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This issue, thanks are owed to Ann Germann and Murray Kaufman, with a special award to Gretchen Schwenn, who, despite the madhouse atmosphere at the University of California (where a student was arrested last week for uttering a naughty word on campus), completed a requested title-caption three microseconds before the RQ was sent to press.

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WHY THE "RIVERSIDE QUARTERLY"?

To those acquainted with the geography of New York City and with the current "little" magazines our title will not be a mystery. Just as Riverside Drive follows the Hudson river, so the RQ proposes to emulate the HUDSON REVIEW, possibly the best literary magazine, and perform the same office for fantasy and science fiction that the HR does for literature in general.

"TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN..."

Correspondents and subscribers should note the RQ's new address: Box 82 University Station, Saskatoon, Canada.

EXPLANATION

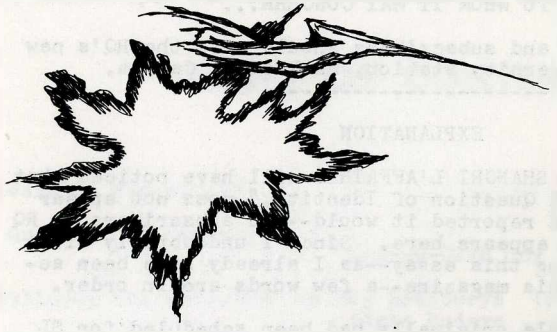
Subscribers to SHANGRI L'AFFAIRES will have noticed that A.J. Cox's essay, "A Question of Identity," does not appear there--as the RQ had reported it would--and subscribers to RQ will notice that it appears here. Since I undoubtedly will be accused of stealing this essay--as I already have been accused of stealing this magazine--a few words are in order.

Mr. Cox's article originally had been scheduled for SL --the review in the last RQ having been prepared from an old manuscript--but last month its previous editor, Redd Boggs, moved to San Francisco (an action understandable to anybody who has lived in Los Angeles). Since SL's new editors felt that Identity was too long for their present purposes and since I already had expressed interest in this article, Cox immediately sent me the new manuscript when he once again received it. Although I had a relatively passive role in obtaining this article, I nevertheless regard its present acquisition as the most noteworthy editorial coup since Astounding's acquisition of Stanley Weinbaum.

THE RQ RECOMMENDS...

Here I must mention T.G.L. Cockcroft's newly completed index of the weird story magazine in English, with its listing, by story and by author, of Weird Tales, Strange Stories, Strange Tales, Thrill Book, Oriental Stories, Magic Carpet, Strange Tales (British), and Golden Fleece. In addition, there are various bibliographic aids, such as separate listings by series (e.g., C.A. Smith's Tales of Averoigne) and a summary of translations and translators. The Index by Author and the Index by Title--which together comprise The Index to the Weird Fiction Magazines-- may be obtained for $2.75 each (or $5 the set) from Richard Witter, P.O. Box 415, Staten Island, New York 10302.

A QUESTION OF IDENTITY



ARTHUR JEAN COX

1

After a long absence, Harry Bates re-appeared in the science fiction magazines in early 1953 with a novelette, "Death of a Sensitive," published in Science Fiction Plus. It was widely recognized, I believe, as a remarkable story, a kind of science fiction tour de force. Some months later, another and longer story by Bates was printed in the same magazine. This second story, however, proved to be very disappointing. Its story-matter was as unexpected and its writing as fervent as that of the first, but it seemed to be almost completely pointless.

A correspondent of mine had what is perhaps the typical reaction to it:

> The story...is probably as silly as anything to see print in a science fiction magazine -- it seems to have been written primarily to rid Bates of what may have been a conceptual obsession based on a particularly vivid nightmare. Certainly there is no point to the tale beyond the presentation of the rather stupid -- but to Bates intensely significant -- phenomena which take place -- nothing is explained or resolved.

A rough sketch of the story might show what aroused this puzzled irritation:

The narrator and two friends, Tom and Mary Sellers, are standing in the experimental grounds of Wilson Laboratories, where he and Tom are employed as electricians. There is a brief domestic quarrel between the man and wife, in which he rejects some affectionate gestures she makes. She walks away, looks back, waves an arm; there is an explosion or splitting sound -- and her body disappears. Her head is seen floating in the air, some nine or ten feet off the ground. It floats away into the distance and is lost. The two men are the only witnesses of this "new thing," and no one believes their account of what happened until the same thing occurs again: Two workmen lose their bodies, and their heads behave in a similar way. Scientists arrive to study this unprecedented phenomenon. They locate the exact spot where "the dimension triggers." An experiment is arranged with Tom's beloved horse, Pinto, as the guinea pig. Unknown to the others, Tom also enters the danger area, determined to sacrifice himself because he holds himself responsible for his wife's death. The splitting sound comes again and the two heads, a horse's and a man's, float away. The narrator runs after them, follows the heads through scenes where he and Tom spent their boyhood together, until they reach a familiar lake. There the heads sink below the surface and the story ends.

The question is, Why did the author of "Alas, All Thinking!" and "Farewell to the Master" write something like this? Bill Blackbeard, in a letter dated from New York, November 10, 1953, from which the above quotation was taken, offers a shrewd suggestion:

> ...note the implication in the tale, by the way, that the heads thus sundered from their bodies are sublimely free, happy. This might imply that Bates now views the victory of rationality subconsciously with greater favor than before -- in contrast with his attitude in "Alas, All Thinking!", with its hideous depiction of swollen monstrous heads covered with the dust of inaction attached to tiny shrunken bodies.

This provides us with a clue, perhaps. The heads are surely the most important single element in the story. If they are meant to have some special meaning, and if we can determine what that is, we very likely will have grasped the solution to our mystery. My idea is that we should trace out this clue by going through all of Bates's stories and noting the circumstances and associations that are present whenever the word "head," or any word or phrase similar or related to it, is used. In this way we may be able to determine more closely the meaning the word has for the author of "The Triggered Dimension." This will not be so laborious as it sounds. Although Harry Bates is one of the better known science fiction writers, he is the sole author of only ten stories published over a period of twenty-two

years (1931-1953). He had written in collaboration with D. W. Hall a dozen other stories, including the popular Hawk Carse series; but these we will not consider, as we have no way of knowing, particularly at this point, which of the ideas in these early stories are his and which Hall's.

Any conclusions reached as to this one story may give us some vantage ground from which to survey all of Bates's work.

2

We come upon a reference to heads in Bates's first science fiction story, "Slave Ship from Space," published under the pseudonym of A. R. Holmes in Astounding Stories, which he was then editing. He tells how two men, camping in the wilds, are captured by an invisible slaver from another planet. After various efforts and complications, the two manage to render their captor both unconscious and visible; pages 86-7:

> The clothes were odd; the figure was much like that of a normal man, though the shoulders were more sloped and the head much larger; but it was the face, its expression, that held him.
>
> Unhealthy, leprous white was the skin and there was not one hair, eyelash or eyebrow on the whole head. The closed eyes lay in deep caverns surrounded by a thousand fine wrinkles, which criss-crossed all over his face in every direction. The face and head were freakish -- monstrous; and yet, somehow, over it rested an expression of infinite wisdom and calm. He lay bound and still and unconscious, at the mercy of men far below him intellectually, this man from another planet...
>
> "We'll have to keep him unconscious with the anaesthetic," he said at length, "he's too dangerous to monkey with."

In his second story, "A Matter of Size," Bates introduces a character named "Jones," who also comes from another planet and who is physically similar to the slaver: "[His] head was massive, the cranium oval, and not one hair adorned its smooth and shining surface' (page 39). Jones is friendly; but he hints to our hero that he could, if he wished, destroy or enslave the entire Earth without effort, so great is his knowledge.

Bates's third story was "Alas, All Thinking!" The title states the thesis, the story being the plainest expression of that suspicious distrust of intellect which had already appeared in the first two stories. Here the author makes it clear that he not only regards intellect as dangerous when possessed by others, but also as not being conducive to happiness when possessed by oneself.

We encounter the subject of heads directly. In describing

the protagonist, Charles Frick, the narrator says of him; page 11: "...tense serious lines appeared in his rugged face; his great head lowered with the struggle to arrange thoughts that were difficult, and perhaps painful to him." We are told explicitly two pages later that Frick's head is larger than the average.

Frick, who "once" had an I.Q. of 248, declares to his friends, page 9, that he is

> "dumb...normally, contentedly dumb...Because Humpty Dumpty had a great fall. Because thought is withering and sensation sweet. Because I've recovered my sense of humor. Because 'why' is a dangerous word and makes people unhappy. Because I have had a glimpse of a most horrible cerebral future..."

He goes on to say that intelligence, like the great size of the dinosaurs, was a dead end for Mother Nature and that he thinks she will next feature instinct.

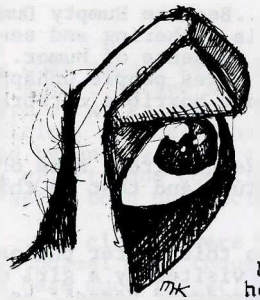
The story tells what brought him to this bitter philosophy. While working in his laboratory, he was visited by a girl with a large head and a time machine, who introduced herself as an "atavism" from the future. She invited him with her to her own time, the far future. He went, and found that the human race then consisted of a few grotesque creatures, "human baroques," with heads larger than their bodies. Sitting motionless, covered with dust, "looking like monstrous three-legged spiders," they spend their lives meditating on the ultimate paradoxes. Horrified and revolted, he destroys these last few fragile representatives of mankind by breaking their necks.

By this time we know what to look for. Picking up the next story, "The Experiment of Dr. Sarconi," we turn directly to the scene in which the scientist makes his initial appearance; page 94: "He was about forty five, tall and thin, with a large head... The dark, deep-set eyes glittered with facile intelligence."

The fifth story, "Farewell to the Master," causes us some embarrassment at first. A wonderful stranger, "god-like in appearance and human in form," closely attended by a giant robot, arrives from space; but, although there is pointed reference to the stranger's face ("which radiated kindness, wisdom, the purest nobility," page 62), there is no indication that his head is larger than the average Earthman's -- which is surprising, as he is obviously the possessor of a super-science. However, Bates does mention the robot's "great head" (page 62), the same words he used to describe Frick; and it will be recalled that it is the robot, not the man, who is the Master referred to in the title. He is the superior of the two because he has the greater intelligence.

We draw a blank with the next story, "A Matter of Speed."

There are no great heads in it, but they re-appear in the following story, "The Mystery of the Blue God." Here is a description of a bus-load of ordinary citizens of the future, page 55: "Within, seven large-headed, totally bald and quite skinny passengers of both sexes sat quietly..." Our hero, Mickey, has a present-day sized head, but he is "an imbecile," who "hardly got through relativity."



Bates is the sole author of "The Return of Hawk Carse" (which not only lacks the crude charm of the older stories, but is excruciatingly bad most of the time). All the standard characters of the series have unexceptional heads, but Bates introduces a new character in the present story: Ku Sui has created "The Unborn Q," a creature which is a composite of all the others -- Hawk Carse, Elliot Leithgow, the Sensitive Meeker, Ku Sui himself, and so on: "His head was well-shaped and unusually large.." (page 206). The Unborn Q has hair -- all the persons of whom he is composed have hair -- and, of course, a vast intellect.

This story is followed (eleven years later) by "Death of a Sensitive." Two or three paragraphs are expended on page 7 describing the Sensitive, John Inglis. "Anyone seeing him for the first time would likely notice only his head. It was a striking head -- large and broad, with hair a mass of coarse black ringlets." Once again, we have some reason to be surprised. Inglis has a large head, but is not depicted as a genius. But we easily see the reason for it. Bates continues, same paragraph:

> He did not have the thin-skinned esthetic face usually associated with sensitiveness... But for his head and the relaxed way he stood there, he might have been a truck driver.

That is, he does not have the appearance of intellectuality. His large head denotes his super-sensory powers, not his intellect. (Perhaps the appeal of the Extra-Sensory here is that it combines the best features of both intellect and instinct: like intellect it is mental in character and possessed by private gifted individuals; like instinct, it is unconscious in nature and supra-personal in origin.)

And, lastly, here is a paragraph from "The Triggered Dimension," a description of the brilliant mathematical physicist, Herzog:

> ...This was the famous head and face, different, pictured thousands of times in the newspapers of the world. As in the pictures, both head and face were covered by an even mat of cinnamon-colored bristles half an inch long. The eyebrows were other bristles to match. The all-over fur made his head seem even larger than it was, and it completely hid the expression of the face.

We note the last sentence in particular: "...seem even larger than it was" -- this is a variation on the most reiterated idea in the story, "Science knows a great deal...but not as much as it would seem to know." The other phrase, "...and it completely hid the expression of his face," may be taken as meaning, "Science is inscrutable." (Einstein probably is the original of this description, although he appears in it somewhat disguised. Bates could hardly have helped observing that Einstein's bushy mane of hair made his head seem very large, and one imagines him rather struck by it.)

The reader has already recognized that these quotes invalidate rather than substantiate Blackbeard's suggestion that the detached heads in "The Triggered Dimension" denote rationality. It is not heads that Bates associates with rationality (or, more accurately, great intellect, knowledge), but large heads. And there is absolutely no indication in the story that the heads are larger than the average, or that the people who possessed them were more intelligent than the average. In one case, just the contrary: Tom Sellers is an impetuous, emotional fellow who dislikes study and abstract thought. And, of course, there is the horse: Its brow obviously does not express intelligence and knowledge.

We can only conclude that the heads must represent something else. The question is still, what?

3

There is a certain persistent word in the stories we have just examined which has a very close connection with 'head' -- and that is 'face.'

The hero of "A Matter of Size" is approached by an extra-terrestrial human who offers him fabulous rewards to stay a few months on a mysterious planet -- actually, an asteroid. The people on this asteroid are only a few inches high. Physically small, they are intellectual giants but, because of excessive inbreeding, they have lost the ability to reproduce. Our hero is imported to take care of this end of things: his job being to inject fresh blood into the life-stream of the race. Of course, the disproportion in height between him and the girls is a problem, but this is solved by splitting him into hundreds of small replicas of himself, which are the same size as the inhabitants of the asteroid -- a doubly neat solution since it is also a step toward cutting down

the disproportion in numbers. But our hero, or the fraction of him upon which the author now focuses our sympathy, is not informed of what has been done to him and is startled when he encounters one of his doubles...although he does have a vague memory of "interminable rows of doll faces. Each face his own face and each one, somehow, himself" (page 46).

In "Alas, All Thinking!" the same idea appears in a somewhat different form. Frick asks the girl from the future to prove to him that the mechanism she calls a time machine really works by taking him back a week in time. They are in his laboratory. She consents; he gets into the machine, and they move invisibly back into the past. A man is lying on the floor, working on a machine, page 14: "The man on the floor rolled over, sat up, turned his face -- my face -- towards us and, deep in thought, gently fingered a sore place on his head..."

"The Experiment of Dr. Sarconi" is about a scientist who invents a machine which can duplicate people. He runs off some copies of Shallcross, our hero, Shallcross's girl friend, Diana, and himself. There are finally five of each, resulting in some legal and amorous confusions. Again, we have the scene in which the hero encounters his own face.

There is a similar scene in "Farewell to the Master." The giant robot Gnut experiments with a method of reproducing bodies from voice recordings. He duplicates twice the body of one speaker and there is a curious moment in which one of the bodies, becoming conscious, discovers the other.

Once again, "A Matter of Speed" proves an exception: Just as there were no great heads, there are also no duplicate faces. They reappear in the next story, however, "The Mystery of the Blue God." Our hero's "god-father," Talbert, produces an individual identical in appearance with our hero, except that he is blue, by experimenting with gene development.

In "The Return of Hawk Carse," Bates repeats the idea of reproducing bodies from voice recordings. I will say more of this presently, but first we might conclude the tracing of the theme by noting the brief presence of Robert Inglis, John's identical twin brother, in "Death of a Senstive." The idea is not present at all in "The Triggered Dimension."

Now, stories about identical twins, doubles, doppelgangers, are not uncommon; but we must notice that there is a difference between the majority of these stories and those by Bates. In most such stories, the duplicate persons represent antagonistic motives or embody contradictory attitudes: One of the identical twins is Good, the other is Evil; one of the doppelgangers is Alpha, the other Omega. The plots of these stories invariably revolve around confusions occasioned by the identical appearance of these twins or doubles. The Bates stories are not of this kind, with the doubtful exception of "The Mystery of the Blue

God," which might be taken as a variation on the good son - bad son theme. Bates's duplicates usually have the same motives. In fact, they are the same person, not two different persons who look alike. Bates delights in juxtaposing love and reason, but our hero and his double do not separately embody those qualities. "You split me!" one of his characters will cry, anguished, when asked some probing question; but apparently it is not because he is torn between two different modes of conduct or possibilities of action.

It must be that he is so interested in this story-situation -- a person meeting himself -- because he is trying to answer the question of what constitutes identity itself: something that is expressed plainly for the first time in "The Return of Hawk Carse." The reader may recall that in the previous effusion, "The Passing of Ku Sui" (written in collaboration with Hall), Carse had forced the insidious Dr. Ku to surgically transplant the five isolated brains (who had played the title role in "The Affair of the Brains") back into bodies, but that the only bodies available were those of a Chinese "coolie" and four drug-and-disease-scarred white men. Now Carse decides that it will be better for society in general and the mens' wives in particular if he kills them and reproduces their old selves from recordings of their previous voices. He does so, permitting the "coolie" and the others to live long enough to meet themselves in their new-old bodies. There is quite a bit of space devoted to their reactions.

> "Oh, the 'I'!" mused the yellow men. "Tough old problem. What is it? I remember as a boy coming up sharp one day with the thought: I am the center of the whole world. Everywhere I go I am the center of all I see, all I experience. I am different from everybody else, because I am I. I am most immensely important.
>
> "Later, I reasoned that my feelings of 'I' was not a unique thing. Other people had it too. But where did all these 'I's come from? And if I had not been born, where would I be at that moment? Were 'I's interchangeable? Indestructible? Were they all drops of one thing? Could my own 'I' exist in some other body?" (Page 176)

Many writers are interested in "identity." This interest usually takes the form of describing a "search for identity" (the working out of an identification with some political, social, moral or esthetic ideal) and of personifying changes in ideals and loyalties as figurative or actual re-births; but Bates is getting at something else. He has no interest in personality or character. His business is with identity as such. His favorite story idea of bringing a person face to face with himself confronts in the most direct way possible the question of what constitutes that person's identity. His repeated use of it is a repeated attempt to come to grips with the problem. (In other words, he has not satisfied himself. The problem has not been answered or completed, and he must try again.)

We notice that Bates invests nearly all the qualities of his characters in their heads and faces. Necessarily, he must mention physiques, clothes and manners, but he emphasizes faces: "There was a man in the box. The man stirred and sat up and Cliff saw the living face of Klaatu" ("Farewell to the Master," page 83). It is as if the face alone were adequately expressive of identity and could represent the whole man, as in this sentence from "The Triggered Dimenion," page 54: "Two new faces joined us." This mention of faces only, as if detached from their bodies, is striking, coming as it does in the midst of a story of heads floating in the air...and we feel that movement of intuitive anticipation which tells us that we have touched upon the solution to our mystery.

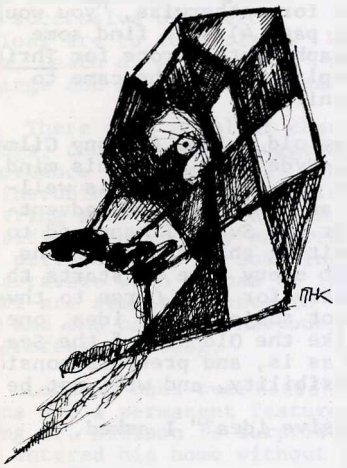
Briefly, then: Bates invests his characters' identities in their faces. Pragmatically, we would have to say that they are identified by their faces; dramatically, we can say that their faces are their identities. His purpose in reducing his characters to heads alone is to present them as pure identities. He wishes to isolate their identities and show them floating free, uninvolved with the material world. To do this, he has to use whole heads rather than configurations of features (faces), because he wishes to represent them as visible objects. Besides, he wants to include an animal, Tom's horse, and it wouldn't be practical in this situation to distinguish a horse's face from its head. The Christian says, "Destroy the body and there will still be an essential left, the soul." Our author destroys the bodies but leaves what is essential to their identities, substituting disembodied heads for disembodied souls.

If we have any lingering doubts as to the plausibility of this conclusion, "Death of a Sensitive" provides us with some corroboration of it. The protagonist of the story kills himself as an act of cosmic compassion. He hypnotizes the narrator and another friend and commits suicide by opening a vein in his arm (all of which is convincing enough in the story). As his life drains away, he soliloquizes that he is about to make the Great Change and sink back into the great Ocean which is the origin and goal of all life. An equivalent event takes place at the end of "The Triggered Dimension." The heads float swiftly across the countryside at Big Pond and, pausing, sink below the surface of a lake.

What Bates has done in "this very human and moving story" (as his editor described it) has been to take his earlier, more abstraction notions of the oneness of all life and of the Psychic Ocean and translate them into rustic-boyhood images: the girl, the boy and the horse, the farm, the woodland and the lake.

4

By tracing to their conclusion two series of recurring words in the stories of Harry Bates -- "large heads" (intellect) and "faces" (identity) -- we have established, I think, the general meaning of "The Triggered Dimension." Let us go on and try to fill out the broader outlines of his fiction by discovering any other recurrent or important elements which may be present and their connexions with each other and with the two themes above. We should have then, or so we can hope, a simple and whole conception of his work.



It hardly matters where we start. Since we have at hand William Blackbeard's letter about "The Triggered Dimension," from which we have already quoted, we might take another cue from it.

Blackbeard states that "it seems to have been written primarily to rid Bates of what may have been a conceptual obsession possibly based on a particularly vivid nightmare." We might not be inclined to take this notion seriously at first, but on deliberation it gains some plausibility -- not as a literal suggestion, but in its larger meaning: that the story was "inspired," i.e., compulsive.

Looking at Bates's work with an eye to its general composition and structure, we observe a certain uneveness of intensity. Each story has one or two, sometimes more, powerful and effective moments -- bizarre and grotesque scenes -- and these seem to be the reason the story was written. The rest of the story, we suspect, was contrived to fill in between these two or three scenes, to connect them together and to "explain" them. Almost any Bates story we choose has this quality (although there is at least one exception: again, "A Matter of Speed"). What we remember from a story is not so much the characters or the plot as this or that incident, standing forth vividly against the duller background of the story: The first sight of the great-headed men of the future, mantled with dust; the robot standing in the darkness of the museum, tenderly holding in his hand the body of a dead song-bird; Shallcross hearing the number of voices in the next room increase, each the voice of Dr. Sarconi; the unveiling of "The Unborn Q"; the dead cockroach that has traced in the flour

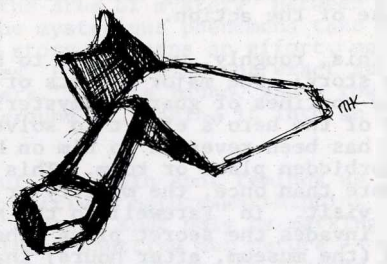
spilled on the kitchen floor the words, do not kill us; and so on.

We must suspect that it was these curious scenes and incidents which originally 'came' to the author and that his deliberate creation of each story consisted mostly of connecting the moments together in such a way as to give them meaning and coherency. Several things seem to confirm this suspicion. First, the infrequent publication of the stories, because such a 'method' is surely spasmodic and uncertain. Second, the ready acceptance of compulsive ideas in the stories themselves. John Inglis, the Sensitive of "Death of a Sensitive," refuses to kill the cockroaches in his apartment because he feels that it is "appropriate" that he should spare them, just as he feels it "appropriate" that he should kill himself. The narrator of the story has a message for the reader, but cannot give it until he has described all that happened for, otherwise, "you would not feel compelled" (emphasis his, page 4). We find some corroboration also in a few paragraphs Bates wrote for Thrilling Wonder Stories, whimsically explaining how he came to write "The Experiment of Dr. Sarconi."

> Well, I was talking to my old friend Anthony Gilmore, and ribbing him on the Jekyll-Hyde make-up of his mind, which alone would account for the success of his well-known character, Hawk Carse, and that intrepid adventurer's insidious adversary, Dr. Ku Sui. I happened to ask him why he had stopped writing that series and he told me it's a funny thing but every time he starts to work out another Ku Sui deviltry for Hawk Carse to thwart his mind gets stuck on one plot subject, one idea, one only, which rides his mind like the Old Man of the Sea, and insists on being written as is, and prevents consideration of any other plot possibility, and will not be shaken off.
>
> "And what is this compulsive idea?" I asked, surprised.

The "compulsive idea" was that of duplicating persons -- particularly, the mass duplication of women, which was adapted to the Sarconi story. The hero of this story, incidentally, is motivated by what he frankly admits is an irrational desire: to possess the original Diana, and no other.

Obviously, a writer who distrusts rationality will be more likely to credit an obsessional, that is, irrational, inspiration. (To balance these remarks, I hasten to admit that the stories are well thought out. The Striking Moments are well rationalized and are used with calculated effect.) This way of writing stories has its advantages. For one thing, it makes for strong endings, because one of the powerful scenes is likely to be the final one. But it has its disadvantages too: the means by which the scenes are connected together may seem to be only mechanically necessary and perhaps tedious.



We might take "Farewell to the Master" as an example. Each of the vivid moments occurs after hours in a museum in which the robot and spaceship are being kept; the mechanical side of the story consists of Cliff's comings and goings to the museum. This would seem to be just part of the necessary structure of such a story -- getting the protagonist to and from the setting in which the successive dramatic actions are to take place. We have much the same thing in both "Death of a Sensitive" and "The Triggered Dimension": comings and goings to the same place.

There is a peculiar characteristic of these comings and goings, though, which suggests that they might be of some importance in themselves. They nearly always involve the act of intruding upon someone, invading someone's privacy, or entering some forbidden room. The narrator of "Death of a Sensitive" is greatly embarrassed when he has to intrude upon the private rooms of John Inglis; and, later, he is again embarrassed when he has to invade the classroom of Dr. Whitman. There are similar scenes in "The Triggered Dimension," in which Tom and the narrator nervously intrude twice upon the privacy of Professor Herzog.

Looking back over Bates's fiction, we see that these intrusions are a permanent feature of it. In "A Matter of Size," young Dr. Allison is surprised and angry to find that "Jones" has entered his home without being invited. In "Alas, All Thinking!" Pearl, coming from the future in her time machine, "lands" quite accidentally in Frick's laboratory; she asks, page 12, "Do you mind too much this intrusion of mine?" He replies that he does not, partly from surprise. In "Mystery of the Blue God," Mickey's god-father Talbert spends most of his time in a laboratory-study which Mickey is forbidden to enter: he finally finds the courage to do so when a "death-visitation" from Talbert convinces him the old man is dead. In "Farewell to the Master," Cliff, seeing the giant robot disappear into the spaceship, does "the mad, courageous thing which made him famous for a generation" and dashes inside. In "The Return of Hawk Carse," another young doctor is startled to find that Carse has broken rudely into his office where he is working late at night.

This peculiar element may be present in some of the other stories, but, if so, it is obscured by the character of the action. It would be difficult to prove that when the hero

forces his way into a laboratory to rescue his girl friend ("The Experiment of Dr. Sarconi"), or into the headquarters of a totalitarian political organization ("A Matter of Speed"), that the intrusion has some interest aside from the practical purpose of the action.

This, roughly, would seem to be the structure of a typical Bates story: The major moments of dramatic interest occur within the confines of guarded, mysterious places. The plot consists of the hero's effort to solve some mystery or problem which has been revealed to him on his first penetration into the forbidden place or room. This usually involves his returning more than once, the mystery or problem being solved on the final visit. In "Farewell to the Master," it is only after Cliff invades the secret place (the spaceship) within the closed space (the museum, after hours) that he is told "the final, most incredible fact of them all": that the robot, not the man, is the master.

Curiosity is the chief sentiment in Bates's fiction -- curiosity charged with awe and anxiety and countered somewhat by a contemptuous distaste for those who pry and disturb: "shameful in the ? (cumulative?) effects of nosiness noisiness nosiness" is one of the scraps of lines produced by John Inglis in the free-associative writing experiment in "Death of a Sensitive." Curiosity is the intellectual passion; and we note a further connection with the uneasy preoccupation with intellect in that the forbidden rooms are nearly always the scenes of intellectual endeavors: laboratories, studies, hospitals, museums, spaceships and classrooms.

Our first impression is that intrusion is a basic element in all of Bates's fiction except "The Triggered Dimension," in which it would seem to have only an incidental importance -- the two intrusions on Professor Herzog, who offers interesting but unsatisfying explanations for the bizarre phenomenon. Examining the story again, however, we see that it is indeed present and of vital importance. We were deceived at first because the forbidden place is now not a closed room, but an open field. Bates has introduced a variation on the theme:

> A full moon showed clearly all the larger details of the area. Several hundred yards to the west, in the direction of New York City, lay the cluster of buildings that comprised the indoor part of Wilson Laboratories. Between lay the field used in the outdoor experiments -- a rectangular area of about 80 acres, once field land, now a level surface of weeds irregularly furrowed with deep trenches. In a great oval stood a half-dozen high latticed towers, and in the center of them two greater towers -- the area of mystery. I may not give any further details. The field was circled by a high woven-wire fence posted at intervals with out-facing signs warning: KEEP OUT. LIGHTNING EXPERIMENTS. DANGEROUS.
> (Page 42)

Note the areas within areas like the boxes of a Chinese puzzle: the field within the fence with its "out-facing' signs, the oval of towers within the field, the two higher towers in the centre of the oval, and "the area of mystery" between them; it is within this last that the mysterious phenomena take place. Curiously enough, much of the story concerns an effort, under the direction of a Dr. Chambers, to determine the exact spot in which the dimension 'triggers.' It is found, and a row of poles are set close together around it, making it into an enclosed space.

This circle of poles about a certain spot reminds us of those rude temples built by primitive, nature-worshipping peoples, intended to render a certain spot holy by marking it off from the profane world without shutting out nature -- that is, the visible landscape and sky. Stonehenge in England is an example. I think the circle of poles here serves the same purpose, for the bearing of the story, dealing as it does with the Soul (the face), Atonement (Tom's self-sacrifice) and the Transcendental (the Dimension), is primarily religious; and it is religion considered in relation to nature (rather than in relation to society, as in "Death of a Sensitive"), which is why the familiar rustic landscape is essential.

We may ask if there is some secret that is revealed finally at this Centre of Centres -- aside, that is, from the narrator's breathless witnessing of the conduct of the heads? There is no revelation as such; but there is a minor incident which is particularly intriguing because it is never really explained. The scientists, while minutely scrutinizing the field, make a discovery near the spot where the "splitting" occurred. They find some "animal tissue...pink, fluted stubs, tubular in shape," page 55. "They look like parts of some animal. Parts that stick out. You can see where they were torn away."

One is reminded immediately of those popular stories of genital parts being found near the scenes of accidents and explosions; but something is added to this commonplace thought when the fluted stubs are mentioned again, during the narrator's second conversation with Professor Herzog, page 58. Herzog tells him that the stubs have been examined and that "the biologists call the things tentacles. They say that they're full of nervous tissue, rather like the grey matter of the brain...."

Any mention of nervous tissue or grey matter must arrest our attention, of course. In connection with the fluted stubs that stick out, it brings an awkward thought to mind, that they are penises composed of brain tissue. If we are embarrased by the grossness of the idea, we might observe that it is in keeping with the material grossness of Bates's other presentments: the identification of a large head with great intellect, the equating of identity with the physical features of the face. His anti-intellectuality causes him to dislike abstract conceptions and to substitute for them images of concrete things. That notion with which he has experimented once or twice, of playing back the bodies from recordings of voices, is typical of the turn of his thought -- the materialization of words, the making concrete of the abstract. Another example of this, perhaps, is his use of the phrase, "A Matter of --," in the titles of two of the stories.

Anyway, the castrative element (to name it as such) is obvious enough, although it raises several problems: Such as, why two stubs? For the two workmen? If so, why wasn't there one for Mary? Because she is a woman, or because the peevish killing of her kitten by Tom rendered such a token unnecessary? And would there have been one for Tom himself? Or would the presence of his horse (from which he was "for years inseparable -- parts of one organism, almost," page 60) have made any further sacrifice of animality unnecessary? But it is unlikely that the answers to these questions would contain anything very unexpected.

Similarly, no one with the slightest tincture of psychoanalytic knowledge will fail to recognize in the trembling and peeping intrusion into forbidden rooms in these stories an unassimilated fragment of some incident of childish sexual curiosity; even though the forbidden rooms are always laboratories, studies, hospitals or classrooms, those places where sexual intercourse never (or hardly ever) takes place. The desire to know and witness, a dangerous intellectual activity, dangerous because of the threat of retributive sexual punishment, has been displaced from the bedroom to the library and study, the proper settings for academic pursuits -- "academic" pursuits being those that are not personally risky.* This means that the earlier sexual curiosity has been split into two parts, sex and intellect; but in this last story they have been surprisingly and boldly recombined. This fusion is possible because intellect has been rendered physical, or organic, and so can be crossed with whatever else is organic. It is necessary because there is now, with the acceptance of death, which is the whole bearing of feeling in the story, an acceptance of castration -- that is, the acceptance of the loss of all personal potency, phallic and intellectual. The loss is welcomed because only by giving up his personal claims and interests could someone become one with the Supra-personal.

*We have no wish to acquire the stigma of "nosiness noisiness nosiness"--and, in fact, we have no biographical interest in the man whose name we have used so often here, being concerned only with his public utterances--but such speculations as the above seem unavoidable at this point.

5

We have, I believe, accounted for the puzzling elements in "The Triggered Dimension," specifically, and have gained some understanding of the composition of the stories in general. Let us go on to make a few observations on their vocabulary and related matters.

Some of Bates's favorite words and phrases are "ironic," "wonderfully ironical," "a mockery," and, often, "grotesque." Once he used "baroque," which Funk & Wagnalls defines as "Irregularly shaped, fantastic in style, grotesque." The last word is defined as "n., Any disproportionate or ludicrous person, figure or design;" and "adj., Incongruously composed or ill-proportioned." We glimpse the relation between Bates's antirationality and his use of grotesques when we recall that "rational" is derived from 'ratio,' which has to do with proportion. The indicating of great intellect by a disproportionately large head is a grotesque (i.e., ir-ratio-nal) attack on rationality -- perhaps the simplest and most direct attack possible.

As the example indicates, Bates likes the literally disproportionate. This takes a somewhat less violent form in two of his stories, "A Matter of Size" and "A Matter of Speed," in which the normal is made to seem grotesque, but without any actual distortion, simply by being presented from different perspectives and scales of reference. He also finds appealing such less literally grotesque things as disproportions in motivation: as in some of the compulsions already mentioned, or the incident in the last named story above in which the villains are undone by a meaningless grim whim on the part of one of them. We might detect this tendency also in his fondness for putting things backwards. It may be the reversal of a common saying, such as the remark about Inglis, that his

bulkiness was "all fat, not muscle;" or an incidental feature of the story, such as the sweethearts' code in "A Matter of Speed," which simply consists of spelling words backwards; or it may be a more important gimmick, such as the mechanism for evoking human bodies from voices; or it may be a physical happening presented from a contrary perspective, as when the principals of "A Matter of Speed" look out the window and, not knowing that the building they are in is falling, see the Manhattan skyline tilting up into the air; or it may be something more basic to the story, such as the 'clincher' in "Farewell to the Master."

(His characteristic syntax, however, is strictly conventional and straight-forward, with few inverted sentences and no eccentricities of punctuation or the like. Nothing greatly different may be found in pulp magazines, of course, but our author's writing in his better pieces is so plain as to be almost a recognizable style. Ideally, the stylistic expression of the mysticism of the later stories would be a kind of syntactless immediacy of statement and feeling, like the fragments of free associative or 'automatic writing' produced by Inglis.)

The grotesque is but one or two removes from humor and there is some of the latter quality in Bates' work, mostly of the sort typified by the thin-lipped Dr. Sarconi, but not much even of that. Kenneth Burke makes some remarks in his book, Permanence and Change, which are to the point. He has been discussing "perspective by incongruity" and "planned incongruity," page 148, and writes:

> There is, however, even a stage of planned incongruity that goes beyond humor: the grotesque, wherein the perception of discordance is cultivated without smile or laughter. As compared with the mechanism underlying the appeal of the grotesque, even the most destructive nonsense is revealed as an upholder of things as they were. Humor still manifests its respect for our earlier categories of judgement even while outraging them... The grotesque,

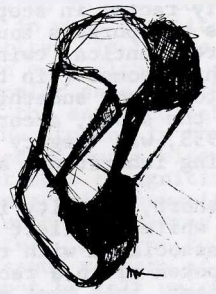
he goes on to say, "is a much more complex matter, and," adding something neatly relevant to our subject, "gradually merges into something very much like mysticism." What the grotesque and mysticism have in common is anti-rationality. The maker of grotesques, like the mystic, though in a more piecemeal way, is trying to break through institutionalized reason.

In summary, Bates uses grotesque conceptions to give new perspectives on things: to show them in a radically different light, or to discredit them by rendering them grimly ludicrous. "Alas, All Thinking!" might be cited especially, although "Death of a Sensitive" and "Farewell to the Master" provide good examples of the persuasive power of the grotesque. It must be added, though, that the word "appropriate," so important in "Death of a Sensitive," suggests something quite

the opposite: the appropriate being exactly that which is "adj., Suitable...fit; proper; relevant;" in other words, proportionate and rational. The emergence of the word shows that an underlying ground of motive and substance ("the Psychic Ocean") has been 'contacted,' making possible a new simplicity and wholeness of response. Here there is no "perception of discordance" and the grotesque is not needed.

6

We have reached a kind of impasse in our discussion. We have related several of the minor themes in Bates's writing to its two major concerns, but have not made any connection between those two themselves. The connection does not seem to be possible. Identity and Intellect are neither mutually contradictory nor complementary, for a given identity may or may not be markedly intelligent. The two terms cannot come to grips with each other and so our criticism seems incomplete.



Perhaps our approach has been too narrow. The intention was to use only a kind of demonstrable 'statistical' analysis -- actually pointing to the recurrent words, phrases, ideas, and so on, and tracing the ways in which they develop and connect with each other. We thought it would be most consistent with this method, and more effective generally, to avoid the temptations of psychological speculation. In one case this didn't prove to be possible: The fluted stubs in "The Triggered Dimension" could not have been discussed at all without resort to psychology, as they are not "explained" and are not associated with any present or previous element in the fiction. They seem to be just what they are presented as, fictively: gratuitous elements precipitated from another dimension -- that is, from outside the natural boundaries of the story.

I think that suggests what our difficulty is. It may be that the reason we have been unable to discover the connections between Identity and Intellect is that the author has never made them. In which case, we must try to make them for ourselves.

We begin by noting that Bates separates the two themes after a fashion. Although they are present in some degree in

nearly all his stories, about half are primarily concerned with intellect and the other half primarily with identity. We also notice that in those stories which primarily concern identity, the story-problems are all on a personal level. That is, they involve the welfare of individuals -- the protagonist, his girl, his friends, and so on. Whereas, in those stories which primarily concern intellect, the problems are of broader scope, involving whole races, peoples, species. Examples of the first are "The Experiment of Dr. Sarconi," "The Return of Hawk Carse" and "The Triggered Dimension." Examples of the second are "A Matter of Size" and "Alas, All Thinking!" I believe that "Slave Ship from Space" and "Farewell to the Master" will have to be considered as specimens of stories in which the problems are of racial scope, even though each only involves a small group of characters. Both are about "slavery" or "mastery," and what we have in such instances is not the subjection of individuals to other individuals but the subjection of members of one race to the members of another. "A Matter of Speed" is something of an anomaly. Written on the even of World War II and strongly flavored with the atmosphere of the great collective war effort, it might seem to be 'racial' at first glance; but 'national,' a word of lesser circumference, would be more accurate. It is the least typical of the stories, showing no interest in race, identity or intellect. "Death of a Sensitive" is clearly racial in scope. The story is organized around metaphors and phrases touching on heredity. Robert and John Inglis are identical twins, the unconscious drawings they make are of chromosomes ("in the process of division"), and even the Visitors look something like chromosomes. The original title of the story, according to Fantasy-Times, First February issue, 1953, was "Legacy of a Sensitive," a title further emphasizing inheritance and heredity.

In short, identity is seen as a personal problem (of course), while intellect is a racial problem. But if intellect is associated with race -- "associated," because it is always spoken of in a racial context -- and if it has sinister connotations, this must mean that it is somehow dangerous to race. If so, it must be dangerous because it threatens the continued existence of race. This is plainly stated in "A Matter of Size." Our virile Earthman is transported to a planet inhabited by a race of super intellects to help replenish their diminishing population. The idea of racial extinction through excessive preoccupation with the intellect is present also in "Alas, All Thinking!" And it might be noted that the egg-heads of "Mystery of the Blue God" are revolted by the imbecile Mickey's passionate thoughts of his girl-friend, and that the super-rational robot of "Farewell to the Master" is (naturally) asexual. Now we see the point in the frequent juxtapositions of rationality against love. Love is an aspect of the sexual urge, which is the mechanism of procreation.

Bates compares intellect unfavorably with instinct. The latter, we take it, is a word for racial motives -- motives common to everyone and essential to our existence and preservation -- while the former refers to conscious thought which has a more personal character, since marked intellect is the attribute of certain individuals only. The use of reason tends to replace instinct and so to impair the continued existence of the race. Viewed in this light, reason is seen as disruptive to the collective enterprise of racial development because it is selfish. There is a passage in "Mystery of the Blue God" in which the scientist Talbert refers to a seemingly irrational attitude, hatred of those who are different from one's own kind, as "biologically rational"; which we might re-phrase as "racially rational." Individual rationality, then, is racially irrational. Probably one of the reasons Bates is so fascinated by insects -- there are dozens of references to them in only eight stories -- is because they have so unmistakably featured instinct and dispensed with individual identity and intelligence.

We conclude that the most basic elements in his fiction are not Intellect and Identity, but Race and Identity. We may either compare or contrast these elements.

Comparing them, we see that both are expressions of a single attitude: a concern with identity in its collective and individual forms. Our author is interested in what constitutes "race" -- that is, racial identity; and in what constitutes individuality -- that is, personal identity. It is the second which is the more obvious in the fiction now, although an outspoken consciousness of race, in the popular sense of the word, showed itself in an ugly way in some of the early collaborations with D. W. Hall, and in many of the stories in the magazine he edited. This has been documented so amply elsewhere that we need not go into the matter, but some recognition of the early racism is necessary before the growing humanity of the later stories, and the peculiar triumph represented by "Death of a Sensitive," can be appreciated. And the full force of many lesser things, such as the grotesque mockery of the ending of "Farewell to the Master," cannot be felt unless the authoritarian background is understood.

Contrasting the elements, we would say offhand that the first gives rise to the second, that personal identity is known in contrast to racial identity. Or, to state it in a more familiar social vocabulary: Our sense of self is narrowed and defined when our wishes collide with those of our parents, teachers and peers. Ordinarily, then, we would expect a person with a strong awareness of community values and motives to have a correspondingly strong, perhaps

even an anxious, awareness of his own individuality -- as, seemingly, with our author. But the language doesn't apply to Bates. His stories tell of no conflict between society and the individual. They show no interest in the human world as something created and achieved, an abstract pattern of manners, customs, laws and traditions. Rather, all collective motives are converted into biological motives, another instance of that downward turning of abstractions into concreteness that we see elsewhere. It is as if Collective Man were solely physical too. "Race" is the best approximation of the attitude we can make in a single word. Communities are aggregates of individuals who behave similarly because they have similar organic constitutions; as is illustrated by the mindless but socialized behavior of the communal insects, which provide the most striking endorsement of such a view. The closest Bates has come to writing a social or political story is "A Matter of Speed," but the protagonist of this one is an entomologist; and that, and the usual references to insects, one guesses, is meant to supply the phylogenetic ingredient which otherwise would be lacking.

The most obvious dichotomy we discern in the philosophy (which it is, however unsystematized) is between the person as a biological specimen, possessing certain physiological features in common with many others, and the person as an individual, possessing certain features not shared with anyone else. This might not seem to be much of a dichotomy -- identity simply has been placed neatly in a racial context -- but it is a division which raises problems. The attempt to define identity physically -- in sum: Racial identity is biology; individual identity is physiognomy -- and so to give it an unimpeachable substantiality, has created awkward difficulties for the latter. For, if the personal identity is the physical features, suppose there should appear, somehow or anyhow, a double or duplicate of somebody? This disturbing thought is explored in several of the stories. Since there would be two individuals, there would have to be, do what we will, two identities; which means that there must be some kind of identity beyond identity, or what is being allowed as such. This is a problem which cannot be solved as long as it is insisted that the individual identity is solely physiognomic. (The idea which Bates tried out in "The Experiment of Dr. Sarconi," that of placing some mark upon the Original to distinguish it from the others, is clearly unsatisfactory.) The problem remains, the breach is unhealed, and must be broached again, continually. However, the problem is not of much importance in the last two stories -- of no importance, one might say, in the very last -- but this is not exactly because it has been solved. Rather, viewed from some larger perspective, it has lost its urgency.

The personal identity being weak, it is easily overawed by the racial, which has vastly more authority, being strong and stable and its laws imperative. We touch here upon what we must consider, looking backward from the last two stories, the basic conflict in this whole body of work; which we may

formulate as follows: There is a striving to maintain the personal in implied contrast to racial identity, but Intellect, the chief power of the individual self, is disesteemed, while Instinct, the function of race, is respected. This conflict appears in an expressive and somewhat subversive way in two of the stories. Instinct is commended in "Mystery of the Blue God," but the writing is coloured by resentment of its harsh rejection of all that is different. On the other hand, the existence of the non-biological Gnut in "Farewell to the Master" has unmistakably sinister implications (for race), but the story is pervaded with affection for the robot, who is dignified, kind and gentle.

We shall conclude our discussion of Bates's fiction by briefly synopsizing the development and resolution of this conflict.

In his first two stories, "Slave Ship from Space" and "A Matter of Size," there is present an awed respect and distrust of intellect. It is suggested that persons who possess great knowledge are potentially dangerous. In his third story, "Alas, All Thinking!" this distrust appears as an avowed anti-intellectuality, a despair of "the cerebral future of mankind." It is predicted that the future belongs to instinct. In "Farewell to the Master," this pessimism is elaborated in a milder tone into a suspicion that mankind might come under the dominance of mechanical intellect. Instinct is featured fully in a following story, "Mystery of the Blue God," but its unpleasant qualities are emphasized. There is the first tentative hint of mysticism. This hint is elaborated into "Death of a Sensitive," in which the conflict between humane ideals and instinct is resolved with the happy observation that all races or species are really one. In his latest story, "The Triggered Dimension," this solution to the racial problem is adapted to the personal. Just as all species are aspects of the Great Ocean, so are all persons "drops of one thing." Since racial identity has been, in a sense, dissolved, the urgency of the need to maintain personal identity in opposition to it is relaxed. Presumably, the underlying imagination -- the stages of whose progress have been marked by these stories -- has made its peace with death.

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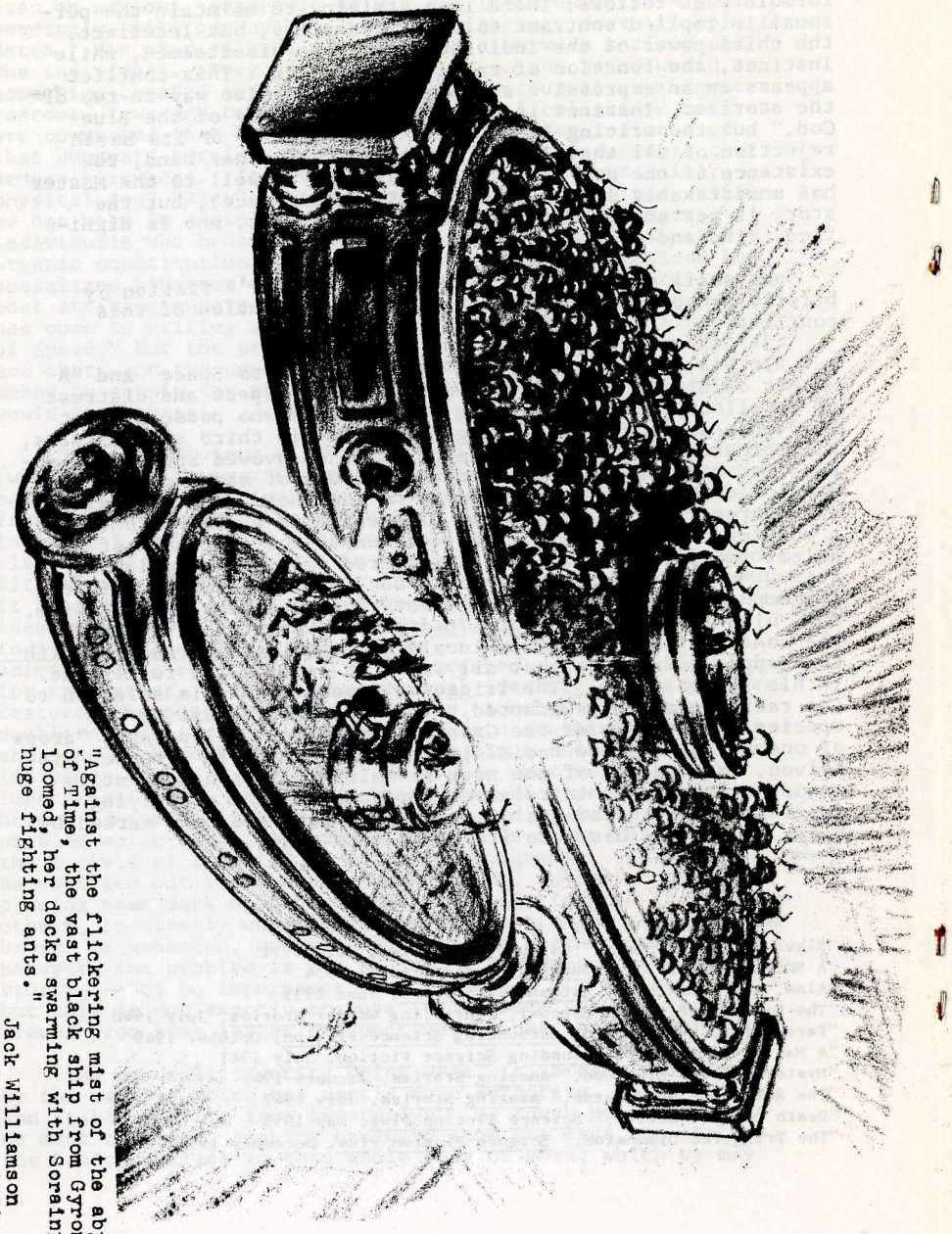

"Against the flickering mist of the abyss of Time, the vast black ship from Gyronchi loomed, her decks swarming with Soreinya's huge fighting ants."

Jack Williamson
The Legion of Time

"BALLOON, OH, BALLOON"

by RAY BRADBURYS

Robert stood alone in the golden breeze of the afternoon, the long green grass caressing his ankles with the whispered promise of everything, the slow, rolling fallaway of the hillside combing down, down, and to the next hillside, and up, and down onto the horizon, where upstairs-stairway wallpaper-paint-blue sky held clouds like child handprints scrubbed away by patient Mother.

At the edges of the horizon to his right and left hands were woolly green forests. Behind him, in the valley by the meandering river, lay the white town like a setting for the blue tracks of the Aurora and Yellow Rock Railway. Before him, between him and the horizon and the gold-washed sky and the golden sun lay nothing, nothing to keep his eyes and the sunlight from touching, and the long grass that grew wise as Time on the ancient prairie hillocks that had felt the stamp of buffalo in flight from Kiowa ponies and the roll of pioneer wheel, the sting of cattle-chip fires and the scent of coffee boiling in cowhand agate pots, the song-step of roving voyageur and his Alouette, gentil Alouette!, that knew the way of it, and the why of it, and the how of it in human hearts--some hearts--that wise old grass whispered to Robert: "Northwest Passage...passage...Cibola...Samarkand...Cibola...bola... Samarkand..." and, long-drawn-out, soft-spoken, breeze-kissed: "Erewhon...ewhonnn...whonnn..."

"God damn it!" Robert exclaimed childishly, his fists driven into the pockets of his wash shorts, stamping his feet, the boy-tears shining in his eyes and scattering the sunlight. "Son," his father had said at dinner, home for the noon meal from the tractor plant where the machines made ugly sounds as they built machines that made brute-sounds as they tore the prairie, "Boy," his father had said to him not unkindly, but firmly, "Boy--Robert--son--Chamber of Commerce's gonna buy that hill you like goin' to and make it a parkin' lot Put down blacktop. Meters. First six hours free with tokens from the local merchants. Good for business. Blacktop." Robert had stopped with the forkful of greens almost to his mouth. Just stopped. His father had said, earnestly: "Boy, I know how fond you are of goin' out to that place--before school, and recess time, and after school, and after supper, and sneakin' out of your room on moonlight nights--son, don't you think I know that?"

His father's honest face had gotten all twisted up, and as Robert blinked it got blurry around the edges, so that it had no hair, no ears, no eyes, no vinyl-plastic-bow-tied blue-striped shirt collar, only a mouth, saying: "Why you reckon I told you myself, 'stead of lettin' you find out from strangers?" with a little fleck of fried potato crust sticking to one of the lower front teeth.

"Robert!" his mother had screamed as Robert quietly put his fork down in the middle of the scratched china plate with the blackening and peeled-in-places gold trim around the edge. "Robert, don't you go! Don't you go to that place now!" as he pushed back the chair, lower lip under upper, "Robert, Robert--you'll break your heart!"

Not go? Not go to Samarkand for one last time? Robert's thin, strong legs drove him out the door, the screen banging flatly behind him, while his father was saying to his mother: "Let the boy go, Matty--don't deprive the child..." And Robert ran down the street, down past the Emporium, and Stupor's Drug Store, and Woolworth's, and the Sears Robuck Catalogue Sales Store, and the Volkswagen showroom, and the Arcadia Theatre, and the gas plant, and over the A&YR tracks, and up the first hill, and on to this place, where the grass said "Mystery... " and a man in bib overalls had come out while Robert was in school, and planted a board sign nailed to a hatchet-sharpened yellow pine two-by-two, a glistening-new white sign with red sans-serif block capitals that said: SITE OF NEW MUNICIPAL PARKING AREA. GRANTWOOD CHAMBER OF COMMERCE WELCOMES U. Had put up the sign and trudged down the hill again after wiping his sun-seamed face with the print bandanna in his hip pocket; had left an emptied, crumpled Red Man Chewing Tobacco wrapper on the grass and trudged back.

And the grass whispered: "Kiowa...waa...Cathay..."

Robert shut his eyes tight, shoulders hunched, fists bulging in shorts pockets, round soft jaws clenched, and he thought of great sun-battered orange brick soot-stained barns with white-rippled-glass chicken-wire-embedded windows in peeling, rusting, unopened, once-black-painted iron frames, and in those barns men in bib overalls tending great, oiled, gleaming, brass and copper and stainless steel and grey crackle-finished painted-sheet-iron machines that endlessly wrapped Red Man to sustain the cud-motion in the faces of other bib-overalled men who came to the El Dorado to hammer in stakes and expectorate: "Blacktop!"

"Rat bastard!" Robert gritted desperately, his heart beating against his ribs like a garden mole when the brown-gold nozzle of the hose finds his burrow, "Oh, if--"

If he could become as fleetfoot as a pony, as sure as an arrow, as certain of his track as Major Robert Rogers, then this buffalo terror that made him want to snort and paw the ground for comfort could become a flight like a cowpoke's rush, bursting for Blonde Nellie's place on a Saturday night, and he could skim the prairie on his toe-tips, arms outstretched, true as a wish toward the westering sun, and leave behind him for the overalled men to hear only the vanished treble giggling of Alouette...

And a great roaring and sighing came into his head: "Cathay, Cibola, Erewhon," the grass prompted urgently. The sound spoke: "Cayley, Santos-Dumont, Professor Langley!" "Wings!" cried Robert, trembling, with the prairie wind thrumming at the pulse beat in his fingertips, where the pink capillaries surged, and the edges of the world blurred, until there were no forests to either hand, no horizon, no white town behind, only the golden, golden sun and--

"Oh!" Robert cried out, "Oh, I wish I truly did see a golden speck against the golden sun!"

And it seemed to him that if he truly did see a golden speck against the golden sun, a golden speck descending, wafting gently down through the scrubmark clouds, silent, oh, silent as hope, then what could that speck be--what could he hope for it to be--but "A balloon!" Robert shouted. "A Balloon--oh, a big round balloon coming for me!"

Round, golden, warm and glittering with varnish, netted in brown rope hawsers, wide-throated, painted in gilt curlicues and cherubim and butterflies and eagles, doves, cormorants, flamingoes, storks, hearts, scrolls, flowers and stalks of arrows bound in ribbon, the balloon was the only balloon he could have wished for, swaying gently down to him, wisps of blue smoke trickling up around the rim of the open throat, a pale yellow wicker basket slung below it from the net of hawsers, and peering over the edge of the basket a tall, spare, commanding grey-haired woman in black bombazine, with her hair pulled back in a bun with a little black hat pinned to it and lace frothing white from under the tight black sleeve at her bony wrist as she pointed to him, arm outstretched, with a tightly furled black umbrella whose long brass ferrule glinted heart-stoppingly, saying: "I am your Aunt Agatha Marvelous, come to take you to Mars. Wipe your dirty little face!"

"Yes, Ma'am," said Robert politely as the balloon grounded with a sound like "Samar--thump!--kand" before him. "I'm pleased to meet you. But isn't Mars a very long way?"

"Don't be impertinent, child. I've packed an adequate hamper," Aunt Agatha said. "Scramble aboard, now--scramble aboard; we must be off!"

And the great creaking varnished-paper bag swayed over Robert in fabulous protectiveness, stiff and shining and curlicued, delicately gored and gussetted and seamed, and from it came the enchanting scent of anthracite smoke and baking varnish and the acrid tang of japanning on the glistening bentwood hoops that stayed the hawswers around the brass fire-pan, and here and there a drop of gilt on the rim of the wicker basket where the angels who had surely swooped and fluttered about it, executing those wondrous decorations, had surely swayed each other's paintpots a little with the joyful rush of their wing-feathers, and Robert cried: "Oh! Oh, balloon! Oh, Mars!"

"There are ponies and buffalo on Mars," Aunt Agatha said. "Long, rolling plains, and pink-towered cities, and cowboys and pioneers and long camel caravans swaying across the land at dusk, and Kiowas and Comanches and Shoshones and Crow, Sioux, Winnebago, Sac-and-Fox, and bear, and deer, and giraffes, and beaver, and no parking lots, no gas plants, no sewers no smoking, and everyone cooks over cattle-chip fires. There are conquistadores and vikings and crusaders and berserkers and Attila the Hun and Gallileo."

"Oh!" cried Robert, scrambling aboard and throwing his arms around Aunt Agatha's whalebone-clasped waist, "Oh, my Aunt Agatha!"

"Hush now, child," she said, pushing him away busily. "There's no need to be demonstrative," she snapped, but a smile quivered the corners of her carefully compressed pale rose lips. "Here, help me with the kindling," she said, thrusting her umbrella toward the woodpile while her tin-plated scoop rattled in the galvanized iron coal scuttle. "And listen --listen to the balloon!"

And as he helped stoke the fire-pan that filled the balloon with the heat of life and the great expansiveness of flight, Robert's ears filled with a host of murmurs:

There was a sound like the aspirations of all the paper bags ever made; a crackling, a striving, a stirring; a rush, a scraping sigh. "At last--destiny!" the great envelope seemed to say, full of the warmth of its own dreams. And the hawsers in the breeze sighed "Mars..."

"Upward!" the great bag grunted, and in the fire-pan below its throat, the merry coals brightened in response. Out of the crushed ferns, the pine cones, the bitumen of geologic ages; out of the trapped sunlight of all Earth's time; of heat, and rain, and earth and crush of years, of layered patience. Out of the heat of oxygen, invisibly disguised in air, out of the need, and the wanting, out of the hunger to burn--coal, and oxygen; sunlight and air--sunlight and air and time; the fire quickened as Aunt Agatha poked it with the ferrule of her umbrella, and again "Upward!" the bag grunted, and upward the bag rose, and the hawsers sighed: "Marsss..."

The balloon rose, and rose, above the prairies and above the white little town and the A&YR tracks, and the white board sign on the hilltop below dwindled, and the balloon rose, and pushed through the soap-smelling clouds, which brushed Robert's face and made him blink. Of earth, and air, and fire, and water; upward, the balloon rose, and the hawsers spoke: "Mars... Marsss...Marsss...sss..."

"Gee whiz!" Robert exclaimed.

"None of your vulgarisms, young man!" Aunt Agatha snapped, boxing his ear.

"No, Ma'am," Robert agreed politely, his eyes shining like moonstones as he stood feeling the sway of the basket, listening to the murmur of air and the voices of the ropes, the chuckling of the coals, and felt the rushing warmth of the heated air bubbling up into the smoky heart of the balloon, and dreamed of giraffes skimming head-up across the prairies toward Ultima Thule. Of muskrat and okapi and woodchuck , and lions, and elk, and eland, and the greater kudu running with eyes a-start before the onrush of horse-laughing Kiowas.

"Alouette!" Robert cried out into the sky, and turned to throw his face up toward the sun. "Alouette!" Robert cried out to the sun, "J'en te plumerai!"

He felt a little faint. A great noise came once more into his head; voices chanted: "Lilienthal...Graf von Zeppelin...Willi Messershmitt..." and he held out his trembling arms to Aunt Agatha while the hawsers sang: "Mars samarkand andorra atlantis cibola lagrange illinois..."

Aunt Agatha efficiently whipped her umbrella under one arm and gathered him in her long, tight arms, holding him close to the busks under the crackling sharp bosom of her bombazine bodice with the scent of lilac sachet in the stiff white lace, and stroked his hair, promising: "Never you mind, young man. I'll always be here whenever they behave uncouthly toward you. I'll save you. I am your Aunt Agatha Marvelous, and if any of them try to take away your toys or make you go to bed without your supper, you just say to them, 'We'll see about that!' You just sneak out to the parking lot and shinny up a light pole, or something, so I can see you-- a boy like you needs lots of practice shinnying up things anyhow--and you wave. Wave with all your brave heart, young man." And Aunt Agatha pursed her lips and kissed him between the eyes.

"Oh, yes, yes, Aunt Agatha," Robert whispered as softly as the rolling-over of a mouse asleep in a loaf of bread, under the cellophane, and closed his eyes. He heard, faintly: "Mind you scrub your knees, next time..." and then he was blinking his eyes next to the Chamber of Commerce sign.

"Son," his father was saying to him in his honest voice, squatted down next to him, taking a whole half-day off from the Carburetor Division, mopping his brow with a print bandanna. "Son--boy--listen; you know what I done?"

"What?" Robert said sulkily, knuckling his eyes.

"Listen, what I done--I went to see Mr. Snavely, down at the bank, you know?" his father said earnestly, trying to put his arm around Robert's stiff young shoulders. "And I took Matildy's butter-an'-aig money, and all the life savin's, and your college money, too, matter of fact, and then Sam Snavely and me, we went down to see Mr. Tight at the Realty, and can you guess what we done?"

"No," Robert said, kicking the two-by-two upright on the sign, making a noise with his scuffed-white and grass-stained sneaker toe like "Blacktop!"

"Well, Sam Snavely, he explained to Bill Tight about how he was refinancin' the mortgage on the house another twenty years and how what with the savin's this would be enough--well, here, Son," Robert's father said, fumbling in his pocket and bringing out a piece of folded stiff white paper that crackled "Snap!" like a trap and had never heard of okapi, "Here's the deed to this piece of land. You can come up here all you want to, now, and stand around all mooney-eyed with your hands behind your ears like you do, and won't nobody bother you!"

Robert's father tried to reach around and slap him on the back, but Robert had already turned and was hammering his fists on his father's honest chest, crying: "Oh, hell, hell, hell!" he said, hammering harder with his grimy-knuckled fists and blinking his eyes, "Oh, hell, hell, hell and God damn, now you've gone and taken away Aunt Agatha!"

The FAUSTUS TRADITION in the Early Science Fiction Story

by Leland Sapiro

Part III

The clue we need is to be found in Dr. Santurn's library--from an historical account of events some thirty centuries removed. The invaders of Canaan, under their new leader, David, have captured Jerusalem, the last enemy fortress in the promised land. Having made this city his capital, and now wishing to make it his religious centre, David orders the Ark of the Covenant to be carried there from its old tabernacle in Baale.

But on the way there is a disconcerting incident which causes the trip to be delayed for several months. The oxen begin to shake the cart bearing the sacred Ark, which an attendant named Uzzah tries to hold steady- with consequences recorded in the Second Book of Samuel:

> And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzzah, and God smote him there for his error; and he died by the Ark of God. [53]

Certain exegites have attempted "naturalistic" explanations [54] for this passage--e.g., a heart attack or the concussion from a fall--since Uzzah's harmless intent did not seem to merit such punishment; but such interpretations are scarcely consistent with the Book of Numbers, which specifically reaffirms the penalty of death by contact:

> ...but they shall not touch any holy thing, lest they die.[55]

To see why Uzzah was punished we first must try to understand the meaning attached to the notion of holiness or sacredness in the old Semitic religion.

The present-day concept of sacredness as a transcendent property we owe to Isaiah and the other Hebrew prophets. But sacredness (or, more exactly, the Semitic word we translate as "sacredness") does not have such a meaning in the Book of Samuel, which represents an earlier stage of Jewish religious development. "The primitive concept of holiness, to which the modern variations of the idea must be traced, belonged to a habit of thought with which we have lost touch" [56] --and this archaic mode of thought is compromised in the belief that holiness bears a physical as well as a supernatural aspect.

In particular, the sacredness of the national god

Jehovah was thought to have genuine physical manifestations as an occult power or energy, concentrated in special objects and places, which could be diffused through any person who contacted it.

> Owing to the contagiousness inherent in all that is sacred, a profane being cannot violate an interdict without having the religious force, to which he has unduly approached, extend itself over him and establish its empire over him... This is why sickness or death are considered the natural consequences which are believed to come by themselves, with a sort of physical necessity.[57]

The familiar "awe in reverence" receives here its "cultic counterpart" in the belief that anyone who touches a sacred object, however blameless his motives, surely must die.

> ...every place and thing which has natural associations with the god is regarded, if I may borrow a metaphor from electricity, as charged with divine energy, and ready at any moment to discharge itself to the destruction of the man who presumes to approach it unduly. [58]

Uzzah's only mistake was his physical contact with the Ark, but due to the impersonal nature of the divine energy his death was the automatic result.

But there is one thing which is considered sacred in primitive and non-primitive religions alike, and which, irrespective of the connotations borne by the word "sacredness," represents in each of us a spark of divinity--and this is the human soul.

> In fact, the soul has always been considered a sacred thing; on this ground, it is opposed to the body which is, in itself, profane. It is not merely distinguished from its material envelope as the inside from the outside ...more than this, it inspires those sentiments which are everywhere reserved for that which is divine.[59]

The concept of soul, therefore, is "a particular application of the beliefs relative to sacred beings." Hence it is reasonable to suppose that in the religions of primitive man--and in certain thought-processes of his descendants--the soul is invested with that same type of mystic energy which is associated with other sacred things.

Keeping in mind this last conjecture, let us try once more to find a reasonable interpretation of Snyder's story.

Consider the final tableau: Dr. Santurn and his assistants gathered around the operating table for a performance

of brain surgery. The doctors are no longer working with a lower animal, but with a creature that is potentially human. Born with no appreciable mentality, the infant exhibited at the start no uniquely human characteristics; therefore in giving to it a higher (and eventually human) intelligence, the experimenters have transformed the baby into a human personality: that is, they have given the baby a soul.

But the soul belongs to the domain of things sacred, into which a profane being cannot intrude "without having the religious force, to which he has unduly approached, extend itself over him." It is the diffusion of mystic potency, the lethal power accumulated during past weeks and now released by Dr. Santurn's incision, that we are witnessing in the final scene.

Before continuing, we observe that even the crude Semitic beliefs discussed here represent a considerable advance in the notion of sacredness, which is conceived by the savage mentality as an intrinsic rather than a derived property. In the later books of the Old Testament. sacredness is a property of created things only in a derivational sense (it being idolatry to attribute holiness to the object itself), and even in the story of Uzzah, sacredness--although regarded as quasi-physical--is still a characteristic of Jehovah. But in its pristine conception, holiness is a property which inheres in special persons and things, even when the notion of a god is entirely absent.

The first detailed citation of such a primordial mode of thought was by Bishop Codrington, who reported that among inhabitants of the Melanesian Islands the basis of "all practices which can be called religious" is an occult field of force, capable of producing miraculous effects "beyond the ordinary power of man."

> By means of this men are able to...make rain or sunshine, wind or calm, to cause sickness or remove it, to know what is far off in time and space, to bring good luck and prosperity, or to blast and curse.[60]

Such supernatural force or mana is concentrated in certain special objects, such as stones of an unusual shape, in pre-eminent persons such as chiefs and great warriors, and indeed in any person who has achieved singular success.

> If a man has been successful in fighting, it has not been his natural strength of arm..he has certainly got the mana of some deceased warrior... If a man's pigs multiply and his gardens are productive, it is not because he is industrious..but because of the stones full of mana for pigs and yams that he possesses.[61]

But a mana-type force--which since Codrington has been

observed in many localities--may also cause harm. In the words of another writer:

> The divine person is a source of danger as well as of blessing; he must not only be guarded, he must also be guarded against. Hie sacred organism..is..as it were, electrically charged with a powerful magical or spiritual force which may discharge itself with fatal effects... His magical virtue is in the strictest sense..contagious... The Casembes, in the interior of Angola, regard their king as so holy that no one can touch him without being killed by the magical power which pervades his sacred person...In Tonga it was believed that if any one fed himself with his own hands after touching the sacred person of a superior chief..he would swell up and die; the sanctity of the chief, like a virulent poison, infected the hands of his inferior, and, being communicated through them to the food, proved fatal to the eater.[62]

Assuming that the religious ideas of the Semites also once passed through this primitive stage, we may summarize the evolution of "sacredness" by the progression: mystic energy, divine energy, Divinity. At the last, sacredness is dissociated entirely from the physical world; before then, it has a physical aspect which is conjoined with a god or gods; at the first; it is conceived as a raw power whose action may be likened to an electric discharge--or to a virulent disease.

Consider The Chemical Magnet, by Victor Thaddeus (8-27). While living in a cabin on the beach, Dr. Schirmanhever, scientist, invents a device which separates salt from sea-water as a magnet separates iron-filings from sand. Next he inherits money from a rich uncle and so begins more ambitious projects.

Several years later, aboard his yacht-laboratory, Schirmanhever explains to the narrator his most recent experiments: he is perfecting "a chemical magnet of super-strength," capable of eliciting from the sea chemicals which are as yet undiscovered.

"Chemicals," said Schirmanhever.."which may, who knows, have actually led to the origin of.."

He broke off. At the time I did not grasp the true meaning of what he said. I only had a vague but distinct sense of danger..

"Won't there be a risk in such experiments?" I asked. "If such chemicals do exist, and you collect them in any quantity, mayn't they have a frightful effect on the human body?"

"Very likely," answered Schirmanhever.."There's always a risk in the Unknown."

Dr. Schirmanhever is extracting the primoridal essense of life--and during the ensuing days the narrator observes Schirmanhever's decline in healthy, his increasingly pale complexion, and his "trembling fits that made me fear he had caught some tropical fever."

Finally:

"I've found it at last--the Secret of Life! --I've got it there, out there!"

A thrill of horror shot through me. Suddenly I realized..why Shirmanhever was wasting away--rembered my casual suggestion of that night. Something deadlier than poison was devouring him. I seized his arm..Schirmanhever fought himself loose, and the expression in his eyes..told me that he was mad, utterly mad.

"Something deadlier than poison was devouring him"--in such a way is announced the dreaded occult potency whose effects we have learned to anticipate.

Let us recapitulate.

In its so-called secular aspect, the Faustus tradition entailed the belief that certain knowledge is a prerogative of the Deity. As expressed by the writer of the fifth century,

> I have often marvelled at those who..solicitously search the things that cannot be found, and the quest of which arouses the wrath of God.[3]

It was the "wrath of God," in the guise of a malefic ent "Nature," that was approximated in the Amazing story by Bob Olsen--and, unknowingly, by many others.

Observed next was the Faustus tradition in its Newtonian aspect, as comprised in attempts, during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, to minimize the embarrassment of human beings living in a mechanical universe. In recent times, the situation was given an original rendition by Francis Flagg and several other science-fiction writers--but the majority were capable only of voicing the public indignation. Still in the Newtonian tradition was the rejection of mechanistic biology, i.e., Natural Selection, by such writers as Clare Winger Harris.

Also, we witnessed the Faustian notions, secular and Newtonian, as mystically combined by A. Hyatt Verrill-whose

trend of thought was culminated in the occult philosophy of Alexander Snyder and Victor Thaddeus.

Starting from Scripture, therefore, our survey has extended through the Middle Ages and the Victorian Era, then back, full-circle into pre-Biblical times.

But our allusions to the Faustus legend are not meant to imply that there was a deliberate attempt to illustrate it; for the mere presence of an attitude does not always signify a corresponding awareness. This is because a value judgement--as opposed to belief in matters of fact--is acquired not during any specifiable time interval, but by such gradual accretions that at the end one may not realize, consciously, that it exists.

For example, a schoolboy might acquire during the first week of Latin the belief that Caesar conquered Gaul, and from that time onward his awareness of the belief is reawakened whenever the conversation relates to Julius Caesar. On the other hand, such notions as the superiority of humbleness to pride and the transcendence of reason by faith are part of universal Christianity, derived from admonitions scattered through the years--and these are the sentiments represented by the fictional chastisement of the scientist for his "pride of will and eagerness of curiosity."

Thus the sinfulness of curiosity was not acknowledged explicitly by Gernsback's writers because in their thought it was already a basic category, used to evaluate other ideas, but itself unevaluated; these authors illustrated the Faustus tradition without possessing a conscious awareness of the Christian beliefs which were its main source.

But in its occult phase the Faustus tradition antedates Christianity, and therefore cannot be discussed in terms of it. Indeed the concept of mana, or supernatural energy, has appeared in so many guises that it can be regarded as an archetype of human thought.

> The core...the "mana" concept which Codrington found among the Melanesians, is not so much the idea of such particular embodiments, as in the notion of a "power" in general, able..to enter into one object and then into another; a power that is venerated for its "holiness" as well as feared for the danger it contains...
>
> ...Certain terms that correspond exactly to the meaning of mana may be found not only among the South Sea Islanders, but also among a great many American Indian tribes, as well as in Australia and in Africa...On the basis of such observations, students of..comparative religion have largely come to regard this conception..as nothing less than a special category of mythic consciousness.[4]

The existence of such mystic potency in the Amazing story, therefore, does not represent any conscious design, but serves merely as evidence that early stages in the mental development of the human race are reproduced in thought-patterns of the individual.

Concerning Snyder's story, in particular, its author's lack of self-consistency possibly results from simple negligence; but the strong feeling displayed in the narration leads us to a more general explanation--that the pre-scientific and the contradictory aspects of the story are both results of the same process; the regression of mind under emotional tension.

We have described the "failure of nerve," which in the Amazing story implied the almost certain death of the scientific investigator--whose agency of punishment ranged from a vindictive "Nature" to an emotionally charged effusion of mystic energy. Thus, new discoveries, ostensibly designed to instruct the reader, served only to admonish him concerning the scientist's guilt. But since the desire for knowledge is basic to any activity which can be called "science," we conclude that its anti-scientific bias was what so painfully delimited the early science-fiction story.

Footnotes

53) II Sam. 6:7.

54) See the Interpreters' Bible (New York, 1953), II, 1078-9.

55) Num. 4:15.

56) H. Robertson Smith, The Religion of the Semites (New York, 1956), 91.

57) Emile Durkheim, The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life, translated by J. W. Swain (Glencoe, Illinois, 1954), 320.

58) H. Robertson Smith, op. cit., 151.

59) Emile Durkheim, op. cit., 262.

60) R. H. Codrington, The Melanesians (Oxford, 1891), 191.

61) Ibid, 120.

62) J. G. Frazer, Taboo and the Perils of the Soul (The Golden Bough) 3rd ed., part II; London 1911, 132-3

63) Isidor of Pelusium, Epistolae II, 93; Migne, Patr. Gr., LXXVIII, 538B; quoted by Arpad Steiner, The Faust Legend and the Christian Tradition, PMLA, LIV (1939), 396.

64) Ernest Cassier, Language and Myth (Dover Publications, 1946), translated by Susanne K. Langer, 63.

WALK-THROUGH EXHIBIT

A cavernous, red, un-valentine-ish thing,
The walk-through heart filled the entire room.
Deep footprints marked the floor, both in and out.
I entered--and at once a dull red glow
Enveloped me. A heartbeat's measured thud
Throbbed loudly through the walls. I froze in fright.
The light revealed great arteries filled with blood,
Huge muscles pumping fluid up and down.
A hidden speaker, acting as a guide,
Explained the function of each vital part.
What fine precision! A masterpiece of art.
The busy motions made my senses spin.
So many things, I thought, could go awry.
The lecturer tried to set my fears at rest.
If something did go wrong, his tone implied,
Efficient hands would quickly put it right.
The voice clicked off and I was back outside.

The room next door contained a walk-through brain,
A pinkish, tangled, bloated, squishy mass.
My mind recoiled. No voice, no coloured map
Could lure me through the entrance of that maze
Of human aberrations and to gaze
At man's confused desires and thwarted hopes,
The hidden lusts, the secret thoughts exposed.
Battered by terror, retributions, pain,
And history's crimes laid bare and magnified,
Engulfed by hatred, I would go insane.
Lost in that chaos, I would never find
The exit--back to sanity and light.

Edith Ogutsch

Note: There actually is a walk-through heart in the Portland Science Museum, Oregon.

RONDEL TO A PSYCHOSOMATIC ILLNESS

The body is honest; the mind tells lies--
You've given your message, please go away.
I swear I'm listening to what you say:
The mind alone can rationalize
The body knows what the mind denies.
The twain do love and yet betray.

The body is honest; the mind tells lies--
You've given your message, please go away.
Grief unconfessed through the body cries
Though minds at busy contentment play.
King David flings robe and crown away
As the prophet harsh from the desert cries.
The body is honest; the mind tells lies--
You've given your message, please go away.

Pallas Iphigenia

SELECTED LETTERS

Box C39, Clarence St. PO
Sydney, NSW, Australia

Dear Leland,

...your attribution of the incidence of sudden death among scientists in those old Amazing stories to anything as exotic as the Faustus Legend seems a bit ambitious. Sudden death is a convenience in s.f., especially in a story where the scientific gadget is plot, theme and main character combined. You bring on the gadget, you show it off, you clean up all the loose ends (which may mean the sudden extinction of the inventor) and finis. The system exhibits itself in a number of fields--the Deal with the Devil, for instance... Once the basic idea has been produced and shown off, there is nowhere to go but home.

John Baxter

Certain of Amazing's writers did show unmistakable "Faustian" misgivings, e.g., Bob Olsen, Alexander Snyder, and (the most consistent offender), A. Hyatt Verrill; while many displayed the popular antipathy toward science and scientists. Nevertheless, Mr. Baxter's criticism is essentially right: most of Gernsback's authors simply lacked the skill to write a story, so after introducing the scientist and his invention they were obliged to finish in the quickest way possible--and the destruction of the inventor was the fastest and most spectacular method.

---

423 Summit Avenue,
Hagerstown, Maryland 21740

Dear Leland:

The second portion of your Faustus tradition survey added some nostalgia value to the intellectual quality that it shared with the first section. It is astonishing how terribly these excerpts read when subjected to the light of 1964's criticism after they have been given a sort of biopsy and removed from the remainder of the tissue in which they formerly reposed. The sort of writing to which you object is only the slightest degree more advanced than the normal procedure of Mandrake, the Magician, in which the magic word "seems" is utilized to explain and apologize for all the events that Mandrake causes those around him to experience, events that would be supernatural or fantastic without that verb.

To the obvious point that there wasn't much good science fiction in existence to compare to the gobbledegook in these stories that you quote, I might point out one other fact. Fewer readers of science fiction stories had any personal contact with things more scientific than sparkplugs in the 1920's and "significant rearrangements in the molecular configuration of the protein" or "series after series of vacuum tubes mounted upon long panels of shining bakelite" did not represent the truisms and obvious statements that they would to a senior high school student today.

.....

I believe that William F. Fagan's little item would have struck home more effectively if published without those two introductory paragraphs. But I get the impression that man has already begun to break away from observations on observations and has taken more interest in the real thing. It's pretty hard to find descriptions of real natural surroundings anywhere in fiction before they began to appear in the 20th century. In painting, the impressionists finally admitted on canvas that the eye doesn't see what the mind sees, at just about the same time....

Maybe Andy Ross disappeared at the same time as Charley. But he obviously loved and learned from the poetry of Robert Frost: The Trial in particular comes very close to the exact style and fairly close to the merits of Frost's conversational poetry. He knows how to make direct quotations rhythmic without losing a natural swing and freedom.

I've just finished reading a half-dozen Gene Stratton-Porter novels, and I would recommend them to Sid Birchby if he is looking for a mundane literary world to conquer. I was positively blushing at the things that the poor woman put into those stories, and the obvious oblivion to the real import of the events with which the writer was blessed. It's hard to believe that any writer today could complete a story without thinking about its Freudian possibilities, but apparently these things boiled out of the subconscious unwittingly even during the first few decades of psychoanalysis. I once asked Dr. Keller about "The Thing in the Cellar" and he said that it was the first time that anyone had ever suggested that there might be a hidden symbolic meaning about the thing and that the possibility had never occurred to him.

Someone in FAPA, I believe, once pointed out the objection to John Boston's belief in the changelessness of mankind: human nature doesn't change but the ways in which human nature expresses itself change constantly. Vardis Fisher has done a fairly good job of creating believable primitive men, and I don't think that it's unfair to look for an occasional writer of genius who can make equally convincing a mankind from several thousand years in the future, differing from us in the opposite direction but to the same degree as [we differ] from prehistoric man. Of course, there are the obvious ways in which man has changed since Egypt's heyday: he's several inches bigger, he is more likely than not to survive to adulthood, he is more restricted in his ways of relieving the sexual urge, and so on.

I liked "The Outcasts" very much...If The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction rejected this, it's small wonder that Davidson went to Mexico.

The front cover causes me suddenly to wonder what an ATOM drawing would look like in mural proportions. It somehow seems like a Spanish stamp reproducing a Goya, to see a scene like this in fanzine proportions.

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

There were two possibilities for introductory comment in the November RQ, one to explain why Mr. Fagan's story was not to be taken literally and the other to explain the theme of Mr. Neville's. And I think that the response on this last story (to which no comment was prefixed) justified the inclusion of a note before the first; for while RQ's more acute readers all stated they enjoyed Mr. Neville's story, none semed to recognize the Wandering Jew legend which was its theme.

---

77 Davis Ave.
Cookeville, Tenn.

Dear Editor:

As a furtherance of my other letter, I'd like to clarify a few things that I might not have made too clear before. Re emotions in s.f.: I don't think that emotion plays such an important part in s.f. as Mr. Neville thinks it does.

.....

The point I'm trying to make is that while emotions play an important, even vital, part in s.f., they are not the main part that we should be primarily interested in. We may criticize a band for not playing loud enough to suit our personal tastes, but which is more important: the loudness or the music? Similarly with s.f.; we may want the emotions to play a little "louder," but which is the more vital of the two to s.f.: emotions or concepts? Specifically, where would s.f. be if it were devoid of new ideas?

Also [concerning]the "young, brash, etc. magazines..." for the "transition period." I didn't mean to imply that ACE is the only group giving us The Grand Ole Space Opry... but rather that the crude s.f. is with us always. Specifically: Fred Pohl, in IF, states...that the purpose of that mag will be to give s.f. a mag consisting 100% of thud and blunder. The illos in IF range from abominable ones of one-timers with names like Xytgoehglps Quwaktus to semi-classics by Emsh. The stories, on the whole, are hardly what you would call polished or sophisticated. A good example of what he is striving for, I think, is Pohl's and Williamson's The Reefs of Space. This was pretty standard stuff, though I think it would do very nicely for the "transition period." It has only a fair plot, more or less competently carried out, with an expected happy ending.

The readers' box in IF, while rather yawn-inspiring to older fans, shows very well that this is a medium where the young fans can grow like paramecia; for example, how about that bird in one recent issue who drooled over the Outer Limits as being good s.f.--even better than Twilight Zone? If our hope lies in youthful ignorance...don't worry: there's plenty of it.

Reece Morehead

In literary or 'mainstream" writing, as opposed to the journalistic or pulp variety, ideas are conveyed indirectly, rather than by explicit statement; so that the reader can gain that emotional satisfaction involved in synthesizing the object for himself. Such emotion, I think, is the more poignant, since it results from an entire chain of mental associations rather than the single memory involved in naming something. In short, it is not a question of more or less emotion in s.f., but a question of how this emotion is to be conveyed.

1605 Thayer
Richland, Wash. 99352

Leland Old Boy:

You were absolutely right. RQ #2 was much better than #1. But why fool around with this "volume" business? It only causes trouble...to the collector. A straight numbering is more efficient, easier, and just plain better. Give up the "volume" before it's too late.

.....

The cover was one of the best ATOM covers I have seen in a long time...You had a Cawthorn the first time, and now an ATOM. Logically, then, number three will have something by Jones? It should, at any rate.

"On Transcending the Linear Barrier": Well, there isn't much I can say, except that this is the type of thing I wish I had written.

Andy Ross...whoever he is...has proved what I have long doubted; that good poetry can be written in the field of s.f. or fantasy without being Tolkienish.

Perhaps s.f. hasn't sold as much recently because more and more it is becoming assimilated with mundane literature... S.F. as a separate writing form is dead all right...I'm not all-excited about the "impending doom" of s.f. There isn't much we can do about it. We (fandom) are only a very small minority...Trends can be slowed, but not stopped. I don't feel like crusades anyway. Sorry.

James Wright

Your suggestion about Eddie Jones is sensible, and I hope he will do some drawings for us.

The essence of the present reference system is the numbering by volume and by consecutive pages through each volume, e.g., "MLQ XIX, 319-324" or "Hound & Horn VII, 385-406," so that any further information [such as "1958" or "April-June 1954") is superfluous. I could no sooner change this system, which is that adopted by the MLA and most scholarly journals in English, than I could adopt my own private system of spelling.

Concerning the disappearance of s.f. as s.f., I think Harry Warner put the case most succinctly in the last issue, when he said, "I'd think I'd take my chances on the degree of freedom permitted a writer in Harpers over that allowed in Analog, if I really had to choose."

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816 South First Street
Mayfield, Kentucky 42066

Dear Leland,

In addition to the fact that the "Martian Wild West" magazines were the first casualties of the science-fiction slump, it's interesting to note that as early as 1950 Startling and TWS were doing their best to acquire an atmosphere of respectability; hence, the decline of the Bergey Girl on the cover and the appearance of names like van Vogt and Vance and Russell on the contents pages instead of the hacks like Manly Wade Wellman who had cluttered up the magazine before. By the time Startling folded, it was just as respectable-looking as, for instance, Galaxy, and the content was on a much higher level than in the bad old days of Sergeant Saturn. Of course, what I would like to know is how Amazing managed to survive; all I can think of is that possibly the digest size had something to do with it.

It is this same desire to look respectable that led Campbell to change ASF to Analog and change from digest size to bedsheet size. Something else that's interesting about ASF--take a look at the issues published just prior to the name-change and see how many of them are recognizable as science-fictional covers without close scrutiny. Recently there have been a few more covers than usual dealing with the science-fictional stock-in-trade, but more of them have been of a rather mundane nature--for instance, in 1964 alone, January, March, May, September, October, and November.

Of course, Campbell seems to be out of step again; IF, with its avowed policy of action [and] adventure...seems to be just about the healthiest product on the market, along with the Ace line of paperbacks.

Something that just struck me in regard to the fall of the pulps: it seems to me that the type of science fiction published in, say, Astounding or Galaxy during the mid-50's would be more the type to inspire a sort of "loyalty" than the transplanted Westerns of the lower-class magazines. The readers of ASF were probably a much more devoted group than the readers of Startling, simply because the unique possibilities of the field were brought into play more fully there than in the pulps. Even the highest-class "Martian Wild West" story has nothing to offer the reader that can't be found in a well-written Western, whereas there was still enough material like "Mission of Gravity" and "The Stars My Destination" and the stories of Chad Oliver and C.M. Kornbluth and so forth in ASF and its peers to make each issue at least a partially unknown quantity. Of course, nowadays the readers of Analog probably hang on more out of habit than anything else.

The "Linear Barrier" thing was quite amusing, and is a perfect illustration of the semantic fumblydiddles committed by the adherents of these crackpot cults in justifying their beliefs.

Sincerely,
John Boston

To recapitulate, Mr. Boston is discussing not Mr. Neville's speech (printed in our first issue), but a letter about the speech, where it was argued that s.f.'s present emasculated state results from editors' failure to please a public which likes Martian Wild West.

Perhaps the clearest summary of the transplanted Western was given by Lew Martin, who in complaining about this same M.W. Wellman remarked that he

> ...gets his plots from the old time Western yarns, transfers them to the future by substituting rav pistols for six shooters and rocket ships for buck boards ...and [transfers] the location to Venus or some other alien planet, and then he writes the story.
>
> ("It's Amazing," The Alchemist, I (February '40) p.24.)

But the clearest substantiation of this complaint is Guy Archette's "Outlaw in the Sky" (Amazing Stories, Feb. '53), where the author had written a Western and made the appropriate substitutions, but had forgotten to change a particular word, so that on p.68 a man standing on Mars utters the classic sentence, "I rode clear up from Texas to kill Dorken."

WE HAVE NOTHING TO FEAR FROM TERRESTRIALS!

Exalted One, our visit to Earth has disclosed that its inhabitants are too confused, socially and economically, to comprise a threat to the residents of Sfanomoë.

Terrestrials have two modes of planning, Great Leader. In one sector, a small elite prescribes manufacture and distribution for several hundred million inhabitants--so that everybody but this elite is insufficiently nourished.

In another sector, Your Eminence, despite starvation by many, farmers are paid to grow less food; while owners of condemned dwellings--called slums--pay less compulsary renumeration, or tax, than owners of modern buildings.

The natives of Earth, Almighty Regent, speak about poverty, but except for one group know nothing of its causes. This group, which designates itself as the Henry George School of Social Science, shows other Terrestrials how to solve rural and urban social problems.

Great Potentate, if this Henry George School did not exist, the Terrestrials would be ignorant of what to do.

With respect to the local coordinate system, Mighty Lord, the main office of this School is at 50 East 69th Street, New York 10021. In other cities there are branches of this School, whose coordinates have been determined by our agents from the local coordinate or telephone directories.

Great Leader, I have just one recommendation: to destroy this Henry George School. Otherwise, Terrestrial natives may, in time, learn to solve their own economic problems--and then try to occupy the sacred planet of Sfanomoë.

Your Sublimity, after we eliminate the Henry George School, we shall have no cause for apprehension.