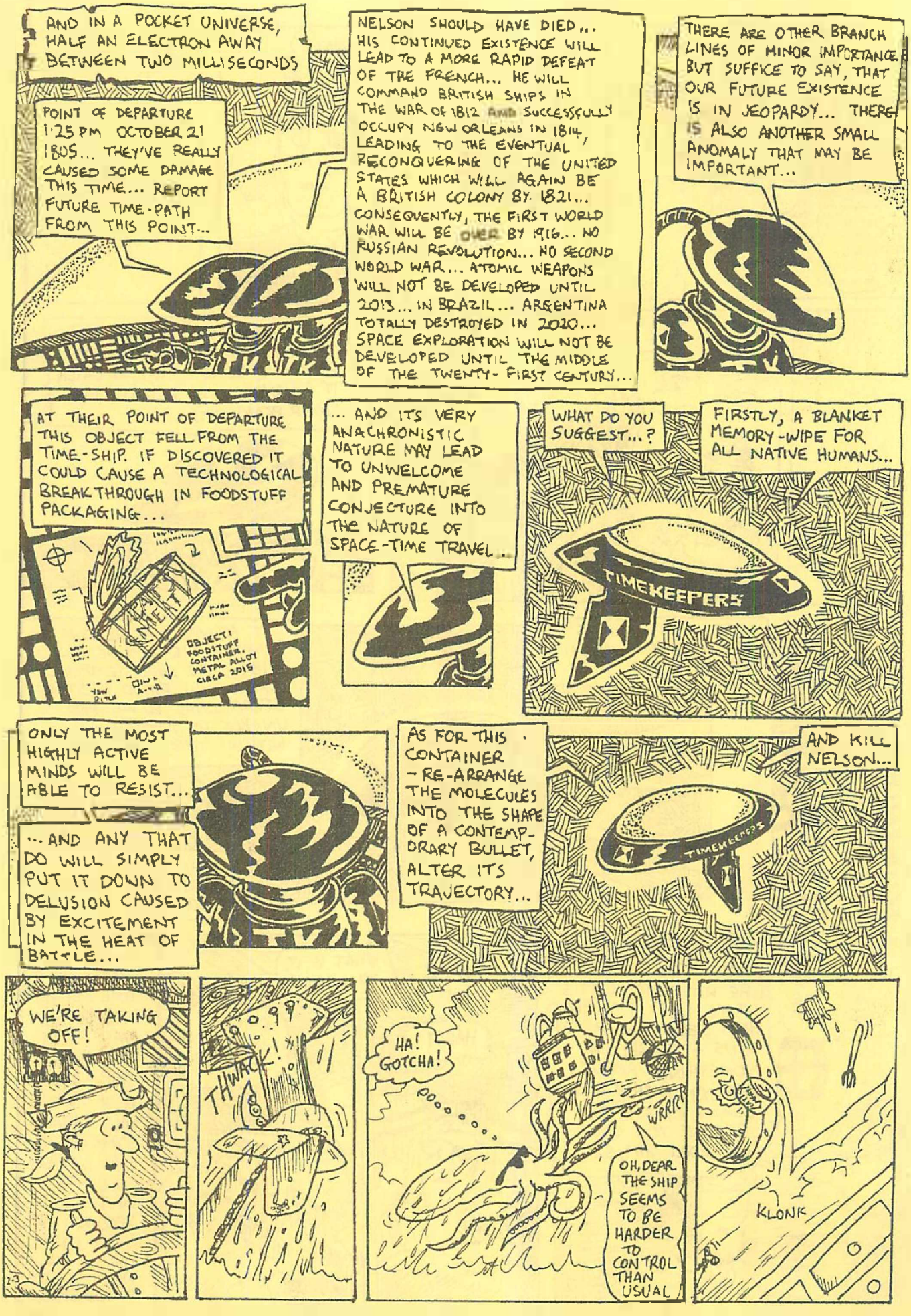


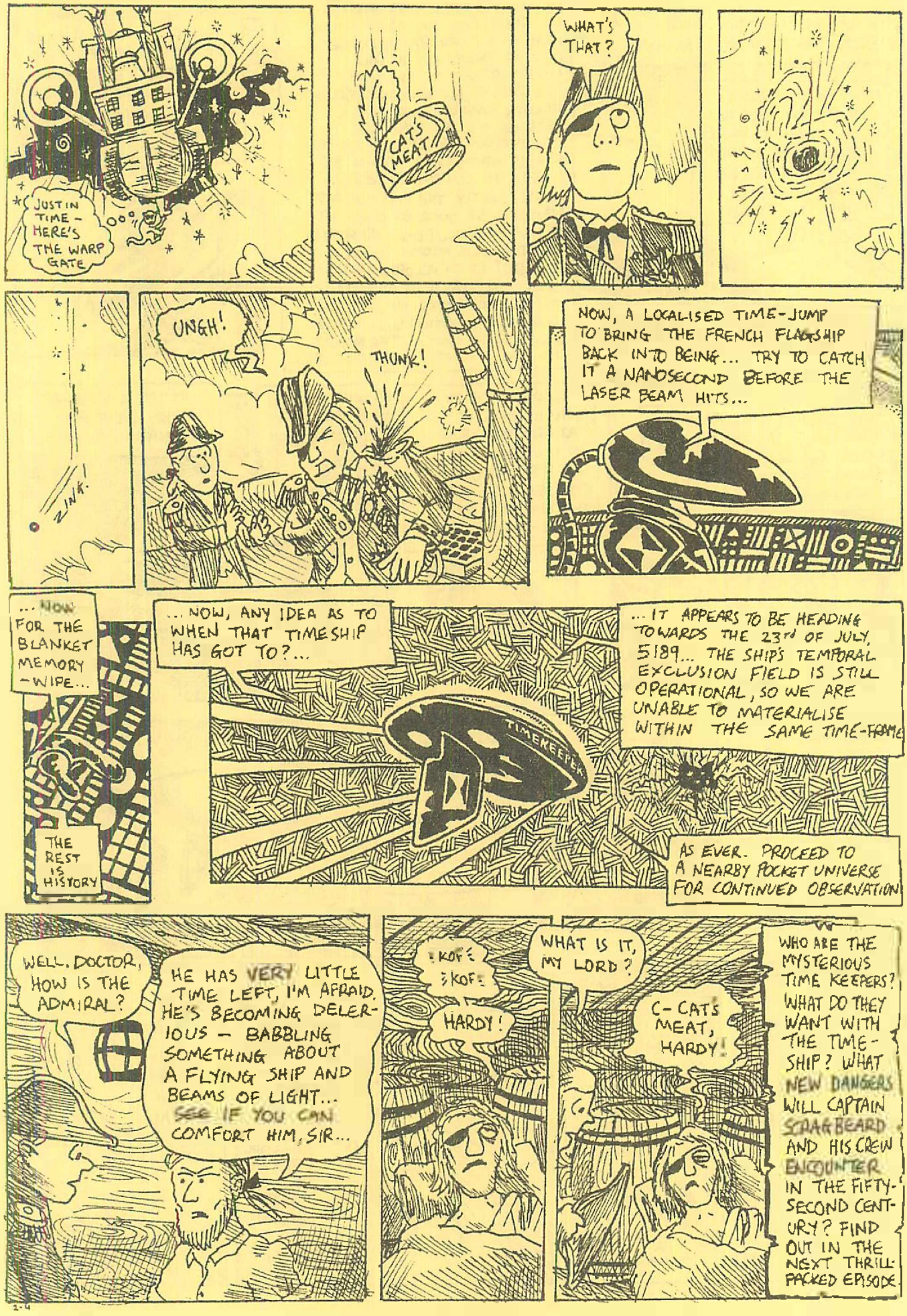




2-1 '91


I DON'T KNOW WHAT'S GOING ON...
THERE WAS A FRENCH SHIP WITHIN FIRING RANGE OF US—
—A BEAM OF LIGHT CAME FROM THAT STRANGE SHIP—
—AND NOW THE FRENCH SHIP JUST ...VANISHED!
...AND I HAVE THIS ODD, OVERWHELMING FEELING THAT, SOMEHOW, MY ENTIRE LIFE'S DESTINY HAS BEEN CHANGED...
HMMM...
THAT SPANISH SHIP IS ABOUT TO RAM OURS...
THIS MIGHT CHANGE THEIR MIND..
16 TONS
ZIP!
KRUNCH
CAPTAIN! I'VE FIXED THE ENGINES! THE TIME-MECHANISM SHOULD WORK FOR AT LEAST FIVE OR SIX MORE JUMPS. LET'S GET THE FUTZ OUTA HERE!
AYE! 'TIS TIME TO RETREAT! SET SAIL!
SET SAIL? WHAT DOES HE THINK THIS IS - A RACING YACHT?
I THINK HE MEANS 'START YOUR ENGINES'
CLICK
ON
CLANK!
SCENE
Rattle Rattle
ALL HANDS PREPARE FOR TIMEWARP!
GLUG GLUG
HEY! THEY CAN'T LEAVE WITHOUT ME!
THUNK!
GRUNNGG!
PORTA POWER
VROOM
GO
THAT STRANGE VESSEL IS MOVING, SIR.
THIS HAS BEEN A VERY UNUSUAL DAY, HARDY...
OI! COME BACK HERE YOU BASTARDS!
WRRRRRRRR
2-2


AND IN A POCKET UNIVERSE, HALF AN ELECTRON AWAY BETWEEN TWO MILLISECONDS
POINT OF DEPARTURE 1:25 PM OCTOBER 21 1805... THEY'VE REALLY CAUSED SOME DAMAGE THIS TIME... REPORT FUTURE TIME-PATH FROM THIS POINT...
NELSON SHOULD HAVE DIED... HIS CONTINUED EXISTENCE WILL LEAD TO A MORE RAPID DEFEAT OF THE FRENCH... HE WILL COMMAND BRITISH SHIPS IN THE WAR OF 1812 AND SUCCESSFULLY OCCUPY NEW ORLEANS IN 1814, LEADING TO THE EVENTUAL RECONQUERING OF THE UNITED STATES WHICH WILL AGAIN BE A BRITISH COLONY BY 1821... CONSEQUENTLY, THE FIRST WORLD WAR WILL BE OVER BY 1916... NO RUSSIAN REVOLUTION... NO SECOND WORLD WAR... ATOMIC WEAPONS WILL NOT BE DEVELOPED UNTIL 2013... IN BRAZIL... ARGENTINA TOTALLY DESTROYED IN 2020... SPACE EXPLORATION WILL NOT BE DEVELOPED UNTIL THE MIDDLE OF THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY...
THERE ARE OTHER BRANCH LINES OF MINOR IMPORTANCE BUT SUFFICE TO SAY, THAT OUR FUTURE EXISTENCE IS IN JEOPARDY... THERE IS ALSO ANOTHER SMALL ANOMALY THAT MAY BE IMPORTANT...
AT THEIR POINT OF DEPARTURE THIS OBJECT FELL FROM THE TIME-SHIP. IF DISCOVERED IT COULD CAUSE A TECHNOLOGICAL BREAKTHROUGH IN FOODSTUFF PACKAGING...
OBJECT: FOODSTUFF CONTAINER. METAL ALLOY CIRCA 2015
... AND ITS VERY ANACHRONISTIC NATURE MAY LEAD TO UNWELCOME AND PREMATURE CONJECTURE INTO THE NATURE OF SPACE-TIME TRAVEL...
WHAT DO YOU SUGGEST...?
FIRSTLY, A BLANKET MEMORY-WIPE FOR ALL NATIVE HUMANS...
TIMEKEEPERS
ONLY THE MOST HIGHLY ACTIVE MINDS WILL BE ABLE TO RESIST...
... AND ANY THAT DO WILL SIMPLY PUT IT DOWN TO DELUSION CAUSED BY EXCITEMENT IN THE HEAT OF BATTLE...
AS FOR THIS CONTAINER - RE-ARRANGE THE MOLECULES INTO THE SHAPE OF A CONTEMPORARY BULLET, ALTER ITS TRAJECTORY...
AND KILL NELSON...
TIMEKEEPERS
WE'RE TAKING OFF!
THWACK!
HA! GOTCHA!
OOOOOO
WRRR!
OH, DEAR. THE SHIP SEEMS TO BE HARDER TO CONTROL THAN USUAL
KLONK


JUST IN TIME - HERE'S THE WARP GATE
CAT'S MEAT
WHAT'S THAT?
ZINK!
UNGH!
THUNK!
NOW, A LOCALISED TIME-JUMP TO BRING THE FRENCH FLAGSHIP BACK INTO BEING... TRY TO CATCH IT A NANOSECOND BEFORE THE LASER BEAM HITS...
... NOW FOR THE BLANKET MEMORY-WIPE...
THE REST IS HISTORY
... NOW, ANY IDEA AS TO WHEN THAT TIMESHIP HAS GOT TO?...
TIMEKEEPER
... IT APPEARS TO BE HEADING TOWARDS THE 23rd OF JULY, 5189... THE SHIP'S TEMPORAL EXCLUSION FIELD IS STILL OPERATIONAL, SO WE ARE UNABLE TO MATERIALISE WITHIN THE SAME TIME-FRAME
AS EVER. PROCEED TO A NEARBY POCKET UNIVERSE FOR CONTINUED OBSERVATION
WELL, DOCTOR, HOW IS THE ADMIRAL?
HE HAS VERY LITTLE TIME LEFT, I'M AFRAID. HE'S BECOMING DELERIOUS - BABBLING SOMETHING ABOUT A FLYING SHIP AND BEAMS OF LIGHT... SEE IF YOU CAN COMFORT HIM, SIR...
KOF KOF
HARDY!
WHAT IS IT, MY LORD?
C-CAT'S MEAT, HARDY!
WHO ARE THE MYSTERIOUS TIME KEEPERS? WHAT DO THEY WANT WITH THE TIME-SHIP? WHAT NEW DANGERS WILL CAPTAIN SCRAGBEARD AND HIS CREW ENCOUNTER IN THE FIFTY-SECOND CENTURY? FIND OUT IN THE NEXT THRILL-PACKED EPISODE

Readercon 8 convention report by Kenneth Knabbe

After taking a year off, a rested Readercon committee returned with a new hotel. Held July 12–14, 1996, at the Westborough Marriott, the convention was largely a success. Even after skipping a year, and talk of difficulty getting to the hotel, about 350 people attended.

I found the hotel very friendly and seemed to be honestly interested in seeing to the needs of all there. Function space was plentiful. With only 350, people the convention seemed laid out just right. For future years, there were four small function rooms not even used. By reallocating usage, the convention can grow to 600 without feeling crowded and can handle 900 before function space becomes a serious problem.

The main difficulty with this hotel is that it has a total of only 223 sleeping rooms, about half of them allowing smoking. People that reserved their room before the room block went away were fine. If you waited until just before the con, the hotel was long since sold out to local business customers. The committee is well aware of this, but there is not much they can do except encourage people to reserve a room as soon as they can. The other major drawback was that the hotel restaurant food was of mediocre quality and on the expensive side.

Despite talk to the contrary, the Westborough Marriott is not that difficult to get to by mass transit. A shuttle runs to the hotel from Logan Airport and South Station about every 45 minutes and costs $20. A taxi from the Worcester Amtrak station costs about $23. Unless you plan on commuting daily via mass transit, Readercon is no more difficult to get to than Boskone. By car the hotel is even easier to get to than the former location in Worcester. The Westborough Marriott is parallel to route 9, just west of the intersection with route 495. If you take the Mass Pike (route 90), take 495 north one exit to route 9 west.

This year's guests of honor were William Gibson and Larry McCaffery, with Memorial GoH Alfred Bester. Due to other commitments, William Gibson had to cancel shortly before the convention. What the committee did was setup on-line communication with him, so that attendees could send him e-mail messages and questions that could be answered in a real-time dialogue over the net. While the concept was great and the logistics worked, I heard that not many people took it seriously and therefore the concept was underutilized. Larry McCaffery was added to several panels to help make up for William Gibson's absence. With a large number of other professionals there, I heard no complaints about shortage of program participants.

As a person who usually skips Readercon because it tends to be too dry and narrow a focus for me, I found a number of the program items quite interesting.

Speaking the Unspeakable: Neologisms in SF/F — Are new words created because sf causes a need or are new words created because it is sf? The panel also covered how words created to describe things that do not yet exist slowly become part of the regular language. The panelists included John Clute, Hal Clement, Paul Di Filippo, and Bruce Bethke. I hope this panel will be repeated next year.

Space Opera Reconsidered — As someone who enjoys "space opera," I found this panel quite interesting. Not only did they try to define the term, they talked about who is currently writing some. The main problem with this, and some other panels, was that they had the wrong people on it. Terry Bisson and Peter McNamara, both interesting speakers, spent the whole time listening to the other panelists. Among those currently writing space opera, Vernor Vinge was thought to be writing the best.

The SF Magazines You Should Be Reading — In the last five years there has been a dramatic increase in the number of magazines being published. I looked forward to this panel until I saw who was on it. The panel consisted mostly of magazine editors praising each other. This was another example of a good idea with the wrong panelists. I would much rather have seen readers or book editors saying what magazines they read.

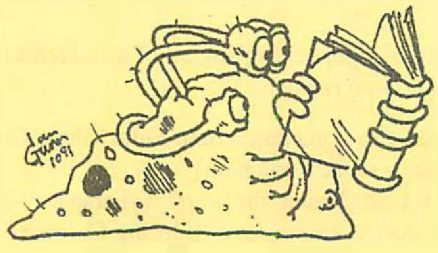
This convention committee did do a number of things right. The banquet was originally supposed to be held outdoors under a canopy. With fears of bad weather, it was moved indoors to a sectioned-off part of the bar. All 80 tickets were sold. One of the reasons for the success was, when you purchased your ticket you chose what table you would be at. Each table had an assigned topic or author. This meant that you sat with people who had a similar interest as you, and therefore a topic of conversation. In addition, it was buffet style.

Another thing done right was to list what an author would be reading at their reading. I found this to be quite helpful in determining if I wanted to go.

Despite the small attendance, there were quite a few people there whom I found interesting to listen to/speak with. Among the people there that I found worth seeking out are: Terry Bisson (try not to miss his readings), Algis Budrys (he is next year's GoH and interesting), Warren Lapine (Editor of *Absolute Magnitude* but not pushy), and Peter McNamara (Readercon was his first US convention. He was stopping off on his way home to Australia from a business trip in Canada).

If I had to name this year's biggest problem, it would be that the committee tried to put all the pros on program. This meant that several panels had people who knew little about the topic, and some panels had as many as eight people on them. Some pros were left looking foolish or contributing little. In this case, more was not better.

The committee has signed a long term contract with the Westborough Marriott. The convention will be there for at least the next three years. With Kim Stanley Robinson and Algis Budrys as the GoH's, I plan on going. If books are your main interest in sf, I suggest you do not miss this convention, just remember to book your hotel room early.



Orbita Dicta: Heard in the halls of Readercon 8

Westborough Marriott, July 12-14, 1996, by Bob Devney

[In a well-worded web page notice 3 days before the convention kicks off, the Readercon committee handles an example of every concom's nightmare]

Due to a death in his immediate family, Guest of Honor William Gibson will not be attending in person. He will have a virtual presence at Readercon via fax over the weekend and plans to attend a future Readercon.

[In discussing Gibson's nonpresence, a fan refers to a writer more predictably absent, the con's official Dead Guest of Honor]

Well, at least Alfie Bester hasn't changed his mind about coming.

[Punky/funky author Paul Di Filippo, moderating the panel on Neologisms in SF/F, hands an "aw-shucks" moment to a fellow panelist]

We have here tonight the inventor of perhaps the most famous science fiction neologism of recent times: Bruce Bethke, creator of "cyberpunk."

[Bethke, modestly]

Mea culpa.

[Panelist and prizewinning Quebec SF author Yves Meynard avers that a neologism ain't necessarily so]

Gene Wolfe's *The Book of the New Sun* series contains not a single new word. They're just words we don't see that often.

[NESFAn and burstin'-with-pride Hugo nominee Michael A. Burstein makes a nice distinction]

The nice thing about a neologism is if you can find a word close enough for people to understand, but used in a way that opens up new worlds.

[Although Di Filippo feels sometimes it's appropriate to pull a smeerp out of the hat]

C. J. Cherryh has probably invented more alien terms than most writers. She wants this density of new language to render her world more tangible.

[Burstein manages to work "When I was at Clarion" into yet another conversation with fiendish ingenuity; they must teach this to everybody the last week of the course]

I have a strange example. When I was at Clarion, they were running a Klingon language summer camp nearby.

[Di Filippo on how doing the neo thing makes your prose pop]

With the right neologism, all of a sudden a hazy concept can SNAP into reality.

[According to Canadian writer/editor Glenn Grant, you never know what'll catch on]

Even with Gibson, the word "cyberspace" occurs only once in the landmark story "Burning Chrome." Throughout the story, he refers instead to "the simulation matrix." The one reference to "cyberspace" is oblique.

[Burstein shows that even for a giant in the field, TANSTAAFL]

One famous neologism never works for me – "tanj" in Larry Niven's stories. It's supposed to stand for "there ain't no justice," but it falls flat.

[Grant cuts it short]

In California, there's been a new tendency to lop off the ends of words. So "'rents" for "parents," "'hood" for "neighborhood." And Neal Stephenson has picked up on this. In *The Diamond Age*, you have "racting" and "ractor" both from "interactive."

[Meynard looks back]

In Quebecois, we invented no neologisms. Maybe because we were already speaking a different language than the English around us.

[Fan Michael Devney sounds off from near the door, prepared to run for it]

You want to think about new words that everybody's using – or's been forced to use – how about "Ms."? I don't like it myself. If you want equality, I think everyone should have been called "Mister."

[On he/she, Grant could go either way]

I tend to think a new gender-free pronoun WILL enter the English language, but only if 1) we get a large population of hermaphrodites or 2) if we have artificial intelligences. What gender is an AI?

[Di Filippo sees new names in high places]

Drug names are one place where we have a constant large supply of neologisms being created. We actually have professionals making them up, carefully crafting every single syllable.

[Grant offers a health tip]

Just make sure you never mix up Zanax and Zantac.

[Bethke thinks there's still hope in our 'hood]

Neologism is a vital sign – tells you that a language is still living.

[And Grant climaxes the discussion]

Neologism is what you get when language has an orgasm.

[*Proper Boskonian*'s Ken Knabbe, handing a new fanzine to a groaning, overburdened fanzine reviewer]

I didn't say you had to DO this one. Just thought you might enjoy it. You don't have to review absolutely every single thing I hand you, you know.

[At the Meet the Pros(e) Party, New Jersey fan Jeffrey Wendler snapshots his first Readercon so far]

I'm really enjoying myself a lot. There are lots of pros, and everybody seems more relaxed. But some of the people on these panels are just going off the deep end of obscurity...

[Protean Tor editor David G. Hartwell at breakfast Saturday, when complimented on a story – Robert Silverberg's "Hot Times in Magma City" – in Hartwell's new *Year's Best SF* anthology]

I'm glad you picked that. It's one of my favorites in the collection. I haven't heard much about it from anyone else, but it's the kind of story that stays with you. I read it, and thought it was good. And then realized I was thinking about it the next week. And even later, I thought, hey, that was REALLY good. So it went in.

[When told that with the anthology, he was resurrecting old-fashioned virtues]

Thanks. I hope I'm not so much being old-fashioned as resurrecting virtues.

[SF Book Club editor Ellen Asher addresses the panel on Fortitude and Character Growth in SF – fortitude being a necessity at 10:00 a.m. Saturday]

In any kind of fiction you've got to have movement, of character and so on, or you're writing an essay.

[Old pro Algis Budrys scopes the field]

In about 1938, we began to leave behind the science-and-nothing-else stories and see stories about characters. Heinlein said the chief character was The Man Who Learned Better...In this and other ways, so many of our understandings of modern SF are based on things Heinlein said.

[Budrys gets precise]

By modern SF, I mean SF written from 1938 to about 1950 – it's a delimited school.

[Kit Reed – long-time short-form doyenne – indicates that some lessons must be relearned each generation]

I work with student writers at Wesleyan. Usually when someone says he wants to be an SF writer, look out. They come in with a story that has the flying saucer and the giant tomato, and leave everything else out. There's description, but no character, no action. Who's there to watch the saucer land? Do they do anything else but run away?

[Writer Jeffrey Carver also wants more "who" than "what"]

Even a good plot isn't necessarily where to start. Building your story out of the characters is more satisfying than a plot that's designed and then just – populated.

[Budrys see current stories where the characters don't have much character; it bugs him]

Too many stories now are about an ant going from point A to point B.

[Asher agrees]

And you've got to be an awfully good entomologist to make that interesting.

[As the editor of *Tomorrow* magazine, Budrys can't put off until etc.]

I read 10 or 20 slush manuscripts a day – and that's on a sparse day.

[Naturally, this can make a guy testy and opinionated]

I can't stand cover letters.

[According to Reed, editors are like that]

"Dear Mr. Gold, how does this grab you?" And he wrote back, "Right down the throat and by the lunch."

[Budrys looks ahead]

I think we're going to see some kind of new prozine. Maybe not a print magazine. Obviously, there's a lot happening on the net now that could bring changes...The magazine will fade out of existence.

[Beyond this horizon, Reed sees vast fields of couch potatoes]

TV fulfills people's basic need for stories. The public gets it by just lying there.

[In the panel on Space Opera Reconsidered, veteran writer Hal Clement laments that other arts get all the breaks]

People complain in SF and space operas about elderly scientists stopping the story to lecture. But nobody complains when the elderly soprano stops the opera for 15 minutes to sing. This is not fair.

[From the audience, author John Crowley sings a different tune]

Actually, the term comes first from "horse opera," not "opera" itself.

[*Absolute Magnitude* editor Warren Lapine opines that the form is certainly a popular one]

Star Trek and *Star Wars* are space opera, after all.

[Distinguished Canadian writer Jean-Louis Trudel makes a distinction]

Star Trek is space adventure; *Star Wars* is space opera.

[*A Fire Upon the Deep* deeply het up eminent Canadian/British critic John Clute]

Vernor Vinge is the best living space opera writer, on the basis of one book.

[After general agreement that breakneck pace and dizzying scale are essential for space opera, Clement tackles the latter]

In dealing with any kind of astronomy, people underestimate the sheer scale. Remember, if the Sun is a tennis ball, Earth is a speck of glass – like the stuff in glitter paint – 22 feet out. Pluto is a smaller speck 800 feet out. And the nearest star system is 2 golf balls in St. Louis, Missouri!

[Clute cautions that accuracy may ruin all the fun]

Perhaps you can't have a space opera universe if the science is right.

[Holding up hit Australian SF book *The Unknown Soldier*, Peter McNamara points out that formulae aren't just for science]

We set out to find the formula and write directly to it. And it's worked bloody well.

[The panel on New Grand Masters opens with author/editor Darrell Schweitzer laying some ground rules]

To be a true SF Grand Master, in SFWA or otherwise, you have to have had both a long AND a distinguished career.

[Science Fiction Age editor Scott Edelman gets more personal]

Grand Masters are those writers I have trouble even talking to when I meet them face to face. Like A. E. van Vogt, they're the people I read and worshipped when I was younger.

[Tor editor Patrick Nielsen Hayden suggests prize proliferation may be a bit out of hand]

The field is absolutely bugfuck crazy about awards....Now every SFWA president can give out a Grand Master award every year. Pretty soon Jack Chalker will be a Grand Master.

[And the criteria suffer from insectile reproductive derangement also]

If you're talking merit and influence, I think you can make the argument that William Gibson deserves one right now. Compared to ever giving it to Lester Del Rey.

[From the audience, Paul Di Filippo refers to yet another new honor]

How about that Science Fiction Hall of Fame they're inaugurating this weekend in Kansas? What are the criteria for getting into that?

[Nielsen Hayden answers with clear wit]

You have to be willing to stand in a big Lucite case.

[Future shoe-in for Editorial Hall of Fame David Hartwell reminds us that a small number of great personalities can make a huge difference]

As David Shapiro said once, it only takes five great poems to make a great poet. It only takes five great poets to make a Renaissance.

[Schweitzer points out that you also need depth on the bench]

Maybe there should be an intermediate award for Pretty Good Novelist Who Never Gets Appreciated. That's the award that someone like Wilson Tucker would get.

[Nielsen Hayden isn't bugfuck crazy about this idea]

I don't know, for 20 years people have been telling me how really good Wilson Tucker is. I think he's the field's Most Appreciated Unappreciated Writer.

[Editor Gordon Van Gelder recalls The Award To End All Awards (At Least For The Recipient)]

Some years ago, Ed Bryant wanted to give out the Golden Bullet Award. You bring some venerated, antiquated figure from the field to the head table with much applause and put a golden bullet in the back of his head.

[In a kaffeeklatsch, Jeff Wendler finds Warren Lapine vying for the Patrick Nielsen Hayden Kick Ass & Name Names Award]

Warren Lapine is honest, but he's blunt as hell. Which can be very entertaining.

[Writer Paul Park warns his kaffeeklatsch of one seduction more perilous than drink or coke or even three-book contracts]

Metaphors can be dangerous. Often the better the metaphor, the more distracting it is.

[Park's visionary new historical novel, *The Gospel of Corax*, features Christ as a major character – which is causing a real rushdie to judgment in certain quarters]

I went on radio shows talking about the book. And religious people calling in would always take me to task by asking, "Are you aware of Verse So-and-So in Paul's Letter to the Colossians?" The dogma really begins with Paul. They never read the Gospels. They read Paul and the Book of Revelations, but not the Gospels based on the words of people who actually knew Jesus.

[Since most of Park's SF books have also touched issues of faith, is he religious himself?]

Do I believe in God, is that what you're asking? I find these questions very interesting, certainly.

[His faith that there might be a place for him in SF came from three works Park read as a young man]

They were books that I read about the same time. They convinced me that I could be a writer, and could write about things I was interested in, and get published if what I wrote was good. They were George R. R. Martin's *The Dying of the Light*, Gene Wolfe's *The Fifth Head of Cerberus*, and Ursula Le Guin's *The Left Hand of Darkness*...Many people know the other two, but I'm not sure even George R. R. Martin knew how great a book *The Dying of the Light* was.

[And what's parked on his shelf these days?]

In the genre, among other things I read the books of friends of mine who also happen to be very good. People like Michael Swanwick, Liz Hand, and Terry Bisson.

[In another kaffeeklatsch, Angela Kessler, editor of *Dreams of Decadence* (a "vampire digest"), casts a bloodshot eye on the typical new-pub arc]

I'm sure that as my magazine gets better, the reviews will get worse.

[At the Saturday night barbecue (held indoors to avoid the now-traditional Boston-area-con meteorological disaster, in this case a hurricane), Ken Knabbe proves there's more to his library than his 138 Perry Rhodan books]

If I could pick one author no longer living whom I'd most like to meet and talk to, it would be C. S. Lewis.

[Tokyo SF scholar Takayuki Tatsumi introduces his onstage interview with the Actually Attending Guest of Honor, avant-pop culture guru Larry McCaffery]

Larry grew up in Okinawa, Japan, which explains why I am here.

[McCaffery explains his own choice of college thesis subject in the 1960s]

I hated my father, I resented authority…So naturally I decided to write about contemporary American fiction.

[Like most con attendees, it seems that McCaffery has always been, well, strange]

At 15 or 16, instead of getting interested in girls or rock music, I got interested in duplicate bridge.

[McCaffery supposedly explains what the hell the next hour of his GOH interview will be about, although in retrospect who can be sure]

Tonight, let's bury Post-Modernism once and for all.

[At the Boston in 2001 party Saturday night, hatefully fit fan Joe Petronio tells Oreo-eating, Pepsi-swilling listeners how he maintains his schwarzeneggerian physique]

Just exercise 2 hours a day. That still gives you plenty of time to read 3 books a week.

[Petronio discovers that coincidentally, about 9 books back…]

You read Paul McAuley's *Pasquale's Angel* 3 weeks ago? Hey, I read *Pasquale's Angel* just about 3 weeks ago, too…Yes, I was disappointed also, a little anyway…Although the stuff about Michelangelo and Leonardo da Vinci was good. If you want the big Leonardo SF novel, try *The Memory Cathedral* by Jack Dann.

[With judicious equanimity, NESFAn Mark Hertel reacts to an earlier discussion]

Maybe Jack Chalker DESERVES to be a Grand Master someday. He says himself he doesn't write great literature. But a lot of us read him and enjoy him. He was a significant fan writer before he was an author. And he founded a publishing house – Mirage Press – that's still around and has produced some good stuff.

[In a panel on new young authors, their critical reception, and phenomena like *Granta*'s Best Young U.S. Novelists awards, author Rebecca Ore relates that an SF prophetess is sometimes without honor in her own country]

The culture vultures in my part of the world once wouldn't even cover a book I did that was reviewed in the *New York Times.*

[We feel writer Shariann Lewitt's pain too]

I was a college teacher for a number of years until I was eased out of the department for writing SF. Well, maybe for the way I dressed, too….I'm a recovering academic.

[Author/publishing worker bee Lisa A. Barnett tells the awful truth]

You have to PAY to submit authors for the *Granta* awards. At Heinemann, we were thrilled that a terrific young writer of ours named Patricia Powell was a finalist. But we were also thrilled she didn't win, because you agree to send a winning author on a huge, expensive book tour.

[It gets worse]

We just paid to submit two books for the National Book Award and one for the Pulitzer. Now we're going, gee, where's the money to publicize ANY of our other books this year?

[Ore digs the depression even deeper]

Booksellers in my part of the country say the Nebula Award is a stigma in terms of sales.

[The pit definitely yawns, so don't try any of your happy endings on us, Rebecca]

Young people aren't reading us. One way out is to write just young heroes and happy endings, to attract youngsters. The other way is to somehow reach out again to the audience for things like *Dangerous Visions*, that we had in the 1970s and somehow misplaced….Maybe that lost audience can save us.

[Lewitt ends by declaring that not only are awards insignificant, so is everybody reading this]

Organized fandom is not the readership of SF. It's at most 5% of that readership.

[In the dealer's room, Michael Burstein imparts a secret with ironic recursiveness]

At his reading in 10 minutes, you may hear A New Story By Michael.

[Then slugs your reporter for asking]

Swanwick?

[Burstein is torn]

I suppose I should go to my own reading. But I'd also really like to hear what goes on at the Alfred Bester panel.

[You asked for it, you got it….First, David Alexander Smith issues a non-introduction]

Bester is the Dead Guest of Honor at this convention, and thus has an excellent excuse for not showing up.

[Writer Daniel Dern gives the advertising world way too much credit]

Bester's prose is rich with complex wordplay and synesthesia – knowing he was in the advertising world explains some of that.

[In more than one of Bester's readers, tension, apprehension, and dissension have begun and never bloody stopped, according to editor Gordon Van Gelder]

My father read *The Demolished Man*, and he said, "I can never get that damned jingle out of my head."

[Master Van Gelder must have been a Ringo fan, whereas his roomie liked Paul]

In college, my friend loved *The Demolished Man* and thought *The Stars My Destination* represented a serious decline in Bester's powers. My feelings were exactly the opposite.

[Dern detects An Influence; all right, more like A Barefaced Steal]

The Stars My Destination is *The Count of Monte Cristo.*

[But the guy had style]

Like Delany and Malzberg later, a great deal of the pleasure in reading Alfred Bester is him as a stylist – the energy pulls you along.

[Writer Alexander Jablokov found the man's coolness to be the best of Bester]

As a Midwestern boy, what got to me was that his people were sophisticated. Living the very high life in New York. You know, these were the kind of people who wouldn't read science fiction.

[Smith likes Bester's dingbat approach to typography]

You'll see this typographical experimentation consistently throughout his prose. He'll name somebody Sally @kins – with the @ sign – or run the type in weird-shaped columns. Always something new.

[Dern points out th@ this can go too far]

To see this carried to wretched excess, see Randall Garrett's review of *The Demolished Man*. It has all those type tricks, and also rhymes.

[Unfortunately, Alfie didn't get bester as he went along, according to Dern]

At the risk of trashing our Dead Guest of Honor, I have to say that his later stuff – after his 19-year hiatus going into the 1970s – is so unreadable that he competes with Heinlein for the He Should Have Quit While He Was Ahead Award.

[Although Smith did manage a feat few could equal – or envy]

I read *Golem100* twice.

[Jablokov voices the only possible response]

Wow.

[But Bester's earlier work was a revelation to people like audience member and SF giant Samuel R. Delany]

Absolutely he was a major influence. My reaction when I read him was, gee, I wish I could write something like that.

But there was an interesting generational difference. With *The Demolished Man*, what was exciting to Judy Merril, Pohl, Blish was that Bester had somehow brought SF and the detective story form together. Whereas my generation thought *The Demolished Man* was a little strained because it tried to merge these two genres, but what was exciting was that it raised space opera to new heights....

He had a tragic last 10 years. He got involved with a young woman named Judy. I went to high school with her, and anybody who got involved with her had a tragic life, believe me.

[Speaking of tragic lives: Dern makes the obligatory Readercon genuflection in the direction of Philip K. Dick]

Bester wrote ideas, Dick wrote themes.

[Dern said one thing, Jablokov says another]

Bester loved reality, Dick was suspicious of it.

[Starting off a Future of the Arts Underground panel that soon proves itself worthy of a Devney Four-Squirrel Award as an Instant Nutball Classic, Paul Di Filippo confides the real reason why the Guest of Honor is represented on the dais only by a large fax machine]

Bruce Bethke says the actual physical Bill is getting his blood changed in Switzerland.

[Author Liz Hand explains why we should all go home now]

I think there WAS an underground, but not now. Now there's no lag time at all to the larger culture's co-opting the underground.

[This thought doesn't stop anybody, least of all moderator and editor Stephen P. Brown]

The media has too many channels that are hungry for content.

[But Di Filippo may be joining Hand's position]

The underground is all about form and content. Some of the content has been permanently subverted. Like S&M. It used to be the fringe. Now Rosie O'Donnell and Dan Ackroyd are dressing in leather and doing S&M in a movie from, what, Disney?

[Writer/artist/leatherguy Richard Kadrey disagrees, contributing virtually his last thought to the discussion that doesn't include the fuckin' f-word, man]

But that's definitely not the end of interesting sex, anyway. They can take the surface, but not the guts.

[It's difficult to recall in what context Di Filippo said this, but with this panel it hardly matters]

There's a saying in the Arabian Nights: Ink is the strongest drug.

[Let's take it that artist Joey Zone may not entirely agree]

When I think of Seattle, it's not freaking Nirvana. It's the Sonics. Pearl Jam – very much in need of that twelve-gauge tonsillectomy.

[Di Filippo feels the underground's becoming way too clubby]

Underground used to be the silence, exile, and cunning trip. Now, hyperbolically, it's degenerating into nightlife and duplicity among the chicest people.

[Hand plumbs further depths]

What's happening on the underground scene right now?

[Don't worry, Kadrey is hip to it]

Eastern European hip-hop music. They're cutting up old Stalinist work songs into these hip-hop mixes....Also, I've been talking to people considered very much on the cutting edge, and there's a lot of underground gardening going on.

[At least one icon of the electronic culture makes Zone see red]

This real shit CEO spreadsheet called *Wired* had an article saying the important people aren't the creators but the people who develop an idea further. Of course *Wired* would write that.

[Gibson phones another one in]

One of the attributes of any Bohemian viewpoint is that all the really cool shit has already happened.

[Movies are always cool, of course, as Kadrey agrees]

People think Quentin Tarantino rips off Hong Kong movies. I like that because THEY ripped off older American movies. But this is not the fucking Quentin Tarentino panel. We don't want to go there.

[Which is fine with our cool Hand]

I hate Quentin Tarantino.

[As the editor of critical zine *Science Fiction Eye*, Brown looks to the ways electronic life may make geography irrelevant to the underground map]

I like the idea of a distributed underground, because my readership IS one. I have three readers in Cincinnati, three in Paris, lots in New York and LA, and so on.

[Even retail is going underground]

Things are really changing. In my local record store, the biggest section is the alternative section.

[In a surprising bid for relevance, Zone circles back to the topic for just a sec]

We haven't really mentioned the role of SF in all this.

[Uh-oh, we should have known]

Which is good. We're finally concentrating more on the punk, not the cyber.

Upcoming New England Conventions

January 10-12, 1997
Boston Park Plaza Hotel, Boston MA
R. A. Salvatore and Bob Eggleton
Arisia '97
1 Kendall Square, Suite 322
Cambridge, MA 02139

February 14-16, 1997
Sheraton Tarra, Framingham MA
John M. Ford, Ron Walotsky & Tom Smith
Boskone 34
P.O. Box 809
Framingham, MA 01701-0203

April 20-22, 1997
Sheraton Tara, Framingham MA
Havoc XIII
(miniatures/wargames convention)
contact: Peter Mancini (617) 926-4719
e-mail: pmancini@lynx.neu.edu

July 11-13, 1997
Westborough Marriott, Westborough MA
Kim Stanley Robinson & Algis Budrys
Readercon 9
P.O. Box 381246
Cambridge, MA 02238-1246

August 8-10, 1997
Holiday Inn, Taunton MA
J. Michael Straczynski & John Flinn III
RebelCon
c/o World's End Productions
10 Rankin Street
Worcester, MA 01605

August 15-17, 1997
Marriott, Providence RI
Brian Lumley and Dirk W. Mosig
NecronomiCon: 3rd Edition
P. O. Box 1320, Back Bay Annex
Boston, MA 02117-1320

November 7-9, 1997
Springfield Sheraton, Springfield MA
United Fan Con VII
500 Monroe Turnpike
Monroe, CT 06468

SF, UFOs, and a Sense of Wonder

by Gene Stewart

Independence Day is breaking all box-office records and is cutting across the usual demographic lines of age and economic group; obviously the Lowest Common Denominator appeal of derivative, even schlock, sci-fi, if not sf itself, remains powerful. And like *Star Wars* in 1977, 1996's *Independence Day* is a compendium of "quoted" scenes and pilfered, purloined references, down to echoed dialog. That there's nothing new here is exactly the point, it seems – the perennials endure, and the myths are at core always the same.

THE SF PART

> I suppose it is a measure of the richness of the field of science fiction that no two of its practitioners are liable to agree on even something as fundamental as its definition – or on the boundaries that encompass it and on where one draws the dividing line between itself and realistic fiction, or between itself and fantasy.
>
> –Dr. Isaac Asimov, *Asimov on Science Fiction*

Cinema rules, and most of the most successful movies of all time have been science fiction, so it might be a good idea to examine the genesis of this genre.

Modern sf began, many assert, in 1818, when Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein, or A Modern Prometheus* appeared. In fact, the science-fictional aspects of the novel were emphasized only later, in film versions of the story, as Leonard Wolf argues in *The Annotated Frankenstein.*

Please note the subtitle, however. Mary Shelley emphasized the mythic overtones of the tale, referring specifically to the Greek myth of Prometheus, associated with Forethought. He was a brother of Atlas, who holds up the world, and another of his brothers was Epimetheus, or Afterthought.

Is this relevant to modern science fiction? Consider the following:

Prometheus berated and belittled the gods of Olympus. He was more cunning than any of them, and excelled in the art of fraud. His most famous deed was the theft of fire from heaven, associated with the mental enlightenment of mankind. He brought light down from the sky. For that crime, Zeus ordered Hermes to chain Prometheus to a rock, then caused a vulture to feed upon his liver for the next several millennia. The hero Heracles finally ended the torment by freeing Prometheus, who was then allowed to join the Olympian gods. His contributions to mankind range from having *made* the first man and woman from clay, giving mankind fire, and teaching mankind the medicinal use of plants, to agriculture and the domestication of the horse.

Prometheus is a powerful, ambiguous myth figure, and Mary Shelley's novel, full of philosophy, scientific speculation, and moral uncertainty, lives up to all aspects of the myth. It's as relevant to science, religion, and society now as it was when first published. Mary Shelley successfully distilled penetrating thought with compelling fiction, and if modern sf must name a starting place, it could do much worse than *Frankenstein, or A Modern Prometheus*. That Mary Shelley was only nineteen years old when she wrote the novel is not only a testament to her genius, but also perhaps a hint that sf would remain a literature and thought-process for the young, or at least for the young-of-mind.

Science, however, became the emphasis of this kind of fiction as technology itself became increasingly more sophisticated, more pertinent to everyday life, and as a new way of telling stories came about, shifting our attention from the printed page to the flickering silver screen. And the Frankenstein story is one of the most successful on-screen adaptations. From the chilling poignancy of the 1931 Boris Karloff, Colin Clive classic production through high camp such as 1942's *Frankenstein Meets the Wolfman* with Lon Chaney, Jr. to the outright spoofs such as 1988's *Frankenstein General Hospital* and even *Frankenhooker* from 1990, the story echoes through our post-literate culture. Over a dozen films directly referencing Frankenstein in their titles are available on video at any given time, not counting the indirect references, pastiches, and allegorical references to Frankenstein found in many another film. The basic story seems almost immune to changes wrought by succeeding generations and shifting societal attitudes. Tim Burton's *Frankenweenie* (1994) caps the sub-genre.

To revel in change, rather than to resist change, is a hallmark of sf, which from the start has not flinched from considering as many sides as possible of each scientific advance. Good, bad, and mundane are all tossed into the hopper, and what comes out, whether fine ground or coarse, becomes fair grist for sf's many mills. It is this potent mixture of the rational and the mythic that marks sf.

That Victor Frankenstein's triumph also embodies his tragedy offers a concise image of the duality of scientific endeavor. This dual nature of thought, of intelligence itself, is often ignored these days, as sf has tended to side more enthusiastically with the positive aspects of any given insight. In most sf publications today, even a hint of ironic doubt, skepticism, or ambiguity is an unwelcome intruder into otherwise constant self-congratulation and celebration. Depth is thus lost, and resonance with larger parts of ourselves falls by the wayside unnecessarily.

This is not to say there are no dystopias. Such bleak futures abound, but inevitably the focus of any given story is somehow uplifting, ennobling, or edifying. As a rule, such tales are cautionary, and thus serve a higher purpose; they're useful, and sf loves the utilitarian.

Presenting a future neither better nor worse but simply *different* is a much more difficult accomplishment. (Try *Queen of Angels* by Greg Bear, for a book example, or rent the video of *Blade Runner*, especially Ridley Scott's director's cut.) It requires something more than linear trend analysis and a shoulder-breaking chip of an attitude. What more? For one thing, it requires a generalist's wide-ranging knowledge and often a specialist's viewpoint. For another, it requires a knack for thinking edgewise, around corners, or between unwritten lines.

Extrapolation from known to possible scientific developments is rendered harder by the sheer amount of cutting-edge science being done today. No one can possibly keep up with all of it, not even the Good Doctor Asimov, who was probably the one person with the best chance of being

able to assimilate everything. If only it were possible to read all the journals, chat with all the researchers, and stay abreast of the rising tide of corporate-planned, incrementally-announced applications, then each of us could write and understand any and all sorts of science fiction. Unable even physically to read a year's published sf, let alone the articles on which it's likely based, we fall back on the most natural filter in the world, our own tastes.

We focus on what interests us.

Thus are specialists born. One can be a specialist these days and yet remain fairly general. Some sf writers enjoy writing stories featuring the quirks and idiosyncrasies of quantum-mechanical theory. Others focus on the anthropological, or the bio-medical. Each sub-set of sf has its own referents, jargon, and presumed prior knowledge, for example, the space colonizers, who all presume their readers understand FTL, while the quantum cowboys toss off unexplained lepto-quarks, the cyberpunks sparkle with black ice, and the anthro-apologists speak of hundredth monkeys and such. Chaos theory, something relatively new, has birthed its own litter of special reference words, such as fractal and Mandelbrot set. And then there's nanotech...

Obviously Mary Shelley needed few if any special terms to reach and satisfy her audience. She was writer enough to base everything in an exciting, even Gothic sort of story that appealed to readers regardless of their familiarity with science or philosophy. She was intellectual enough to give full weight to many sides of the heady debates at the core of the novel, thus demonstrating how excellent sf can be, right at the start. The fact that she also brought myth to bear explains the perennial appeal of the book's central images and concerns; she managed to hook the story to our deepest cultural roots.

Mary Shelley's example provided a solid foundation on which Edgar Allan Poe, 1809-1849, built another sort of sf. He incorporated journalism and published stories with a straight face as fact, thus perpetrating hoaxes. It's not a good idea to hoax, but the fact that his "Balloon Hoax," for example, was believed is due in large part to Poe's incorporation of believable, realistic detail. This is a lesson sf quickly mastered, although, interestingly, it was Poe's horror that cinema emphasized, as for example in Roger Corman's *The Pit and the Pendulum*, starring the inimitable Vincent Price.

And then came H. G. Wells, who in 1898 published *The War of the Worlds*. Planetary invasion was given Mary Shelley's scientific irony and Poe's verisimilitude, all in plain, unadorned, readable prose and with story elements that swept the reader along breathlessly. To this day, such a mix would probably go far toward assuring sales, popularity, and acclaim. It's been made into several films, too, but perhaps the best is 1953's SFX Academy Award-winning production, starring Gene Barry and Ann Hamilton.

The trend has been toward simplicity, on the reader's behalf, even as film has become more complicated. Someone reading Mary Shelley's book in 1818, before effective mass education, would have needed to be familiar with a large body of scientific, philosophic, and especially mythic referents in order to entirely parse her explicit content. By the time of H. G. Wells, all a reader needed was some spare time, because Wells made it all clear, did as much work for the reader as possible, because by then a great part of his potential audience was something that hadn't existed before, the *casual* reader.

In other words, entertainment reared its ugly head. Who had leisure time before the time-clocked lock-stepped lives brought about by the Industrial Revolution? There was no void needing to be filled before people learned about down-time, off hours, and the equation of time with money.

Also there was Jules Verne, who really knew how to entertain. Much of his subject matter was the stuff of journalistic hoaxes, but he applied Wells's scientific plausibility and made it compelling to read by writing in breathless tones of sheer adventure. His science fiction entertained, his extrapolations and speculations convinced, and his fortunes soared along with his popularity because, in days of difficult, uncomfortable travel, he spun tales of Extraordinary Journeys. Disney's 1954 production of *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*, starring Kirk Douglas, James Mason, and Peter Lorre, is a prime example that won several Academy Awards and was one of the first to spawn a ride at a theme park. The less-successful *Journey to the Center of the Earth*, from 1959, starring James Mason and Pat Boone, is notable for the scene in which the overly-brilliant scientist decodes a duck. (Rent it and see.)

And when the locale failed to dazzle, it was the mode of travel that held center stage. We all know about the *Nautilus*, Captain Nemo's remarkable submarine, but do we recall a vehicle called *Terror?* It comes from Verne's 1904 novel, *Master of the World*, written a year before his death. Set in such exotic places as South Carolina, Pennsylvania, and eventually Niagara Falls, this novel revolves around sightings of something moving with flashing speed on land, in water, and even in the air. To satisfy conspiracists, there are secret labs, government cover-ups, exploited scientists, and cut-throat competition between weapon manufacturers. 1961's film version stars Vincent Price and Charles Bronson, while 1976 saw an animated version released.

More to our point, however, is the fact that much of *Master of the World* reads like a modern sf novel of close encounters.

Maybe that's what set the stage. Certainly it helped, for the real, mundane world beyond sf's domain was about to receive several shocks that would once have belonged only in popular fiction.

Which brings us to...

THE UFO PART

> Since the things reported of Ufos not only sound incredible but seem to fly in the face of all our basic assumptions about the physical world, it is very natural that one's first reaction should be the negative one of outright rejection. Surely, we say, it's nothing but illusions, fantasies, and lies. People who report such stuff cannot be quite right in the head. What is worse, most of these stories come from America, the land of superlatives and of science fiction.
>
> –Dr. Carl G. Jung, *Flying Saucers*

Virtually all our images and notions about flying saucers and such things come from movies, but what started it all?

On 30 June 1908 at about 07:00 local time, something exploded about 5km above the Tunguska *taiga* in Siberia. Whatever it was performed several zig-zag turns, according to witnesses along hundreds, perhaps thousands of miles of its route through Earth's atmosphere. The explosion was heard 800-1000km away, while seismographs and other instruments detected it all around the globe. For three consecutive nights, people as far away as London, England, were able to read newsprint all night long from the glow that persisted in the sky. Fluctuations in Earth's magnetic field were detected, and high- and low-frequency radio waves were picked up. No one knows what happened.

Russians liken *taiga* to jungle, so dense and unpleasant to traverse is such forest, so the explosion has never really been investigated by state-of-the-art equipment and methods. Despite several expeditions, no conclusions satisfy all conditions, but apparently there was an event very much like a nuclear explosion, whether natural or not, in the air above the region, resulting in spectacular devastation that exists to this day, and which has mutated at least part of the grow-back.

Pilots say that any landing you can walk away from is a good one; maybe the Tunguska explosion was a bad landing. However, it wasn't the first event to make us begin wondering about the possible reality of concepts once confined to science fiction, not by a long shot.

In the 1890s, for example, reports from all over the world told of airships, which sound to modern ears much like blimps and dirigibles, witnessed by happy crowds who waved to humanoid forms on the ships, and who cheered when the fliers waved back. It was treated more like a curiosity than a threat, and there is a charming innocence in the reports, many of which are written in a rather ho-hum tone, as if such things are but mildly interesting. Today we might think of the spate of reports as a UFO flap, a periodic, perhaps cyclic, phenomenon all journalists recognize.

Looking back through history from the Tunguska event, we can trace things in written history back to the 1200s, or, if we include reports not specifically dealing with strange things seen in the sky, then we can go as far back as the imagery in Revelation. Also from the Bible come Ezekiel's wheels, of course. In all cultures, mythic images, from the yin-yang mandala to the karmic wheel, may apply in this context. Certainly such "evidence" is cited often enough by selective UFO apologists. To go further back, we must begin interpreting symbols from cave paintings, or incised stones, as representing unexplained overhead events.

Grinding axes on the archaeological record is less than scientific, however, and "de-coding" references from myth is open to individual subjectivity, so perhaps we'd do better to look forward through history from Tunguska, and stay with a more recent, if not necessarily more complete, historical record.

There are many events hinting that people are somehow ready to hear about Unexplained Aerial Objects, to use Ivan T. Sanderson's term. For instance, naughty old Orson Welles and his *Mercury Theatre* radio production of "War of the Worlds," a Howard Koch play based on H. G. Wells's book, threw quite a scare into a nation already on tenterhooks due to the geopolitical situation. On 30 October 1938, the broadcast sent the United States into a panic so bad that the Red Cross and National Guard were very nearly mobilized. Pre-war nerves have been blamed, but certainly the idea of an invasion from outer space struck a latent chord of terror common to the average CBS radio listener back then. The audience, as they say in entertainment parlance, was primed for an ET invasion tale, and remained so, judging from the success of 1953's film version.

During World War II, particularly but not exclusively in the European theatre of operations, reports from fighter-escort pilots of Foo Fighters puzzled authorities. Foo derived, they say, from the French word for fire, "feu," although why they used a French word at all escapes me, so this etymology may be flawed, even specious. Anyway, these were small balls of light, or discs, that flew along with fighters, often at the wing-tips, and often spiraling around the planes, and zipping off at great speeds when chased. They were usually reported to be small, bright, and fast, and their maneuvers left the most acrobatic airplane in the dust.

Sun-devils, or glints in the canopy or goggles, were suggested as an explanation, but few of the pilots who saw them bought that.

The V-1 and V-2 weapons added to fear-of-the-sky hysteria. A V-1 was a cruise missile, essentially. It sputtered along, then fell when it ran out of fuel; people on the ground soon learned that the ones you could hear were nothing to worry about. Then came the V-2, a rocket-launched ballistic missile, which usually fell faster than the speed of sound, with the result that people on the ground would suddenly experience an explosion, then hear the damned thing fall. (See *Gravity's Rainbow* by Thomas Pynchon for a fictional, vivid account of the ramifications of the V-2. On video, 1950's *Destination: Moon* offers a post-war contemporary glimpse of the kind of achievements Wernher von Braun and the other rocket scientists envisioned. This is the only film noted sf author Robert A. Heinlein helped make, and it includes Chesley Bonestell's paintings as backdrop. It won an Academy Award for special effects, which are on the realistic side and quite good even now.)

At the tail end of the war, jet aircraft came into common use, so it was suggested that Foo Fighters had been prototypes, but what aircraft manufacturer tests models by flying them up to enemy aircraft during a war? And besides, no jet since has matched reported Foo performance envelopes.

Just after the war, Operation PAPERCLIP scarfed up our share of brilliant German scientists (among them Wernher von Braun), and reports began surfacing of secret Nazi experiments to design flying discs. Flying wings had once had their heyday, until FDR slashed funding for them, so why not saucer shapes? The idea was maneuverability, as a disk presents the same aspects no matter the change of direction. (W. A. Harbinson, in his novel *Genesis* and its sequels, has used Nazi flying-disc experiments as a basis for exciting fiction concerning global conspiracies and possible ET influence, and the theme crops up now and then as a passing reference to buttress the reader's suspension of disbelief and add verisimilitude to this or that hugger-mugger plot. On video, any number of sf films from the late forties and early fifties employ flying discs and saucers. Also, note the opening

of Spielberg's 1980 film *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, in which mysteriously lost aircraft, ships, and the like begin reappearing in odd places such as the Sahara desert. It's an elegant linking of diverse references, and sets the entire story up in historical context.)

There were experiments in flying discs, some perhaps continuing to this day, but none succeeded, and certainly not to the extent inherent in the initial reports. And reports of new versions of flying discs continue, among the most recent a newsflash that Russian designers were testing a huge one intended to replace jet airliners. As always, we'll wait and see.

In 1945 the US dropped atomic bombs on Japan. In the January 1946 issue of the Russian language magazine *Vokrug Sveta*, sf writer Alexander Kazantsev published a short story, (published in English as "A Visitor from Outer Space" in the 1962 Collier anthology *Soviet Science Fiction*, introduced by Isaac Asimov), explicitly suggesting that the Tunguska explosion was due to an out-of-control space craft powered by some form of nuclear energy. His story reportedly addresses every detail of anomaly in the Tunguska event, and explains things better than any other single hypothesis. (Occam's pleased, anyhow, and Sherlock Holmes, who was reported by Arthur Conan Doyle to have said, "When you have eliminated the impossible, what ever remains, however improbable, must be the truth," seems vindicated, but here is not the arena to debate *that* assertion.)

During 1946, there was apparently a UFO flap over northern Europe. On 24 June 1947, businessman Kenneth Arnold inaugurated the first modern American UFO flap by reporting a "flying saucer," he had seen while flying his plane in the vicinity of Mt. Rainier in Washington state. Although his was neither the first in those years, nor the most spectacular, it's usually cited as the start of the modern UFO reports. By September 1947, USAF Project Sign existed, the first official look at the UFO phenomenon and direct precursor to the much-debated Project Blue Book.

Since then, we've learned about close encounters, notably from the film of that name, and lately missing time has become a catch phrase, as people tell of entire lives allegedly affected by repeated manhandling from UFO occupants.

The missing time aspect was first widely publicized in the Betty and Barney Hill case, as documented in *Interrupted Journey* by John G. Fuller. (Not to be confused with the 1949 Richard Todd film of the same name, which is a minor suspense mystery.) Fuller's book, along with other material, was later a made-for-television movie starring James Earl Jones.

More recently, Whitley Strieber's *Communion* (made into a provocative film in 1989 starring Christopher Walken; available on video), and its sequels *Transformation* and *Majestic* (the latter of which dealing with the Roswell Incident, is itself the subject of an HBO film starring Kyle MacLachlan) stirred fearful debate largely because he refused to confirm, deny, or define the extent of its fictional content; it's a book that disturbed many people, some of whom may not have been particularly disturbed prior to reading the book. It may in fact have hit the same paranoia nerve as the 1956 classic *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, starring Kevin McCarthy. (It was re-made in 1978, starring Donald Sutherland, and for a wonder they didn't mess it up.)

And of course the Cold War fueled the tension and fanned the flames of fear which resulted in the spate of Invasion movies. There are almost enough of them to constitute a separate genre. This demonstrates the mythic resonance our culture seems to experience when it comes to xenophobia and outside threats. Whether it's Grendel, Vikings, Marauders, the Wolf at the Door, Beauty's Beast, the Boogie Man, or *Spaced Invaders* (a goofy, hilarious 1990 film spoof), we seem to be afraid that something's going to come in and get us.

Myth analysis, of the sort taught by the late Joseph Campbell, has led many people to assign a common, human source for anomalous, fear-ridden reports throughout history. Such arguments assert, for example, that what we now call Little Green Men are the same things as were once called leprechauns, sprites, fairies, elves, et cetera. Celtic myth's tales of visits to the Many-Colored Land, and other otherworldly places, and equate, say these arguments, with our modern reports of UFO kidnappings and the like. In other words, we're interpreting a standard experience through our own culture's filters and icons, and in effect creating our own, contemporary mythology. What's confusing is that we're used to seeing myth in retrospect, not during the process of formation. Carl Jung himself believed this might explain many otherwise baffling UFO reports.

Certainly the lack of physical evidence seems to point toward a perceptual or psychological factor, if not origin, for things UFO. Cosmic, earthly, or bodily forces affecting the senses are cited as possible causes, while neatly getting rid of even the expectation of physical evidence. Of course, you can dream of eating a huge marshmallow and wake up to find your pillow gone, but such tangential evidence remains insufficient for science

There are those who say the lack of evidence for UFOs is but apparent, and due to a conspiracy. They speak of Men In Black, or MIBs, who intimidate and even assassinate anyone foolish enough to discuss a UFO experience. Are MIBs government? A secret society dedicated to a tradition of cover-ups? Are they ETIs? Delusions of paranoia brought on by the stress of a close encounter? Conspiracists also speak of crashed UFOs being whisked away by government and/or military agencies for secret, probably nefarious study.

UFO investigator Jacques Vallee, in *Messengers of Deception*, describes the menace of many of these UFO cults, and offers, if nothing else, a fascinating exposition of paranoia that leaves the reader's skin crawling for reasons that vary according to the reader. His main thesis is that we're being manipulated by the UFO phenomenon (shades of Eric Frank Russell's *Sinister Barrier*) for reasons we do not fathom, by agencies or forces we have never identified, be they human or otherwise. It's a scary thesis and has the happy quality of being impossible, like all negatives, to prove; a lack of evidence convinces only prepared minds and well-turned heads.

The Roswell, New Mexico, incident, in which a UFO supposedly crashed, killing its occupants, the bodies of which were recovered along with vehicle parts, is the centerpiece of such Stone cold thinking. The infamous Hangar 18 on Wright-Patterson AFB in Ohio is one of many alleged

repositories for recovered UFO debris and occupants. See *Hangar 18*, from 1980, starring Robert Vaughn, Darren McGavin, Gary Collins, and Joseph Campanella.

A Megadeth song/video called "Hangar 18" and dealing with the sad plight of imprisoned ETIs was nominated for a Grammy Award, so the theme remains strong. John Lennon mentioned his own sighting in the wry lyrics to "Nobody Told Me," in which he tells us he ain't too surprised that there are UFOs over New York. A large part of the FOX tv series *The X-Files* deals with UFO lore.

Popular culture has absorbed enough UFOlogy to allow casual references to be understood at once. This is important, because it means we've all got it in the backs of our heads, to a greater or lesser extent, as part of our cultural baggage. It can be used to pull our strings, push our buttons. John Mack's *Abductions* ignores this fact in favor of furthering the validation of what he labels the claimants of the experience. For him, subjectivity suffices.

The disclaimer, often used in earnest arguments supporting UFOs as ETI vehicles, that the witness had never before exhibited the slightest interest in UFOs and had in fact never even read a book about them, is beside the point. We're weaned on UFOlogy, and all sorts of other folkisms, spurious -ologies, and plain old superstitions. We soak it in through the constant barrage of media that so effectively surrounds us these days. Magical thinking permeates our culture. Even the starship *Enterprise* from *Star Trek* has a saucer as the main part of its configuration, the part where the bridge is located, and it has separately crashed in film, too. We mix and mingle fact and fancy wildly.

Is it any wonder we don't know what to think?

THE WONDER PART

> The period beginning in 1950 probably was as responsible for major changes in the nature of science fiction as that which had preceded it, though this was not immediately apparent. Hindsight suggests to me that one of the major factors in the further evolution was a tendency to put aside the previous dependence on technology and science, and to turn to other sources. One of these sources – perhaps the most influential – is what I can only call the quest for magic.
>
> –Lester del Rey, *The World of Science Fiction*, Ch.16

In film, appearances are *supposed* to be deceiving. Looks count more than almost anything else. A picture's worth a thousand words, and when you run a succession of them past people at 24 frames per second, image matters more than content. And this emphasis on imagery, as opposed to, say, persuasive argument or well-developed, logical hypothesis, now influences written fiction. Cinema is getting back some of its own, having changed the way we see.

Take, for example, science fiction and UFOs, the subjects of the first two parts of this article. It makes one wonder.

The compulsion to report is perhaps the strangest aspect of the UFO phenomenon. The 1980 film *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* deals overtly with this element of compulsion, where neither physical sciences nor the psychological arts have, as far as I know, even addressed it. Sf, with its insistence upon rational extrapolation and responsible speculation, offered a constricted avenue through which to vent the compulsion to deal with UFOs, but the fringe cults quickly formed, offering wide-open avenues of expression, in which literally anything could be claimed, discussed, or pontificated upon without proof, logic, or even grammar or syntax. Fake academics proliferated, with ersatz research buttressing them, maybe to fill the gap left by genuine academe's general eschewing of things UFO. This exacerbated the flake quotient, making it all the less likely that legitimate investigations would be acceptable, tolerated, or even undertaken. It got so flaky so fast that sf hastened to distance itself from UFOlogy. Science fiction, once synonymous with wild crank crack-pot ideas, developed a sense, not of wonder, but of dignity. Yes, people were once embarrassed to openly read, or even write, science fiction. Now all of a sudden, sf was embarrassed to be linked with the UFO phenomenon, despite the obvious superficial connections.

Lester del Rey blames Ray Palmer. The Palmer method, apparently, was to substitute an appeal to emotion for the usual sf appeal to the intellect. Forget all that science stuff, here's a way to get excited without having to know anything first, he seemed to say. Old fashioned traveler's tales are what he offered. It was great. You didn't even have to plot, or any of that other writing stuff. Just lay it on good and thick and stand back while the rubes ate it up.

Palmer, publisher of *Amazing Stories* and *Other Worlds* magazines, blended mysticism and occult lore to concoct, first, the Shaver Mystery (amazing stories concerning underground beings, etc.), and then to exploit the Flying Saucer phenomenon, specifically interpreting UFOs as vehicles operated by Extraterrestrial Intelligences bent on havoc. It was the kind of stuff we see in the more extreme tabloids of today; Elvis's immortality was assured even before he died. Who could ever forget that image?

As for the cultists and fringe loners, that compulsive search for a short-cut to a mainline sense of wonder became institutionalized. A coral reef of conspiracy theories accreted on the sunken cargo of inexplicables in the UFO canon, and those few genuinely flabbergasting reports were open game for the glib explanations of anyone with a silver tongue. Flying Saucer Churches, revelations from imaginary planets, and testimony from people who rarely blink became, for the fringe, normal.

UFO cultists, however, comprised only a small fraction of sf readers. Most sf readers were after, not revelations of Glaaki or visits from Klaatu, but a Sense of Wonder. This catch-phrase is used to describe an ineffable frisson that can be had only when a well-informed science-literate person reads honest, science-derived science fiction. The science is as important as the fiction when it comes to sense of wonder, because what's being experienced is a glimpse of how awesome and marvelous reality might really be. SF that imparts a sense of wonder does for the reader what a successful thought experiment does for a theoretical scientist: it clarifies, enhances, and opens new thoughts. Novelty alone is not sufficient, nor is the unexpected. Sense of wonder is mental Lebensraum, it's a leap to the next order of magnitude, a switch to a larger subset of reality. Sense of wonder is

fractal, because in each small insight lies totality, in each incremental advance of comprehension dwells infinity.

Sense of wonder is what we all experienced the first time we saw 1977's *Star Wars,* George Lucas's empire's cornerstone. Remember how amazing it was, all those things we'd never seen exactly like that before? Sheer wow.

Obviously, as people other than scientists and engineers entered the field of sf, the sense of wonder got harder to accomplish, impart, or find. And as science itself has become a fractal diversity of specialism, so sf achieved a variety of idioms, only to lose quick and easy communication. People got too hip too quick, weren't as easy to dazzle or intrigue.

It used to be enough to show a convincing glimpse of everyday life as it would be in space to give a sense of wonder. This explains the initial success of Fritz Lang's enduring 1926 film *Metropolis.* And by the way, 1926 is the same year Hugo Gernsback founded the magazine *Amazing Stories,* the first publication to be labeled "scientifiction," Gernsback's own neologism. We now call it all sf. And back then, by any name, the everyday marvels of the future sufficed.

As readers became familiar with those wonders, however, new ones were required, and each new one meant other and increasingly more specialized scientific knowledge had to be brought to bear. You had to know more than the basics just to come up with something marginally new, different, or interesting.

Is it any wonder that some sought a quick fix? Is it any wonder that there were writers and readers unwilling to put in the time, or unable to scratch up sufficient interest, to keep abreast of the many facets of science on which sf is traditionally based, and upon an understanding of which pivot most of the wonders?

We've lived to see sf enter mundane life. Most of us recall when calculators weighed about twenty pounds and made a ratchety sound. Most of us remember Earth as much bigger, and much emptier, than it is these days. Most of us recall more technological innovation and scientific advance and application within our life-spans than happened in all of history before our births. We can't all be expected to welcome such a torrent of adjustments. Some want an Art Deco world, others crave substance, and the rest may well be Luddites.

And so many who can't keep up decide, instead, to opt out, and replace science with magic, logic with wishing, and observation with dream. Selective memory leads to selective thought. Divergence from strict science lets lazier heads prevail.

There's even an element of blatant sexism involved. We speak of science fiction of being of two general varieties, one hard, the other soft. Surely Freud would chuckle at the difficulty presented by hardness issues.

And what was the New Wave but an influx of writers who weren't primarily or necessarily focused upon science and technology, or who weren't automatically reverential toward scientists and engineers? Those who were respectful basically called the others hippies or worse, and the code-word was Soft. In the Forties the word soft could get you punched.

Maybe the dichotomy should be expressed in terms of Hard versus Easy, but even that reveals a patronizing assumption, doesn't it? Ah, well, hard-noses over here, softies over there.

Genuine sense of wonder requires understanding, but inevitably some seek short-cuts. It's human nature, we say with a shrug, as if that explains anything but our society's penchant for labels. But what is human? We're symbionts, for one thing. Couldn't our senses be symbiotic, too? We're a selective aggregate consciousness who may well possess aspects of sensory experience we haven't yet recognized, labeled, or grown into. Who knows what might affect us? Who knows what effects might be evoked by any and all outside influences?

UFOs, like ghosts and other phenomena, do indeed exist, but we don't know what they are. Some of us use that mystery to amaze, but understanding the phenomena might be far more amazing. Mystery is a challenge, but mystery for its own sake smacks of mysticism.

Realistic means predictable to some people. SF needn't be realistic in that sense or any other, but it should spring from genuine, as opposed to sham, science, otherwise it's just fantasy wearing the trappings of discipline in order to offer a sad little thrill to those who are easily satisfied by quackery. The science must be grasped at least in a general way or it's just bullshitting. Often sf is exactly that. It's like the stories that delighted us as children; when we look them over again as adults, we're appalled at how shallow and moronic were such tales. Often the lies, false research, and nonsensical logic only set us up for a let-down.

The Good Doctor Isaac Asimov wrote in an essay that he chose clarity as the single aspect of his writing on which to concentrate, because he wanted people to understand things. Clarity is precisely what charlatans, politicians, and snake-oil salesmen avoid at all costs, because they don't want people to understand. "Clarity is the philosopher's kindness," Ortega y Gasset wrote, meaning those giant brains figuring everything out can choose, if they're so smart, to be kind to us lesser beings and be clear about what they're thinking.

Or they can choose to obfuscate, hide their shortcomings, and mislead us. Movies continue to depict space-ships with wings, always oriented with a distinct up and down, and always making jet-aircraft sounds, despite the fact that there is no sound in space's vacuum and a little spurt'll do ya, with no air resistance, so there's no need for constant propulsion. Et cetera, et cetera, et cetera, to quote Yul Brynner's King of Siam. Why do these persistent inaccuracies matter?

Gathering the wrong impressions from an ill-researched, shoddily-presented piece of sf, be it print or screen type, hurts one exactly the way a politician's lie hurts, by short-changing the information you have to work with.

No one likes to be cheated, you say? There's a sucker born every minute, P. T. Barnum would answer. Confidence operators all claim that an honest man can't be cheated. What they mean is, they con people by appealing to character flaws, such as greed. Con men offer short-cuts, easy ways out, fast money, and other things too good to be true, and sure enough, the suckers leap.

"Psst. Hey, kid. Want Sense O'Wonder, cheap? Youse don't need no stinking education, it's all a conspiracy anyway, glom onto this picture of a giant human face on Mars..." They prey upon our greed to have that wow experience.

Having developed from sincere interest in science and the wonders of reality, sf quickly disavowed such hokum. UFOs became a taboo subject in printed sf. (I'm distinguishing print media here because TV and film are two entirely different sets of references in this context, neither of them much bothered by ethical, let alone logical, considerations. Remember: We read a book for its content, we watch a movie for its images. Therein lies the distinction.) For years, the best way to get a manuscript rejected, other than failing to push a given editor's crank buttons, was to mention UFOs.

Of course, there were always a handful of sf stories with UFO themes, among the best being Theodore Sturgeon's "Saucer of Loneliness," from the February 1953 *Galaxy* magazine, in which a palm-sized UFO gives a sad woman the message that there is one lonelier than she. Arthur C. Clarke's *Childhood's End*, also from 1953, has huge UFOs coming down to help mankind avoid self-destruction.

As early as 1939, Eric Frank Russell's classic *Sinister Barrier* postulated an Earth controlled by ETI for centuries, in order to create strife because they "fed" upon negative emotions. UFO's also got some ribbing, as in Howard Waldrop's "Flying Saucer Rock and Roll," from the January 1985 *Omni* magazine. From *Cosmos* magazine, 1977, there was Joe Haldeman's explanation of why UFOs so often seem to visit, not the White House lawn (a cinema cliché) but backwoods folk, "All the Universe in a Mason Jar," which asserted that moonshine, not Reese's Pieces®, is the preferred ET cuisine. (George Adamski's 1955 book *Inside the Flying Saucers* contains nothing as hopeful, alas.)

And in 1996, the film *Independence Day*, starring Jeff Goldblum, Will Smith, et alii depicts the obliteration of many American icons, from the White House to entire cities, in an orgy of invasional excess. The fear's back, it seems.

Whether UFOs are human psychology at its weirdest, military cloaking device experiments, disinformation, misperceptions, hoaxes, unknown natural phenomena, ETI vehicles, or something utterly else entirely, we've seen that they impinge upon sf about as much as they touch other aspects of our lives. Each of us decides how much that'll be. In sf, UFOs are a minor theme, one of the many variations of a way of thinking about reality.

The religious overtones are there, too, as usual in sf. Because sf deals so often with cosmological, teleological, even epistemological considerations, inevitably it's a field rife with theological questing. Do we seek a savior from above, even if we must imagine that savior flying a saucer in order to keep from bursting out laughing? Are UFOs a rationalization of supernatural manifestations which, in earlier times, would have been called and treated as divine? Is sf, along with every other aspect of our lives, simply trying to come to terms with what naturalist Lyall Watson called Supernature? Are UFOs just another testimony in support of Julian Jayne's thesis of the breakdown of the bicameral mind? In other words, are they residual god-voice experiences flashing across our corpus callosum, that bit of tissue connecting the largely separate right and left hemispheres of the human brain? "MGM doesn't know it yet, but they're footing the bill for the most expensive religious movie ever made," Arthur C. Clarke is quoted as having said in reference to the 1968 film *2001: A Space Odyssey*, which he and director Stanley Kubrick jointly cobbled. (Note the Homeric myth cited in the subtitle? Myth and science have gone hand-in-hand from Mary Shelley on, probably because both deal with the grand themes, the big questions.)

All these considerations and more, far more than could fit into essay form, flow from pondering the connection between sf and UFOs, especially when we factor in the sense of wonder. After all, isn't a sense of wonder not just a science-fiction experience, but a religious, mystical, or philosophical experience as well? Some see gods, others flying saucers, and others write careful stories which only edge past the communal reality Rubicon. Our collective world is so much smaller than the real one, that's the message sf delivers.

Isaac Asimov wrote an essay about the death in a rock-climbing accident of physicist/mathematician Heinz Pagels ("one of three people I've met who were smarter than I," Asimov said), and in it he told of his idea that we can never know everything, because, no matter how much we know, there's always an infinite amount more to be known, due to science and knowledge being fractal in nature. This rings true, and Asimov regretted that Pagels was never able to do any math work toward establishing this insight as fact, but perhaps that's exactly the function sf serves best.

In its constant synthesis of ideas, sf does the glimpsing.

Perhaps the most trenchant and wide-ranging work of science fiction on a UFO theme is Ian Watson's 1978 novel *Miracle Visitors*, in which UFO Symbol Reality is postulated, among a myriad other mind-boggling ideas. In it, Watson pulls together such disparate elements into such a brilliant synthesis that the reader is left gasping, having achieved that rare E-ticket, the Sense of Wonder. On film, perhaps only the macabre, garish films of Clive Barker, such as 1987's *Hellraiser*, offer as dense and complex a mix of ideas and images.

On a darker note, with the publicity surrounding the missing time people, came *Nighteyes*, by Garfield Reeves-Stevens, 1989. The treatment here is modern thriller, with UFO occupants treated as a definite threat to the world. For lighter fun, find Harry Harrison's 1982 illustrated novel *Invasion: Earth*, or, if that's not good enough, ask Philip José Farmer if he still has the copy of the story referred to by Damon Knight in a letter quoted in *The Best From ORBIT* anthology, dated 2 January 1967 to Robert P. Mills: "...Dear Bob, thank you for letting me see these...I am entranced by the idea of a spaceship flying into a girl's goona..." If that doesn't arouse a sense of wonder, what does? (Shades, by the way, of *2069: A Sex Odyssey*, a 1978 soft-core sf-spoof vaguely foreshadowing 1981's *Space Vampires*, not to be confused with 1985's *Lifeforce*, based on Colin Wilson's novel *The Space Vampires*, which shares a general theme.)

Mystery and suspense and horror and fantasy and romance and all other kinds of fiction draw enthusiastic audiences, but only science fiction lets us combine everything and have it work. Only science fiction offers so wide and deep a set of references, themes, images, ideas, and possibilities. Only sf has that wide an appeal. After all, sf is used to thinking in global terms.

And now that we've examined the history of sf, and the mythic resonance of such elements as UFOs, it's obvious that science fiction is uniquely suited to put the sense of wonder, the wow, into movies. So we see that it's no wonder at all that most of the most popular and successful films of all time have been science fiction of one sort or another. All things considered, it'd be surprising if it were otherwise.

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The Literary Roots of *Babylon 5*

By Nomi S. Burstein

Babylon 5 is not your ordinary SF television show. Besides the level of sophisticated special effects, which outdoes anything previously seen on TV, it has literary roots that go deeper than any earlier project. Historical and literary references abound. The show is not "Lizard Man Meets Bad-Hair-Day Man," it's "See Bad-Hair-Day Man Quote Kierkegaard" and "See Lizard Man Quote Yeats." But the show goes even beyond that. There are subtle references to historical events hidden throughout the episodes.

It is peculiar for a television show to contain this many literary references, but if, like its creator, J. Michael Straczynski, you see the 5-year arc as a novel, it is not peculiar. No literature class worth its salt would try to get away without finding literary references on almost every page of any book read for the class (thus the Christian references embedded in the turtle in *The Grapes of Wrath*). But because this is television, and people have such little regard for the intelligence level of the shows, it is suddenly surprising when there is literary integrity to a television show. And JMS manages to weave the plots so tightly that it is only after watching the show that you say, "Wait a minute...that speech sounded familiar..."

First let's address the historical references.

Michael Garibaldi is named for Giuseppe Garibaldi, a figure from Italian history. According to *The Columbia History of the World*, "The time was ripe for the whole Italian structure to topple. While north central Italy was in ferment, clamoring for annexation to Sardinia, Giuseppe Garibaldi, the romantic knight of liberty, launched from Genoa the picturesque adventure of his Thousand Red Shirts; he landed in Sicily in May, 1860. His filibustering expedition may fairly be described as a joyous war. Sicily overrun, Garibaldi crossed the straits to the mainland; he entered Naples in September. Garibaldi was a colorful, romantic enthusiast, an appropriate symbol of Italian nationalist feeling, but he was no diplomat."

The transport *Marie Celeste*, mentioned in the background dialogue in several episodes, is a reference to a sailing ship found adrift on the sea in 1872 by the crew of the ship *Dei Gratia*. The *Celeste*'s crew was missing, as was her single lifeboat, but there were half-eaten meals in the mess hall and other evidence the crew had left suddenly. Investigators found that Captain Morehouse of the *Dei Gratia* had dined with Captain Briggs of the *Celeste* the night before departure, and Morehouse and his crew were tried for murder. There was no hard evidence, and they were acquitted. The missing crewmen were never found.

When Sheridan first addresses the crew in Command and Control, he uses bits of Lincoln's speeches, for example, "We shall nobly save, or meanly lose, our last, best hope of Earth." Like Lincoln, Sheridan has to preside during a time of great strife and civil unrest.

Bill Mitchell, Sinclair's wingman in "And the Sky Full of Stars," was named after U.S. General Billy Mitchell, who predicted the rise of air power. A vocal critic of the military hierarchy, he was court-martialed for insubordination in 1925.

There are also several parallels to World War II, especially in the show's second and third seasons. Sometimes this is acknowledged explicitly, for example, Sheridan's talk about Churchill in "In the Shadow of Z'ha'dum" or Lantz's line about "peace in our time" in "The Fall of Night," which echoes a speech by British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain after Britain signed a treaty with Nazi Germany.

In "Chrysalis," when Clark is sworn in as president in place of Santiago, the placement of the actors is designed to hearken back to the positions of the important players during the swearing-in of Lyndon Johnson aboard Air Force One.

As for the literary references, they are everywhere. Tennyson's "Ulysses" is quoted in "The Gathering" and "The Parliament of Dreams." As it's one of Sinclair's (and JMS's) favorite literary works, more quotes and parallels are likely.

Sinclair's "How sharper than a serpent's tooth" comment in "Infection" is a reference to Shakespeare's "King Lear."

In the episode "Soul Hunter," the space liner is the *Asimov*, which is a reference to Isaac Asimov. The same space liner re-appears in "Believers."

The Psi Cop that we first get to know in the episode "Mind War" is named Bester. This is a reference to Alfred Bester and his novels *The Demolished Man* and *The Stars My Destination*, which deal with people with psionic abilities. Actually, as we find out near the end of the third season, Bester's first name is indeed Alfred (his girlfriend calls him Al). Bester's closing line, "Be seeing you," is a direct reference to the television show *The Prisoner*, one of JMS's favorite television shows. Bester also uses the appropriate hand gesture, the thumb and forefinger circled, the other fingers slightly bent, making a "6" shape, and saluting with that hand.

Jason Ironheart in "Mind War" says to Psi Cop Kelsey (who is named for a character in an Ursula K. Le Guin story), "You cannot harm one who has dreamed a dream like mine." This is a Native American (Ojibwe) prayer of protection against one's enemies.

"The War Prayer" is a reference to a Mark Twain story of the same name.

In the episode "Infection," Vance Hendricks says to Dr. Franklin, "Stephen? Stephen, there's a Martian war machine parked outside. They'd like to have a word with you about the common cold." This is a reference to the movie version of *War of the Worlds*, where the Martians and their war machines are defeated by the common cold virus (the original book by H. G. Wells does not contain this ending, nor does the famous Orson Welles radio play).

In "Believers," Garibaldi and Sinclair discuss a request by the Shakespeare Corporation to transport a load of pfingle eggs to Babylon 5. Pfingle eggs and the Shakespeare Corporation are both references to David Gerrold's Tracker

books, *Under the Eye of God* and *A Covenant of Justice*. David Gerrold wrote this episode.

In "Signs and Portents," a Raider on the station says "Six to One," when contacting his ship. This is another *Prisoner* reference, to Patrick McGoohan's character (Number 6), whose quest throughout the show was to find out who Number 1 was.

Ivanova is reading *Working Without a Net* by Harlan Ellison in her quarters in "TKO." This is apparently a book that Ellison plans to write (his autobiography) around the year 2000, according to JMS.

The title of "A Voice in the Wilderness" is a Biblical reference:

> "In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight." (Matthew 3:1-3)

The scene in "A Voice in the Wilderness" in which Ivanova and Sinclair cross a chasm filled with technology on a gigantic scale is extremely similar to scenes from the classic 1956 movie *Forbidden Planet*, which contains equivalent technology seen from a similar viewpoint. As an aside, the pilot episode "The Gathering" was set in the year 2257 A.D., which is the same year as the events in *Forbidden Planet*, although this may be a coincidence (JMS has not commented). In the same episode, "EYE AM KNOT A NUMBER AYE AMA FREE MAN" appears on the computer screen when the shuttlecraft initially sent to explore Epsilon III was damaged. This is yet another reference to *The Prisoner*, where this line is said during the opening credits by Patrick McGoohan.

In "A Voice in the Wilderness" Part II, a language database which appears on-screen briefly lists sets of words with no apparent connections other than the list:

ORAK
SKYNET
NOMAD
FORBIN

These are references to:

Blake's 7

Orac was the box of flashing lights that was the most powerful computer within the federation.

The *Terminator* films

Skynet was the defence computer that became self-aware and tried to wipe out humanity.

Star Trek

Nomad was the eponymous probe which wanted to wipe out biological life.

Colossus: The Forbin Project

Another US defense computer that tried to take over the world. Similar to Skynet, it attempts to control rather than destroy humanity.

In "Babylon Squared," Major Krantz, Commander of Babylon 4, says the station "has come unstuck in time." This is how the character of Billy Pilgrim describes his condition in the Kurt Vonnegut Jr. novel and film *Slaughterhouse Five*. It is, in fact, the very first line of the novel, and explains the discontinuity in the storytelling.

"Expect me when you see me" is said by G'Kar in a message to Na'Toth in "Chrysalis." This is the same phrase as used by Gandalf to Frodo in *The Lord of the Rings* by J. R. R. Tolkien.

In "Points of Departure," The *Jupiter 2* is listed as being docked at the station. This is a reference to *Lost in Space*, which starred Bill Mumy (who now plays Lennier on *Babylon 5*), in which the ship is called the *Jupiter 2*.

Sheridan's ship is the *Agamemnon*. For those of you not up on your ancient Greek mythic history, Agamemnon was a great warrior who went after Paris after Paris kidnapped Helen of Troy. During one particularly harsh battle, Agamemnon prays to the gods and says that if he is successful, he will sacrifice the first thing he sees when he returns home, in praise of the gods and what they did for him. Unfortunately, the first thing he sees when he comes home is his daughter, Iphigenia. He sacrifices her, as he had promised to the gods, but his wife, Clytemnestra, does not understand his deed. Distraught, she plans her revenge, and she and her lover murder Agamemnon as he sits in his bath. This leads her other children, Orestes and Electra, to plan and carry out Clytemnestra's murder (this is all from the tragic Greek trilogy "The Orestia." I took a course in this in college). Sheridan himself can be seen as an Agamemnon figure – he was a great hero in a war, but he was powerless to save his loved one, his wife Anna.

The poem quoted by G'Kar in "Revelations" is "The Second Coming" by Yeats.

In "The Geometry of Shadows," Elric the Technomage is a reference to Michael Moorcock's Eternal Champion in a specific incarnation: the albino sorcerer Elric of Melnibone. Elric the Technomage says, "It is said, 'Do not try the patience of wizards, for they are subtle and quick to anger'." The latter part is a direct quote from a phrase said by Gildor the Elf to Frodo the Hobbit, "Do not meddle in the affairs of wizards, for they are subtle and quick to anger" in *The Lord of the Rings*.

In "A Distant Star," Mr. Orwell, the "fixer" who gets Garibaldi the ingredients of bagna caude, is a reference to George Orwell, whose *Animal Farm* recently won the 1946 Retro-Hugo for Best Novella at the 1996 World Science Fiction Convention.

The Soldier of Darkness, an invisible killer, is made visible by white outlines when shot with an energy weapon in the episode "The Long Dark." This is a reference to the monster from the id seen in *Forbidden Planet*.

In "A Spider in the Web," the Cruiser *Pournelle* is the ship that destroyed Abel's ship. This refers to author Jerry Pournelle, most famous for *The Mote in God's Eye*, which he co-authored with Larry Niven. In the same episode, Ms. Carter (from Mars) has an ancestor called John Carter, a

reference to Edgar Rice Burroughs' second most famous character, John Carter of Mars.

In "The Coming of Shadows," Sinclair's Rangers display a marked similarity to the Rangers led by Aragorn in *The Lord of the Rings*.

The Streibs in "All Alone in the Night" are aliens that abduct members of other races and torture them. This is probably a reference to Whitley Streiber, an SF author who has written about such aliens and also claims to have been abducted by them himself. The physical appearance of the Streibs is similar to those described in alien abduction stories.

Agent Cranston in "Hunter Prey" is a reference to Lamont Cranston, the real name of one of the earliest superheroes, the star first of radio, then of comics and pulp magazines, The Shadow. First broadcast in 1931 as a radio show, there was also a recent film called *The Shadow*.

"There All the Honor Lies" is a quote from Alexander Pope's "An Essay on Man." In the episode, Ivanova says, "This isn't some kind of Deep Space franchise, this place is ABOUT something." This is obviously a sideswipe at *Star Trek – Deep Space Nine* and the *Star Trek* franchise in general.

The reference in "In The Shadow of Z'ha'dum" to Minipax is Newspeak for the Ministry of Peace, from George Orwell's dystopian SF novel about oppressive government, *1984*.

In "Voices of Authority," Ivanova says, "It looks like you're about to 'go where everybody has gone before'." Again, this is a sideswipe at *Star Trek: The Next Generation*'s introductory voice-over, which ends with "Where no one has gone before."

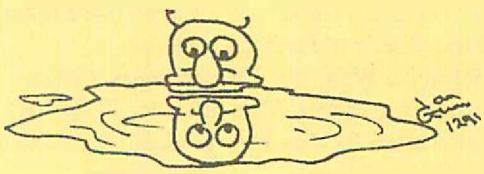
"Grail" and "A Late Delivery From Avalon" both make reference to Arthurian legend.

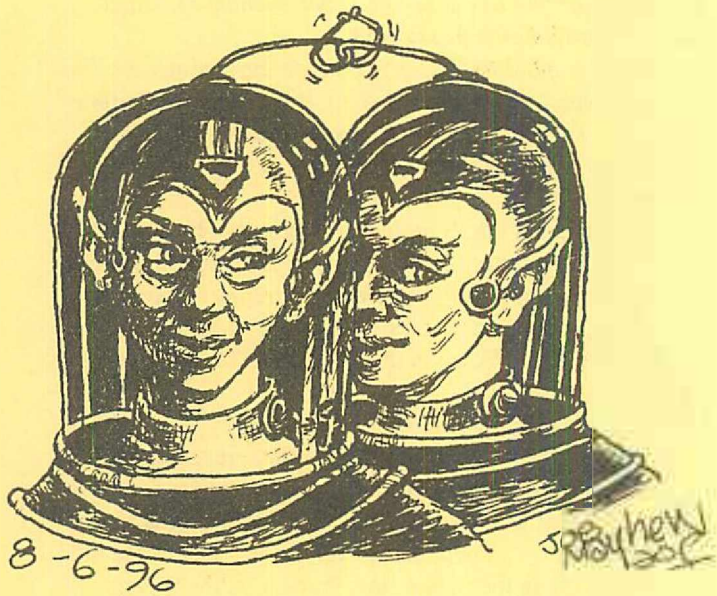
The title of the third-season episode "Passing Through Gethsemane" is a reference to the New Testament, Matthew 26:30-50, in which Jesus is failed by Peter and betrayed by Judas. Gethsemane is also referred to, not always by name, in Mark 14:32-52, Luke 23:39-51, and John 18:1-13.

In "Ship of Tears," Bester quotes from Edgar Allan Poe's "The Cask of Amontillado."

The abundance of both literary and historical references distinguishes *Babylon 5* from other television shows in that the references in other TV shows seem to be mostly from the television genre, whereas this television show reaches into the literary world for its references. This serves as proof of the uniqueness of JMS as a television producer, willing to go against the trends of his chosen medium.

(With thanks to the *Babylon 5* Lurkers Guide)





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A Case of Conscientiousness: James Blish and *the tale that wags the god* by Bob Devney

Spock Must Die hit bookstores and newsstands all over the U.S. in 1970, and was an instant success.

The public absolutely ate up the book's plethora of literary insights delivered in articles, critical analyses, an autobiographical essay, and an interview—all teeming with à propos references to the works of historians Oswald Spengler and Thomas S. Kuhn; fantasist James Branch Cabell; philosophers Artemidorus, Karl Jung, and Susanne K. Langer; scientists Johannes Kepler, E. A. Milne, Nathaniel Kleitman, and Eugene Aserinsky; anthropologist Loren Eiseley; painter Paul Klee; composers Franz Joseph Haydn, Karlheinz Stockhausen, Edgard Varèse, and John Cage; and writers James Joyce, Ezra Pound, Thomas Pynchon—

Oh. Sorry, wrong book.

Wait, I've got it now. *Spock Must Die*, of course, was the first original novel set in the *Star Trek* universe, following a series of earlier novelizations of scripts from the TV show. And it certainly was a whopping success and a good exciting read. Although perhaps a little light on critical references to great intellects, their works and theories.

The erudite collection of critical essays I was thinking of was *the tale that wags the god*. (Which I shall refer to hereafter as *Wags*.) It came out in 1987, and may not have sold quite as many copies.

Sorry for the mix-up. But it's a natural mistake, given that both were written by the same man.

James Benjamin Blish (1921–1975) grew up in Chicago and New Jersey, was an early member of the Futurians fan group in NYC, sold his first story to the SF pulp adventure magazine *Super Science Stories* in 1940, got a degree in microbiology at Rutgers, did postgrad work in zoology at Columbia, quit to become a full-time writer, was a member of the John Campbell stable at *Astounding*, where many of his *Cities in Flight* stories appeared through the 1950s, moved to England in the middle 1960s, and by the end of his life had written twelve successful *Star Trek* novels.

That's the career of an entertaining, craftsmanlike, good-value-for-money, midcentury midlist middlebrow SF writer.

Why would a guy like that get mixed up with writing serious, name-dropping, standard-setting, paradigm-happy, polysyllabificating high literary criticism?

I honestly don't think it's because Blish was ashamed of science fiction, or his own or the field's pulpy beginnings. That may be the case with a few lit critters—that minority of the lit crit community who enjoy the field's finest writing but turn up their noses at anything else, cultivating a few precious blossoms without regarding the manure that fed the roots. James Blish enjoyed the good stuff, however pungent or perfumy.

Nor was Blish just a late-blooming convert to intellectualism, whose stories and essays uniformly grew more serious as he mastered his medium and put away childish things. Remember, another *Star Trek* book—his twelfth—came out the year he died.

I believe Blish worked seriously at everything he did. That's why he thought that he and every other writer in the field could and should improve their craftsmanship in any story for any audience. Preached against the sin of not thinking out an idea to its conclusions. Talked about the writer's duty to be responsible.

Simply put, he was conscientious.

That's why beside his more obviously commercial work, Blish produced fiction touching on deep (indeed often dark) philosophical and religious matters with which SF up to his time had rarely concerned itself. The gratifying and original results range from the ETs apparently created with no concept of sin in *A Case of Conscience* (1959) to the horrific prospect in *Black Easter* (1968) of scholars releasing the Last Judgment onto the world, in a spirit of scientific inquiry familiar to Faust and Oppenheimer....

Also in this sercon vein, Blish co-founded (with SF's earliest serious critic, Damon Knight) the Milford Science Fiction Writers' Conference in Milford, Pennsylvania. After Blish's move to England, in 1972 he helped set up a U.K. Milford conference that I believe continues today. He was an active charter member of the field's premier professional organization, the Science Fiction Writers of America. And he conscientiously wrote a number of articles intended to introduce both technical and broader theoretical criticism into the field. His earlier and better-known efforts, written as William Atheling, Jr., can be found in *The Issue at Hand* (1964) and *More Issues at Hand* (1970). Other pieces and Blish's last critical work were collected in 1987—in the book at hand.

There are nine Blish essays altogether in *Wags*, together with an autobiographical piece and the text of a interview, plus a preface by editor Cy Chauvin, a useful introduction by John Foyster that places the author's criticism in context and discusses the other two critical collections, and a lengthy—all right, a humongous—bibliography prepared by Blish's wife, the writer Judith Lawrence Blish. The pieces here first appeared in journals and magazines from *American Libraries* to *Playboy*, with dates from 1968 to 1984.

The first article in *the tale that wags the god* appeared under that name in *American Libraries* in 1970, but was renamed "The Function of Science Fiction" in a later reprinting. First, it demonstrates that SF wasn't always literature's bastard child: "In the nineteenth century, virtually every writer of stature—and many now forgotten—wrote at least one science fiction story....Jules Verne, in short, was just plain wrong in assuming that he had invented a whole new kind of story."

Then, Blish points out, SF had the misfortune to be cut out from the herd due to "the invention (by the American publishing firm of Street and Smith) of the specialized fiction magazine....This invention, as it turned out, was malign; in literature, it is almost a pure obverse of Mussolini's discovery that the way to raise the birth rate is to fail to supply electricity to housing projects." He's quite interesting on genres here. The once-hugely-popular ghost story is exorcised by the electric light; *Rosemary's Baby* rests on two conventional

women's magazine fears: "Suppose my baby should be born deformed?" and "I think the neighbors don't like me."

Finally, with space travel and increasing media popularity putting SF back on the road to respectability, Blish cites his thesis: "Science fiction is the only remaining art form which appeals to the mythopoeic side of the human psyche." Thus his waggish title.

Blish feels that SF melds science and philosophy; gives even nonscientists the "basic scientific emotions" of the thrill of discovery and good old sensawunda; and creates myths that modern humanity can believe, because they're (at least perceived to be) backed by science.

Much of this argument is taken as truism now. But Blish may have been the first to organize the material this cogently, and I don't remember seeing the word "mythopoeic" bandied about much before his time. Now, of course, it's quite handy to bandy.

In the second piece in the collection, "The Science in Science Fiction" (1971), Blish posits that he's "prepared to agree that most of what we call science fiction—even 'hard' science fiction—is technology fiction at best. The scientific content, as a scientist would understand the term, is quite invisible."

He then brings in the philosopher Thomas S. Kuhn, who in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* talks about the innate conservatism of science when it comes to demolishing a favored old paradigm. (Blish seems to be saying that Kuhn originated the use of the word "paradigm" in this context.) As Blish puts it, "science progresses in a series of convulsive hiccups, during each one of which the attempt to suppress the coming convulsion is the strongest feature of the landscape."

So will telepathy, faster-than-light travel, anti-gravity, time travel, and force fields ever hiccup right out of SF into real science, and become part of a future paradigm? Perhaps, Blish replies, and goes on to make a beautiful and unexpected leap.

OK, he says, "it is the duty of the conscientious [that C-word again] science fiction writer not to falsify what he believes to be known fact." But it's "an even more important function for him to suggest new paradigms, by suggesting to the reader, over and over again, that X, Y, and Z are possible."

It worked for space travel; why not for the other items on our wish list? "[W]e have a lot of hardware...on the moon right now, to show us what can be done with repeated suggestion....It seems to me that the most important scientific content in modern science fiction are the impossibilities."

In other words, friends: if you believe in a new paradigm, clap your hands.

"The Arts in Science Fiction" (1972) is one of the strongest pieces in *Wags*. Here's a knowledgeable expert taking a still-fresh look at something that just hadn't been covered by anyone else in the field, and still doesn't get all that much discussion today.

You may not be surprised that Blish finds comparatively little reference in SF to the arts so far. And notes that when you do find such a reference, all too often it seems that "the artistic tastes of the future are decidedly worse than our own." In Theodore Sturgeon's *Venus Plus X*, artistic life in a future utopia "consisted of gauzily-clad children doing folk dances," and statues or public buildings "in the quasi-heroic, or late-Mussolini, style."

He also lights into Heinlein, who "has no use for the abstract, not only in fiction or poetry ["...I am told...that Robert Heinlein is firmly convinced that the works of (his own) blind poet Rhysling are real good stuff!..."], but also in music and painting." Or sculpture; Blish seems to find Heinlein's mooning in *Stranger in a Strange Land* over Rodin's "Fallen Caryatid" crudely sentimental and simple-minded. Heinlein "likes paintings which tell a story....he has a general bias for narrative; no other kind of art appears to exist for him."

There's lots more tasty stuff here: How Edgar Pangborn wrote "one of the very few knowledgeable sf stories about music I have ever encountered," anthologized by Blish himself in a (slim) collection of future-arts, *New Dreams This Morning* (1966). How "every period...believes it is on the edge of artistic anarchy," so don't worry so much. What interesting stuff is coming out of modern SF poetry. What people like Anthony Burgess, Brian Aldiss, and Thomas Pynchon are up to. And, to turn the easel around, what effect SF is having on the arts in general.

The shortest piece in the collection, "A New Totemism?" (1984), takes on a fairly hefty issue for its five itty-bitty pages: "one of the oldest and knottiest questions of iconography: What is the shape of the soul?"

In more mundane terms, Blish is wondering what ETs might look like. Brace yourself. "The first intelligent extra-solar race that we meet may be wiser and nobler than we are, and look all the same like something out of Hieronymus Bosch....The situation is comparable to a first encounter with African artworks [thus "totemism"], where no insight is possible until we realize that what seem like distortions to us are symmetries in a culture where our norms do not prevail."

So the ET may appear to be "constructed of something...like boiled beans, as in Dali's 'Premonition of Civil War.' " Yummy image, Mr. Blish.

As an earlier and less refined critic (Joseph Goebbels) put it, "When I hear the word *culture*, I reach for my gun." Admittedly, when we hear an essay title like "Probapossible Prolegomena to Idearcal History" (1978), our phaser fingers may get itchy.

But the title and subtitles in the article should probably be taken as academic pastiche, employed since Blish in this piece was applying to SF the ideas in hyperintellectual philosopher Oswald Spengler's *The Decline of the West*. (Blish's *Cities in Flight* stories are said to be much indebted to Spengler.) And we might especially be inclined to let the man have his fun here. Because this astounding little essay was composed in the hospital bed wherein James Blish was dying of lung cancer.

First Blish summarizes Spengler's main concepts. This took several pages; I won't even try, except to say that Spengler saw sweeping connections and cycles throughout the vast epochs of human history, with lots of repetitions in the general although not the specific. One vital Spenglerian idea:

syncretism, the combining of different forms of belief or practice from different eras and areas into a "new" whole.

Springing from that, Blish's central thesis is so dense with ideas and specificity that it's worth quoting in full.

"Science fiction is the internal (intracultural) literary form taken by syncretism in the West. It adopts as its subject matter that occult area where a science in decay (elaborately decorated with technology) overlaps the second religiousness — hence, incidentally, its automatic receptivity from its emergence to such notions as time travel, ESP, dianetics, Dean Drives, faster-than-light travel, reincarnation and parallel universes. (I know of no other definition which accounts for our insistence that stories about such non-ideas be filed under the label.)"

Read that over twice, then go look up the whole essay. I will say that Spengler's serene determinism leads Blish to predict that we can expect no masterpieces from SF—it's simply not in the nature of the genre's niche in history. This need not be "an occasion for despair. I repeat, we have free will within our rôle and era, as long as we know what it is and when we are." Thanks, I feel much better now.

Speaking of despair, though: "On a broader scale, most of Spengler's predictions for the Twentieth Century after 1921 have come to pass, and in the order in which he predicted them, a good test of any theory. He did fail to foresee that they would happen so fast; but he set the date of the utter collapse of the West at around 2200, which is just about as much time left as the Club of Rome gives us, and for the same reason— insanely runaway technology."

"Poul Anderson: The Enduring Explosion" was written for the special April 1971 Poul Anderson Issue of *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*.

Naturally, this means you get more kisses than killshots here from Blish. In fact, he coyly hints Anderson may have written a few poor stories amid a sea of good ones, then refuses to say which they are. (I didn't say everything Blish wrote was higher criticism.)

In an interesting aside, Blish claims to have midwived a critical term still in hard and heavy use today. He once labeled "the kind of thing Poul writes as 'hard copy' — work so deeply felt and so carefully crafted that it looks solid no matter from what angle you view it....Everyone instantly assumed that what I was talking about was sf in which the science was correct, and thus inadvertently was born our present usage of 'hard science fiction.' "

Can anyone out there point to a better or prior claim?

In any case, Blish makes an argument for Anderson's value in terms of prolific quality (238+ stories by 1968), scientific accuracy (*Tau Zero* is both scientifically plausible and mind-boggling enough to outdo E. E. Smith), literary craftsmanship (the story *The Day After Doomsday* builds up to a crucial space battle which is then narrated in ballad form), special gift for bardic poetry (he actually pulled that battle ballad off) and deep understanding of how to create both tragedy (the "utterly pitiless" story "Sister Planet") and comedy (*The High Crusade*, maybe not so much the "Hoka" stories).

Last but not least, Blish shows that Poul also knows how to party. As evidenced in the story "A Bicycle Built for Brew," in which Anderson "constructed a spaceship powered by beer and made me believe it would actually work."

Let's pass lightly over the next three selections.

"The Literary Dreamers" (1973) surveys dream research both classical and current and relates it to *Smirt* (1934), a late dream-novel by the fantasist James Branch Cabell (1879–1958). Blish edited a Cabell Society journal. Frankly, he was nuts about the guy. Equally frankly, I'm not. If you are, this and the next piece should be right up your tree. Certainly the dream science here is interesting but now perhaps somewhat dated; the Cabell material almost put me into a dream state myself.

Ditto in spades "The Long Night of a Virginia Author" (1972), which is all about Cabell. I perked up a bit at a list of parallels between Cabell, with his trilogy *The Nightmare Has Triplets* (successive novels entitled *Smirt, Smith, Smire*—was his editor insane?), and James Joyce with *Finnegans Wake;* said parallels are in fact somewhat startling. But then begins the 8-page plot summary of *Snore* — sorry, of Cabell's trilogy. All else is darkness.

Last of my three over-easies, there's "Music of the Absurd" (1964). It appeared in *Playboy*, but try as I might the only sexual note I could tease out of the entire article was a description of the Greeks' "primary harmonic discovery—that women tend to sing the 'same' melody an octave higher than men do." Other than this heavy-breathing moment, the piece is an extremely well-written, informative overview of new movements in "serious" music to the early 60s, some of which Blish appreciated but most of which he considered entirely wrong-headed and potentially disastrous. Music was Blish's favorite art after writing. If you have any interest in the subject, his insights here are well worth reading.

"A Science Fiction Coming of Age" (part of which saw previous publication in 1972) is an autobiographical sketch, and thus hard to summarize or evaluate fairly. After all, it was his life.

Here's some of what we learn:

Blish came to science fiction at age nine, in June 1931, when a friend gave him the April issue of *Astounding Stories*. It had a garish cover, and stories by Edmond Hamilton, Jack Williamson, and Ray Cummings. He was hooked forever.

Even at nine, he claims, he had a "sort of common sense about the future...to see, for example, that interplanetary travel was...inevitable...whereas time-travel was just a romancer's game."

His mother referred to SF, Blish says "vaguely" but I believe rather elegantly, as "fairy-tales for grown-ups."

Shortly before moving from Chicago to East Orange, New Jersey, he finished 7th grade and had a letter published in *Astounding*—"the second memory is far more vivid than the first."

He filled the pages of a juvenile home-made SF fan magazine called *The Planeteer* with the adventures of a Hawk-Carse-like hero, a sidekick named Bob, a girlfriend

named Velvinor, and a weak patsy wonderfully named Crawly Spindling.

He sold his first story to a professional market as a college sophomore.

Emboldened by steady sales to the SF pulps, though married and with an infant, Blish quit grad school in 1948 to become a full-time free-lance author. By the time that dream collapsed, he'd been forced to sell the house.

Against Blish's own "stern resistance"—he'd considered it unsaleable even when writing the original short story—Frederik Pohl and Betty Ballantine persuaded him to turn *A Case of Conscience* into a novel. It won Blish his only Hugo, in 1958.

Doctor Mirabilis (1965), a straight historical novel about Roger Bacon, was Blish's own choice as the best book he'd ever written. Borrowing a trick from Cabell, in retrospect he announced it as part of a trilogy—on the question of whether the quest for secular knowledge was evil—which he called *After Such Knowledge*. Its elements (in reading order): *Doctor Mirabilis, Black Easter* and *The Day After Judgment* (he considered these latter two one book), and *A Case of Conscience*.

The last item we'll consider, "James Blish Talks to Brian Aldiss," was published in 1973 after a recorded interview at a British SF convention. It's gem. Following a whole book's worth of tightly controlled literary discourse, Blish seems to let his hair down and natter easily with his old friend Aldiss.

Who manages in a fairly short space to ask many of the questions any Blishniac would most want to hear answered, including (although asked with perfect geniality) the equivalents of Why'd you bail out on America? Was your greatest idea yours or really John Campbell's? Why are you so obsessed with eschatology? Why is your writing so cold? Wasn't that book you wrote about your failed first marriage with [fellow SF author] Virginia Kidd a failure itself? Aren't you ever going to loosen up?

Remember, this guy is a very good friend. But perhaps an even better interviewer.

Here in part is how Blish responds:

"I have in fact, pretty much, for my own purposes, exhausted America. I didn't come to this decision lightly. Every day here [in England] I find more and more things that I love, that are personal to me, that enrich me, whereas in the States I was finding fewer and fewer."

"The main thing that [*Astounding* editor John Campbell, in a famous four-page letter inspiring the *Cities in Flight* series] did contribute, the central idea, was that the most valuable things that these migrant workers could transfer in a situation involving fast interstellar travel was…information. These are the pollinating bees of the galaxy….I was quite tired of the kind of sf story in which the leading character rises from lieutenant-general to ruler of the galaxy….Therefore my migrants, carrying their information and operating their small intrigues, seemed to me to be much more interesting as humans…."

"There could be no more final and black an ending for a novel than *Black Easter* [SPOILER WARNING: this book ends with Armageddon and the triumph of the Devil], so my editor at Doubleday said "how about a sequel?"…. I mentioned this mad project [to Harry Harrison], and tried to see how I could undertake it. Harry, who is a master of the over-reaction, threw up his hands, staggered backwards across the room, brought up against the wall with his hands thrown up against it, clasped his brow, then…said, 'Well, meanwhile in another universe very similar to ours….' "

"So many people have said that my writing is cold, in one way or another, that I must assume it to be true. Now, when I hear it from Harlan Ellison, who lives at the top of his voice, I discount it, but Harlan is not the only one to have said it by any means….What I want to do is to produce work which contains passion controlled by reason, in as exact a balance as…I can manage."

[About his failing-marriage comic/tragic/SF novel, *Fallen Star* (1957)] "It's almost totally autobiographic, on the surface as well as at the bottom….The novel fails…when I weighted the damned thing on the science-fictional side. That was a failure of nerve on my part, and I'm sorry for it."

"I won't consider [a piece of writing] a work of art unless it not only has the wider feeling that I'm hoping for, but that it still has the control I feel an artist absolutely must have in order to say what he means….I don't dare lose control because I don't know who I'm becoming yet."

So that's a longish sample of Blish the critic.

Conscientiously trying to bring some intellectual rigor, thoughtfulness, and a wider cultural context to his and others' work. Not a humorist, but certainly not humorless. Often dismissed as too cold and analytical, but passionate about SF's roots and its reach for the stars.

It wouldn't do to push the analogy too far, but I often think of James Blish as science fiction's T. S. Eliot.

Both left America, where intellect was not to say the least overvalued, and found a home in England where their intellectualism was better appreciated. Both were dry in their approach, and born to criticism at least as much as to their quite significant individual creative accomplishments. And both were quite concerned with sin. Above all, with the sins of the intellect.

There's a sad story about The Science Fiction Foundation in the U.K., another worthy group of ameliorationalists which Blish helped found, in 1970. They appropriately established the James Blish Award after his death. Its purpose: honoring excellence in SF criticism.

Also appropriately, the first award went to Blish's old friend Brian Aldiss in 1977. But the project was then canned due to lack of cash.

It couldn't have been for lack of a new generation of fine critics. I'd have nominated any of the triad from *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction*—Peter Nicholls, John Clute, and Brian Stableford—for the ESF and other individual works. Not to speak of SF-authors-turned- occasional critics such as Samuel Delany, Ursula Le Guin, James Gunn, or Barry Malzberg. All must own a considerable debt to Damon Knight and to James Blish, who blazed the trail.

About *Wags* itself: in Clute and Nicholl's monumentally judicious *Encyclopedia,* Peter Nicholls cheekily terms it a

"curate's egg." Turns out this is an English catchphrase from an early 1900s *Punch* cartoon, which showed a nervous, overawed, overeager curate having breakfast with the bishop. The bishop says the curate must have got a bad egg. Blurts the curate, "Oh no, my lord, I assure you! Parts of it are excellent."

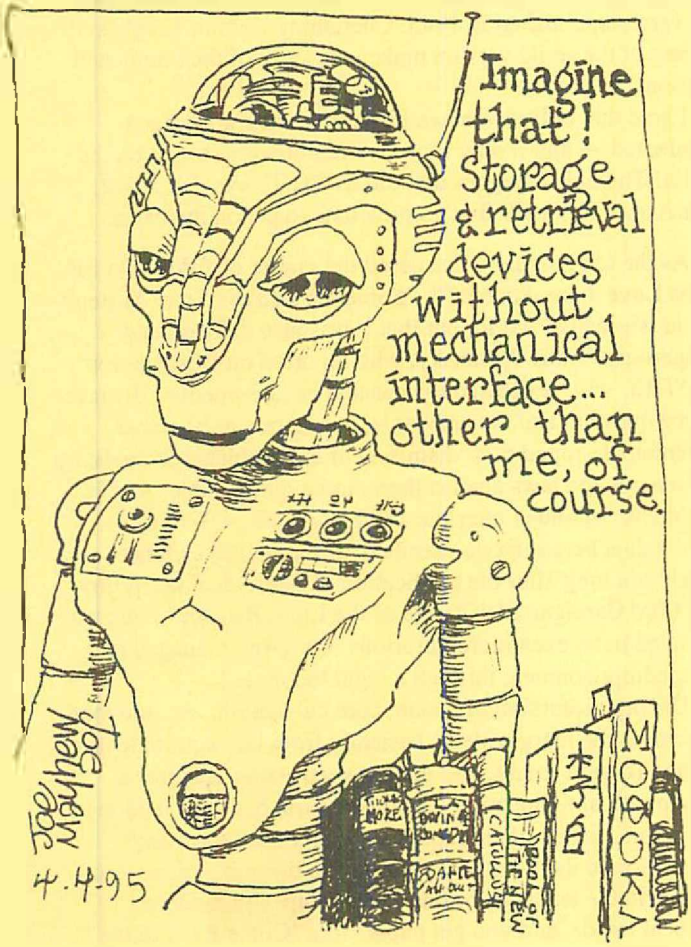
His partner Clute might beg to differ, and point out that the egg we're talking about here is from the workshop of Fabergé. In his solo offshoot *Science Fiction: The Illustrated Encyclopedia* (1995), Clute observes: "If American SF were interested more in intellectual discourse than in the telling of stories, if it were interested more in thinkers ravaged by heavy thoughts than in heroes, then James Blish might have been the most significant figure in the whole history of the genre."

Still, why read rag-tags of criticisms in perhaps not the best critical book by someone who might have been — but in this universe was not—the best SF writer, and who moreover has already been dead for more than 20 years?

Because a good writer can always surprise you, as I hope some of the above has demonstrated. And James Blish was certainly a good writer, who thought deeply about how to reward your reading of his work.

He was conscientious about it.

the tale that wags the god by James Blish • edited by Cy Chauvin, introduction by John Foyster, bibliography (96 pages) by Judith L. Blish • Advent:Publishers, Inc. • Chicago 1987 • Hardcover, 290 pages



May 30, 1996

Dear Mr. Knabbe;

I loved *Proper Boskonian* #36! Bob Devney's review column is excellent. I love his writing/reviews. Keep this man. Tie him to a chair if you have to. Evelyn C. Leeper did a marvelous report on Intersection 1995. Did she do it all by herself?! Wow!

I also enjoyed "How I Sold My First Story" and the Henry Kuttner pieces. Now I have to track down the Hogben stories. It was a fantastic issue. I liked it so much I'm enclosing my small press special issues #1 &2 to see if I can trade them for a back issue or two.

Appreciatively & Hopefully,
Joy V. Smith

19 June 1996

Dear *Proper Boskonian:*

Many thanks for *Proper Boskonian* 37. A copy of *FTT* 20, published in time for the Eastercon, will be mailed to you at the same time as this letter – but at printed matter surface rates rather than by air, so it could be another couple of months before it eventually arrives. (Although surface mail transit times can vary wildly – sometimes it can take two to three months, but the North American copies of *FTT* 20, mailed in early May, seem to have taken scarcely more than a fortnight.)

I noted Lloyd Penney's review of *FTT* 19, and would say that while he's correct that it was once called *Fuck The Tories*, he's incorrect in saying that PC had anything to do with the change of name. (Certainly, there were a few people who did object, but since it was transparently obvious that they objected principally to the thing's political slant – and that had it been called, say, *Fuck The Socialists* they would have cheered instead – their complaints were always dismissed out of hand.) We changed the name on our own initiative: because while the title *Fuck The Tories* had adequately summed up what we thought we wanted to do when we started publishing, it became less and less representative of what we actually *did* do. And more restrictive, in that it both distorted people's perceptions of what we were about – some never could grasp that the fanzine could be politically aware without entering into discussions of politics *per se* – and actively hindered us in obtaining the kind of contributions we wanted (even though we still write the bulk of the contents ourselves).

Besides, hardly anyone ever referred to the thing by other than its initials anyway, so formally renaming it as *FTT* was perhaps no more than a bow to (as D. West might put it) the stern dictates of an unyielding reality.

Yours, Joseph Nicholas

July 9, 1996

Dear Helmuth and the gang:

To begin by picking over Bob Devney's Twelve Labors of Sisyphus [mixing our myths here, what?]: Having received Guy Lillian's latest doorstop *Challenger* No. 4, I can comprehend the reviewer's delight. Since it will not get on the revolving list of fanzines to be reviewed until, likely, *Challenger* No. 6 or so, let me point out, for example, the article on Bob Shaw the gun fancier. Some southern fen took

him in hand after he wrote about a "Colt .44 Magnum." The article includes a picture of Northern Irish Terrorist Bob Shaw preparing to test-fire assault weapons for his paramilitary group . . . well, whatever.

Don D'Ammassa recounts in the *CLF Newsletter* of how "Bruce Coville's *Jeremy Thatcher, Dragon Hatcher* was 'temporarily removed from a school library because of "excessive" references to the colors silver and green, which are "associated" with satanism,' " the reviewer says. And here I thought the colors silver and green were associated with *money*. What we are seeing here is the power of urban legend, made stronger by the alienation of ordinary people from the governmental process and driven by the increased spread of "alternative" communications. Someone read in an anonymous flyer left at prayer meeting that the colors silver and green were associated with Satanism and because it was outside the "approved" methods of communication, believed it — a grown-up version of believing that the liquid in a golf ball is deadly poison, because a kid in the sixth grade said so.

And so to **Evelyn Leeper,** speaking of Boskone. The **"Alternate Holocausts"** faces the problem that such a topic is a magnet for Nazis. The discussion of Bradley Smith touches on the point. A Usenet group discussing alternate histories tried to discuss a similar topic and got hit by one of the most ignorant and contentious Internet arguers — a Joseph Nicholas with a modem and a topic of anti-Holocaust (instead of the original's veiled alternative supreme rule of his band of socialists). As a matter of fact, revisionists ***have*** told survivors, "You're lying about what you say you saw." The Ernst Zundel trials in Canada were the most recent notorious example of revisionism at work.

"Even for many students today their only exposure to World War II other than *Schindler's List* is *Hogan's Heroes,*" the panel concluded. Well, Robert Clary (LeBeau) had been in Buchenwald. And Werner Klemperer (Colonel Klink) made a point of being as absurd and ineffectual as possible — the traditional German weakness of being servile to one's superiors and contemptuous of the ones below one. (Remember how Klink fawned on General Burkhalter [Leon Astin].)

"Alternative Christianities" seems to be a magnet for wish-fulfillers. It is always reassuring to imagine that a losing heresy, if it had prevailed, would have brought about a world more like the intention of one's current political belief system. Gnosticism is very popular in this regard, since so little of Gnostic beliefs has survived and what has survived is so incoherent — well, ambiguous — that it can be made to fit many contemporary beliefs.

"Flynn thought the biggest turning point for an alternate Christianity was when the Emperor Justinian made it the state religion." Try "Constantine." Justinian was a fanatical persecutor, and the Eastern Roman Empire had a more diverse range of mutually hostile heresies. This in turn created a fifth column for the conquering Arabs in their time. (Having disliked the Orthodox, they thought nothing would be worse, but found out they were wrong.) Incidentally, the surviving sects of those heresies are now generally non-Roman Catholic adherents of the Papacy!

Panelists discussing **"Books We Love That Aren't SF"** observed that "many fans read historical fiction." Assuming they can find it. The historical category has been usurped by romances, most of which have virtually no research. The "tomatoes and potatoes" in Evan Rhodes's *Children's Crusade* are nothing by comparison. (And let me point out that there are more and more "time-travel and fantastic" romances being published now. Let us look out.)

Louis L'Amour did his research and did not want to waste it. Hence the long historical lectures in his books. In this he is emulating Victor Hugo. If Disney had wanted to be true to this legacy, in their new animated movie Quasimodo would pause among the songs to discuss the history of church bells, Esmerelda would deliver a brief multimedia history of the Sinti and Roma, and even Judge Frollo (change from Fr. Frollo of the original) would discourse on French law enforcement. (I have not seen Disney's *Hunchback of Notre Dame* and doubt they have the scene where Esmerelda gets taken out of the courtroom to have a fitting for footwear, so to speak.)

Since Boskone, the ballot for **"The (Retro?!) Hugos"** has come out, so a few comments are in order. *Foundation and Empire* is not fully eligible, but its second part "The Mule" is — while *Animal Farm* turned out to only be eligible as a novella. The problem I have with *The World of Null-A is* that the version that most of the voters will be familiar with is not the version published in 1945. Cherishing Damon Knight's review of the serial version makes me leery of the nominated version.

I note that only seventeen different novels were even nominated — and it only took five nominations to get on the ballot! The only category that did as "well" was Fan Artist, which also only took five nominations to get on the ballot.

As the *ton* languidly discussed the matter of **"Why Do SF Fans Love Jane Austen?"**, "Someone said that Jane Austen's world was a civil world, but that it was also difficult and dangerous." Taras Wolansky, who reported on Boskone for *FOSFAX*, will be pleased to hear that he is Someone. His take on the question and the answer is, not surprisingly, rather different. He found their dismissal of the problems of duels, by referencing the laws against them, to be quite risible. And in fact duels continued after the 1800 law cited — Wolansky cited a duel between two members of the British Cabinet fought not long after the publication of *Sense and Sensibility*, and Lord Cardigan of "Charge of the Light Brigade" fame was involved in an even more notorious one. (And managed to escape imprisonment through a legal loophole.)

The big discussion of canon, core curriculum, etc. too long to write in the margin stems basically from the requirements of tenure. To gain tenure, and then to keep status, requires a certain rate of publication. Deconstruction has been a boon to professors, as now their papers no longer need have any connection to the works they purport to discuss. Add to that the inevitable tendency to one-upmanship, and modern political trends, and you get papers like "Come Back to the

Raft, Huck Honey," the analysis citing references to the color violet as proofs of a homosexual subtext in "The Jack Benny Show" (Well!), and the proof that Abraham Lincoln was a closet gay.

So Mr. McMaster "would have taken a certain physics course from Robert Oppenheimer, except that he'd taken it the previous year from Enrico Fermi," reports dutiful daughter Lois, as **Bob Devney** "Heard in the halls of Boskone, February 1996." Well, there went his chance to go down in the pages of history, or the NSA's decoded Soviet telegrams, anyhow. Or to become one of the supporting bad guys in *Atlas Shrugged.* Alas for the fall from fame!

And on to the book reviews. I had a different problem to the one that **Mark L. Olson** had with *The Young Lady's Primer* in *The Diamond Age* by Neal Stephenson [Hugo nominee, incidentally]. Given that it draws from the imagery of the reader, what is to keep it from being the Tales of Bart, Beavis, and Butthead Blowing Up the Floating Island? And like all nanotechnology novels, it had the problem that the humans tend to become landscape for the real characters, the nanotech mites that make all the decisions and do all the changing.

Olson has problems with the presentation of Daniel Webster in *Alvin Journeyman.* Card shuffled around the character of a historical character in the last one, *Prentice Alvin,* with his presentation of William Henry Harrison. There are still Harrisons around who took issue.

But Card might be running into a stricter opposition. If you will remember the setup in Card's alternative America, last names are more strictly job-related. Alvin's father was a miller, so Alvin was born "Alvin Miller," and when he became a blacksmith he became "Alvin Smith." Ah . . . some nebulous reports indicate that the member of Joseph Smith's family who started esoteric spiritual explorations was his older brother — Alvin. Could someone be looking for trouble?

Thanks for the artistic comment. E. B. Frohvet (of *Twink)* was in a similar quandary.

Harry Warner proposes: "What television series should be mated with the *Star Trek* concept? My preference would be *The Avengers."* A novel about the beginning of the "five-year mission," *Star Trek: The First Adventure,* was typoed on a newspaper best-seller list as *Star Trek: The First Avenger.* So I did a review of *Star Trek: The First Avenger,* the story of how Kirk, Spock, Bones, Scotty, Sulu, Chekov, etc. met Steed, Cathy Gale, Mrs. Peel, Tara King, "Mother," Purdey, Gambit, etc. And noted that they had left out the real "First Avenger," Dr. David Kiel. (Originally the series was about Dr. David Kiel, whose girlfriend had been murdered by gangsters, and his search for vengeance on them, assisted by a mysterious professional named John Steed. The concept changed between the first and second series "season" in American terminology.)

Odd, **Ray Bowie** must have started really getting into the prozines not long before I did. *Analog* was the first prozine I regularly read, but by the time Campbell died I was aware that this was the passing of someone important. It is ironic that when he died, Campbell was beginning a revival of his inspirational powers. Among the stories he bought, which were published in the issues assembled after his death and before the hiring of Ben Bova, were "The Gold at the Starbow's End," Frederik Pohl's *first* appearance in *Analog;* "Brillo", the *first* appearance of Harlan Ellison in *Analog* (albeit with Ben Bova as a co-author); and the first section of Joe Haldeman's *The Forever War.* What more would he have done?

And Ray, you are welcome.

And **Bob Devney,** you are welcome. E. E. "Doc" Smith, *Galactic Patrol:* "Dominating . . . end. " Kim Kinnison is the culmination of that one breeding line, and Clarissa MacDougall is the other, so Kim is indeed dominating this conclusion. Robert A. Heinlein, *Space Cadet:* "To . . . shake." Well, the ideas of the book do challenge one's preconceptions.

Namarie,
Joseph T Major

July 18, 1996

Dear Editor:

I love the cover of *Proper Boskonian* 37; yes, I read ALL the titles. The back cover is great too. The fan feud comic really tickled me, and the other cartoons and "Space Time Buccaneers" were lots of fun also.

Great review column by Bob Devney, with excellent and thorough reviews of *Challenger* (not an easy task) and a number of others. I enjoyed all the reviews and the quotes, such as the entire editorial of *Gegenschein* (You gotta love that editor. Most people would have come up with a list of excuses) and Harlan Ellison's comments (*Thyme* 107), especially about the 400 books written by Barbara Cartland's Pekingese.

I enjoyed Lloyd Penney's reviews also (I would never have known that South Africa has zines), and Evelyn C. Leeper's excellent, in-depth report on Boskone 33. (Hard to believe her reports are edited!) I was most interested in the Holocaust panel. It sounds as if it would be a very good thing if more writers wrote about the Holocaust so that it cannot be forgotten. I've seen "Shoah" and other documentaries. How anyone can deny all that film footage and those personal interviews with survivors, military personnel, and unrepentant former Nazis themselves is inconceivable to me.

As a writer who's only recently wandered into the fanzine world, I found the Fan-to-Pro Transition piece very interesting. I also liked Bob Devney's Boskone piece (interesting, fun, and well-edited). "Collecting SF & Fantasy Art" was good too. Actually, this issue was so good, I spent more time on this letter than I intended!

Appreciatively, Joy V. Smith

July 25, 1996

Dear Kenneth,

Many thanks for *Proper Boskonian 37.* I was a trifle puzzled by your remark "I used the information in the actual books (even where it was believed incorrect), so people could find them easier" (re Kuttner), as I wasn't sure what difference such information would make in practice. Anyway, I long ago gave up trying to untangle the vagaries of the Kuttner/Moore

publications and was happy just to trust the word of the bibliography's main author, Virgil Utter. Incidentally, the bibliography is now out and is available (for $9) from Chris Drumm in the USA. It's the first one I've done as a perfect, bound paperback and I confess to being rather happy with it (although it will never match the wonderful Underwood-Miller volumes from the 1980's).

On the Blish front, I'm not sure what I can do for you in the way of "updates" to the earlier bibliographies. Superb as each was (and each contains some information I have been unable to locate elsewhere), they were both a trifle prone to errors and omissions, and the new bibliography has gone back to the source wherever possible (Judith Blish kindly allowed me access to the Blish archives in the Bodleian library). The finished bibliography will be shipping to the printers next week and will run to 161 pages, most of which will contain some material not previously published.

However, if there are any specific queries that you have, I'd be more than happy to try to respond to them - otherwise I'll just send you any comments I have after #38 is published. I was sorry to hear that you had canceled plans for a collection of Blish fiction, particularly as the recent British edition to which you alluded, while welcome, was a trifle disappointing.

Thinking of collections, I hear from Bruce Pelz that NESFA are publishing a James White volume entitled *The White Papers* for Worldcon. I'd be grateful if you could let me know the cost of said volume as soon as it is available, as I'd hate to miss it (to my mind, Jim is a sadly under-rated author, particularly in the UK).

All the Best,
Phil Stephensen-Payne

[Thanks for letting me know about the new bibliographies. I will ask the NESFA library to purchase copies. The White Papers *is available for $25 + $2 p&h from NESFA press. KK]*

August 2, 1996

Dear Kenneth,

Thank you for sending another issue of the *Proper Boskonian*.

I'm afraid Bob Devney would be disappointed by an oral version of *Challenger*. I've met most of the contributors, and they have only traces of Southern accents. Some are transplanted Midwesterners like me, and others like Guy Lillian have spent years in other parts of the country. Well-educated Southerners find they have to drop or soften their accents or their opinions will not be taken seriously.

My thanks to Lloyd Penney for his kind remarks about the *Southern Fandom Confederation Bulletin*.

Best wishes,
Tom Feller

August 6, 1996

Dear Ken,

PB 37: another splendid issue.

Ian's art. The Ian Gunn covers plus art throughout was a real surprise. Man I like his stuff. That easy, unforced line, crammed yet clearly delineated landscape, and to top it off something to say (content) and the right words with which to say it (copy). James Blish scorned Heinlein (see my piece on Blish this ish) for having no use for anything but narrative/programmatic art. Suppose that's really what Ian does. So call me uncool, cherishing such warm regard for his oeuvre.

Ken's coup. Most definitely a frosty move to highlight all six Hugo-contending contributors last ish in your editorial. Hope they all win, even the ones pitted against each other in mortal combat. As my Aunt Yeti says, "It's an honor just to be abominated."

Especially pray the leonine and talented Mr. Mayhew recovers from his recent illness. Missed him at Readercon. Of course, we trust a mere medical emergency hasn't compromised his *PB* output one whit.

Penny's thoughts. What delightful zine reviewers *PB* has on staff! First that brash young (HA!) upstart whatsisname, now Lloyd Penney, a veritable fannish institution in zines and lettercols worldwide, with his clearly written, measured judgments and sense of goodwill to all. Liked his glimpse of the zine from South Africa. Was slightly horrified to discover, on just rereading this issue, that Lloyd also reviews the British fanzine *FTT* — which in the meantime the *PB* editor (who shall be nameless) had already given me to review for this issue. (I look at a later *FTT*, thankfully.) I THOUGHT I knew an awful lot about *FTT* for never having seen it before. Anyway, fortunately, looks like Lloyd and I are agreed that it's a real quality zine. Maybe even worthy of this *PB* first, reviews of successive issues — in successive issues.

Leeper's level gaze. Evelyn C. Leeper's con reports continue to be beyond compare. If you didn't get to a certain Boskone panel, never mind, she gave it more attention and thoughtful consideration than you would have anyway. One note: for those who want to hunt up the excellent science essayists she mentions anent the Books We Love That Aren't SF panel, David "Cuomen" of *Outside* magazine is really spelled "Quammen." I've got several of his article collections; really excellent writing for laypeople on natural history.

Olson's oracularisms. Mark Olson's book reviews, also as usual, were very fine. If Paul Di Filippo can call his own new collection *Ribofunk*, I see no reason why Mark shouldn't be free to label Neal Stephenson's awesome *The Diamond Age* as "nanopunk." Although given the Victorian tone of the protagonist society, perhaps it should be something more like "nanoscamp."

Endrey's incisiveness. Tom Endrey's piece on collecting SF/F art doubled my knowledge in two crisp, beautifully organized, beginner-friendly pages. Tom obviously knows this world cold, but he's also thought deeply about how different people might approach collecting on very different levels. Really a model article. Left me curious about only one thing: which artists do you especially like, Tom? Who do you personally collect?

Burstein's balance. Nicely measured account by Michael A. Burstein of "The Pros and Cons of Fan-To-Pro Transition" (nice title too). Like what the editor said to him about no fans or pros, just fannish and proish activities. And Michael's reformulation of this, that he's simply "becoming more

involved in SF from all sides." With that kind of diplomacy, Burstein for SFWA President! Seriously, always a delicate balancing act among humans and other status-happy mammals to move from one social identity to another within the same herd. You seem to be managing with grace and aplomb, Michael.

Thanks. My gratitude to those who wrote to keep me chained to the wheel of fanzine reviewing: Richard Newsome; Teddy Harvia; Joseph T. Major; Harry Warner, Jr.; Brad W. Foster; and Ray Bowie. All right, I'll stay, but only for another thousand zines or so. Two *PB* issues, tops.

And Joseph Major again: hope Johnny Carruthers doesn't waste away for shame of not being mentioned in my review of *FOSFAX*. In fact, I did have a whole paragraph attacking his attack on slightly pudgy ex-cadet Shannon Faulkner. Ken Knabbe must have excised it for reasons of space – or good taste.

regards,
Bob Devney

August 12, 1996

Dear Kenneth:

Ian Gunn's artwork should make your 37th issue stand out in memory a long while. It's hard to say whether he gets more details or more humor into his page size drawings. It makes my head ache to think how long it must have taken him to think up all those titles for the cover, then draw in the books and letter them in a legible manner. Much the same could he said for his back cover, which I imagine must have required immense planning and revising to squeeze all those balloons in and still leave room for the slightly disguised fan figures. If this issue reached Hugo voters before they'd sent in their ballots, it should have a marked effect on how the fan artist tabulation goes.

Once again I like Bob Devney's fanzine reviews for their length and their content. It's particularly good to find him devoting so much space to an issue of *Challenger*, a fanzine that has been inexplicably neglected in fanzine review columns and in general discussions about current fanzines. It is admittedly big but not formidably so and it contains a lot of good contributions from individuals who don't turn up regularly as writers for other fanzines.

The Boskone conreport maintains Evelyn Leeper's tradition as the most thorough reporter in prodom or fandom. The only fault I can find with this one is the many references to alternate history. I suppose it's too late now to expect people to start referring to alternative history, the more accurate term, but it grates a trifle on me whenever I encounter it.

I liked in this conreport the fact that someone spoke up and said novelettes or novellas would be better sources for science fiction movies than novels. I think that is correct, even though mundane novels have in some instances been turned into satisfactory movies. But most science fiction novels of the past have been more rapidly paced, filled with more happenings, than the famous mundane novels, making it more difficult to get a fair representation into two hours or a little more on the silver screen.

As for the retro Hugos, the nominations for the fan categories seem remarkably overloaded in the direction of the West Coast. I don't know if this reflects a greater number of ballots from that area during the nomination voting period or an actual fandom-wide belief that that was where fanac was best in 1945.

I'm among those who don't believe the internet or world-wide web or whatever will be a wonderful thing through all eternity. One obvious problem with it is a de facto exclusion from participation by low-income people in developed nations and almost everyone in underdeveloped countries, who can't afford to pay a thousand dollars or so every five years to replace their obsoleted computer equipment and hundreds of dollars each year in use fees. I also suspect that commercialism will slowly erode the present net attractiveness, both in cluttering up what is available and in figuring out ways to cause users to pay more for almost everything they do at the keyboard.

Thomas Endrey's article about collecting art is very informative. Maybe someone could supplement it in a future issue with facts and figures about what has been paid for stuff at the larger cons' art shows in recent years, to give potential collectors some idea of what they may be getting into. It's hard to believe that interior art originals donated by prozines sold for nickels and dimes and cover paintings brought only a few dollars when sold at Worldcons within the memory of living fans. I suppose mortality among those originals must have been great over the years, as their owners died or lost interest and the art got thrown out or ruined in damp cellars. Someday I hope I'll run across one of those originals in a flea market or secondhand store. Some of them presumably survived until the owner's possessions were sold at public auction or otherwise disposed of by his heirs.

I don't think there's any hard and fast rule about what happens to a fan when he turns into a pro. Sometimes he remains a good guy after the transition, sometimes he seems ashamed of his past. But this happens in almost every field of activity. The same divergence of behavior can be observed when a young man becomes a famous pro in baseball or basketball and shows he had a good character all along or had the capacity to turn into a slob. Ditto for men and women who get promoted to the status of boss. There are good bosses, no matter what the media claims, and there are bad ones, and I don't think it's often possible to predict before the transformation how the individual will handle the change in status.

Your plan to emphasize Jim Blish in your next issue is a good one. He was an important link in the transition of science fiction from pulp to respectability and he also pioneered in frank criticism of pros by a pro, something that just wasn't done in the early years of the prozines.

Yrs., &c.,
Harry Warner, Jr.

August 14, 1996

Re: My Convention Reports

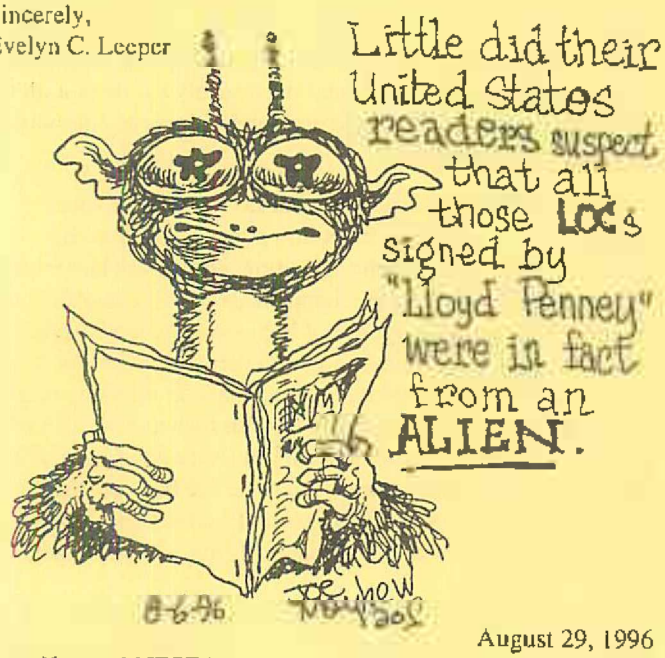
A correction and a couple of comments:

Commenting on Ken's comment to Harry Warner's comments, I have tried once or twice to tape panels (especially those I am on) in order to have a better record of what was said. Invariably I have problems (dead batteries or whatever), and I don't do this any more. I used to take notes with a pen and pad; now I type my notes into my palmtop. For panels I am on, Mark takes the notes (and usually more thorough ones than I do).

Thanks to everyone who likes my reports or finds them useful–it's always nice to hear good things.

And I would like to acknowledge those who find them lacking in some way, or perhaps the problem is not that they are lacking so much as excessive. Yes, I cover panels far more than parties or socializing, in part because I do more panels than socializing (at least with BNFs), and in part because that's what *I* enjoy reading in other people's reports (along with general organizational comments). As for interjecting my personal opinions, that's part of the fun I get from writing the reports, though I can understand that people reading them might not get the enjoyment I do. I try to keep them at least pertinent to the subject at hand, though I don't always succeed. (Maybe I should italicize them so people could skip them easily. :-))

Sincerely,
Evelyn C. Leeper



August 29, 1996

Dear Ken and NESFAns:

I will attempt a review of one of the few *Trek* novels I really enjoyed, Mike Ford's *The Final Reflection.* I'll try my best to get it to you RSN.

Any comments on my fnz reviews? No requests for issue 38? They were mostly intended to show different zines to your readers. I'll get started on more reviews, just in case, for issue 39.

I have enjoyed Ian Gunn's *Space-Time Buccaneers* since its first episode...I think Gunny's got plans to sell compilations for a fannish cause, or just turn pro with it.
If I was ever to turn pro, I'd not want fanac to interfere with my main source of income, but I'd not want to abandon everything fannish. Since there's not much chance of the former, there's no worry about the latter. I have seen local fans like Robert Sawyer and Tanya Huff turn pro, but Tanya has disappeared, while Robert does maintain some fannish ties and visibility, and as we've all seen, it certainly hasn't hurt his pro career.

Yes, it is hard to believe, but some mediazines do cross the various universes, and the Doctor's TARDIS may materialize on the bridge of the *Enterprise*, and so on.

Lloyd Penney

[Sorry I did not get back to you, but as everyone will attest, I am very far behind in my correspondence. Yes, I would like some more fanzine reviews, and please send me that Ford review. KK]

8 October 1996

Dear Kenneth,
Thank you for *Proper Boskonian* 37. I have to admit there wasn't as much in this issue to interest me as the previous few.

In your editorial, you mention the Hugo nominees that have contributed to the zine. I don't know about your other readers, but one problem I have with the Hugos is that there never is enough time to read or see all the nominated works. In fact, I haven't been doing well just trying to do the novel category. One year, a CD-ROM was put out that contained all the written nominated works and some artwork. Unfortunately, this was not widely publicized; and I didn't get it until after the awards were given out. I checked the following year to see whether there would be another one, but it looks as though too much effort and even money had been required to do it. So I find myself this year still reading the novel nominees. I like to read them to get an idea of whether I agree with the choices made. I have one and a half more books to go. Of course, this year was further complicated by the retro Hugos. I wonder whether this tradition will be continued.

Even without having finished reading the retro Hugo nominees, I can say that the choice was probably highly colored by the fact that Asimov's work is remembered better than any of the other nominees'. On the other hand, perhaps its quality is why it is remembered. However, are the retro Hugos supposed to reflect what would have been chosen back then? If so, the result may not be an accurate reflection.

Thanks for letting me have my say.

Sincerely, [R-] Laurraine [Tutihasi]

[I also heard from: Sheryl Birkhead, Tom Endrey, Gary Farber, and Harry Andruschak. In addition, I received art from: Mercy and Rillan MacDhai. Plus PB *is now trading with* Probe *and* Gradient. *Reviews next issue if I can keep Bob Devney's ego in check. KK]*

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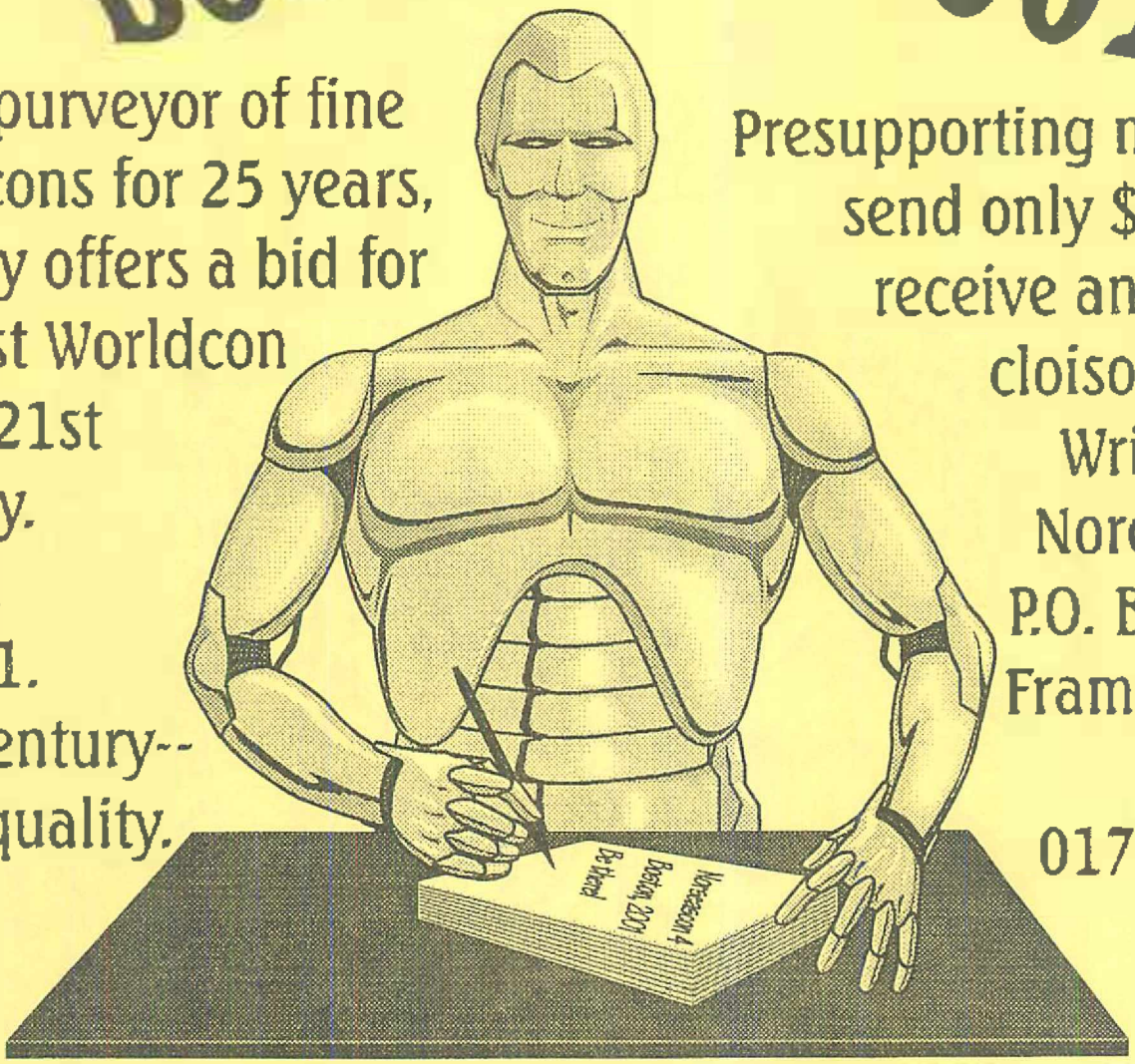

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