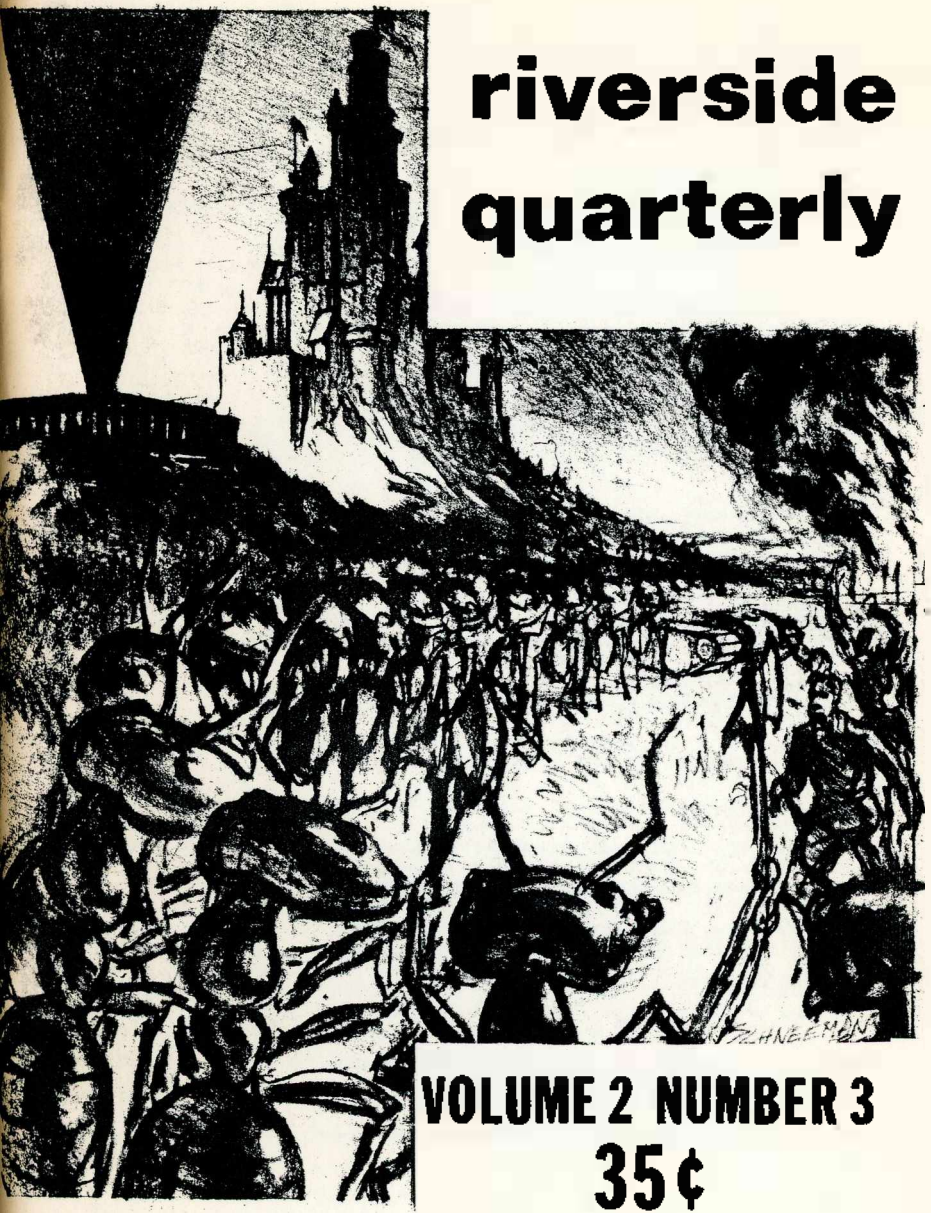
riverside quarterly



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RIVERSIDE MISCELLANY

AT THE ROUND EARTHS IMAGIN'D CORNERS, BLOW YOUR TRUMPETS...

After sending the last RQ to the printer I received a notice, from Larry Farsace, concerning a World Poetry Day in Rochester, New York. Being unable to print the current issue before Mr. Farsace's deadline, October 8th, I shall atone by calling attention to a related literary event, POETRY AUSTRALIA's overseas issue, to be published in June 1967. This number will consist of works by Canadian poets, i.e., poets born or living in Canada, and eligible writers are requested to submit MSS to either the editor, Grace Perry, 350 Lyons Road, Five Dock, NSW, Australia, or Professor A.J.M. Smith of Dalhousie University, Nova Scotia.

Residents in the Queen's other dominions should take note of RQ's new poetry editor, Jim Sallis, RFD 3, Iowa City 52240. Mr. Sallis, who is now teaching at the State University, has proved himself resolute indeed in the Defence of Poetry; all such compositions now should be sent directly to him.

The final event in this context is Sanford Sternlicht's return to New England after a year's duty as Visiting Professor of American Literature at York University. The current "York Engravings" arise from Dr. Sternlicht's cohabitation with the ghosts of Yorkshire's past; except for Nun at Walm--gate Bar, published simultaneously in Manifold Quarterly (London), these compositions are printed here for the first time anywhere.

KEEP THY FOOT OUT OF BROTHELS,
THY HAND OUT OF PLACKETS, THY PEN FROM LENDERS' BOOKS,
AND DEFY THE FOUL FIEND. (Tom o' Bedlam)

RQ readers will be gratified to learn that they can obey the first and last of Tom's injunctions simultaneously, for in the present instance the brothel keepers and foul fiends are identical. Our account begins at the Stardust Motor Hotel (of the Handlery chain) in San Diego, site of the 1966 regional science-fiction convention ("Westercon"). Guests at this event were treated with contempt by the hotel management, which cancelled individual reservations, called the police (once at 9 P.M.) to disperse night meetings, and charged scandalous and illegal prices for rooms--one, e.g., being posted at $15, $20, and $25 on three consecutive days. It eventually transpired that the reason for such discourtesy was the fans' naivete in assuming that the Stardust was only a hotel.

> Later on we learned from San Diego natives that the Stardust is one of the better known bordellos and the management was...peeved because we weren't patronizing the girls.
>
> (Bill Donaho, "Two Westercons," Habakkuk, August 1966, p.25.)

Ordinarily it would be none of the RQ's concern that Handelry & Co. operates a bawdy-house. But when this institution is advertised as a hotel and its guests abused because they take it to be one, then the situation deserves public attention. An even tempered report is difficult here, so I shall just request RQ subscribers to abstain from all relationships with members of the Handlery chain.

The Mystic Renaissance: A Survey of F. Orlin Tremaine's "Astounding Stories": by Leland Sapiro: Part II

SECTION IV -- Some Religious Difficulties

Thus far, we have considered only the more direct examples, where mysticism was expressed as a unification of some kind -- either conveyed directly or implied by the occult notion of "sympathy." But for reasons just indicated we also might expect the doctrine to be conveyed indirectly by a minimising or a derision of man's rational faculties.

Such views frequently were expressed in an unfounded reliance on instinct. The first such story was T.C. McClary's "Rebirth" (February 1934), in which a scientist obliterates the memory of everybody in the world. Following this event, men are enabled by instinct alone to recognise sickness, dislike rats and corpses, and to perform complex actions like the gauging of relative velocities and the apprehending of an adulterous mate.

Another advertisement for instinct was J. Harvey Haggard's "Lost in Space" (August 1935). This story, like Harl Vincent's "Cosmic Rhythm," describes a space-liner seized by an inexplicable force -- but in this instance the ship is thrown so far off course that the very constellations look unfamiliar.

The ship appears lost -- and this news is accompanied by a radical change in the behavior of everybody on board. The chief pilot resumes biting his finger-nails, explaining to the captain that "I had trouble with the habit when a boy"; a previously reticent matron kisses a strange man who passes her in the corridor; a crew-member, explaining that "I've always wanted to do this," robs the safe where "most of the ship's currency" is stored (where he proposes to spend the money the author does not specify).

No self-consistent explanation is given;[20] so let us just say that there is a release of inhibitions caused by each person's belief that he will never be held to account for his actions. In any case, the ship eventually finds its bearings with the aid of a canine passenger. Even while the ship was floundering, the dog always ran to that side facing the Earth; so by using the dog as a guide the Captain is able to re-orient his ship. "You can't lose a dog," explains a (human) passenger, "They've got a sense of orientation which is utterly unexplainable even by the most complicated of scientific equations."

And so what began as an interesting psychological study of behavior under stress culminates by a trite observation on the instincts of Man's Best Friend.

Now, a statement that science or intelligence is "not enough" can be construed in several ways. If it is taken as a reference to behavior patterns which are "instinctive," i.e., not learned, then the sentence is a biological truism. A similar remark applies to the frequently heard statement that intelligence and compassion do not always occur together. But sometimes the inference is that intelligence precludes emotion. Such a statement also is a cliche, but unlike the other two -- which are facts of common observation -- it originates from sentiments which are centuries old.

In the "scientific" universe of the 18th Century there was no soul, no Deity, no human values -- but only a multitude of atoms, with motions specified by the laws of Newtonian mechanics. Such a universe was not conceived as a fit habitation for human beings; and the widespread resentment was conveyed by the Romantic emphasis on emotion and those qualities which distinguish a human being from a mechanical thinking machine. On another level, this resentment eventually was expressed by the popular conception of the scientist himself, who was represented as a being without sentiment, a human embodiment of the Newtonian World-Machine.

This stereotype was encountered many times in Hugo Gernsback's Amazing Stories, nor was it entirely absent from Orlin Tremaine's magazine.

"Science does not admit love or pity," asserts J.R.Fearn's chemist-astronomer ("Before Earth Came," July 1934), "three thousand years of scientific progress have drilled such sentiments out of us." Similar unconcern is manifested by the scientists of Harl Vincent's "Rex" (June 1934), who "immersed in their work and oblivious of all else...gave little thought to the plight of their fellow men."

Finally, there are Nat Schachner's "Saprophyte Men of Venus" (October 1936), who plan to enslave the Earth. "What frightful things these Venusians are," cries the heroine, "with all their intellect and scientific knowledge."

From the wickedness of scientists it seems a natural transition to the wickedness of science itself. Actually, the concept of science as "forbidden" knowledge is an abiding part of the Christian tradition -- as is seen by the mediaeval Faustus legends [21] -- and antedated Newtonian mechanics by many centuries. Nevertheless, this "Faustian" notion was conveyed to Tremaine's readers by the same trio cited above.

Thus we learn in Nat Schachner's "Isotope Men" (January 1936) that many chemical substances -- in particular, those in the human body -- are comprised of "mixed" elements, or isotopes, with non-integral atomic weights; and the story describes an attempt to create two human beings from one, with each man's body made of "pure" elements instead of isotopes.

But the experiment has evil consequences because, to quote scientist Malcolm Stubbs, "in our scientific arrogance we tampered with forces beyond our control." Such "arrogance" was demonstrated in the experimenter's earlier claim that "I've done what nature has merely fumbled at doing." "Nature," of course, is a euphemism for Deity, and later Stubbs is properly chastised for his impiety.

A similar allusion occurs in Harl Vincent's Prowler of the Wastelands (April 1935), where somebody meditates: "...it was sacrilegious to do a thing like this, to tamper with nature's law."

But the most outrageous impiety is committed by John Russell Fearn's experimenters (op.cit.) on the doomed planet Jir, who plan to create an artificial solar system and found a new race on its third planet. This experiment, too, is not entirely successful. "I might have known it," exclaims the scientist-in-charge, "we are usurping the Creator's power."[22]

Thus a writer can express by a stereotyped portrayal of scientists the notion that science is "not enough" or he can portray a superstitious fear of knowledge, with its allied notion that certain things are "not meant" for humans to know. Both these sentiments are trite and outworn, so that an author who repeats either one is simply anaesthetising (in George Orwell's phrase) a part of the reader's brain.

By contrast, notice how the "Faustian" notion was treated by another writer, Russell Winterbotham. Mr. Winterbotham also exhibited mystical tendencies, but his perceptions were of a different order than those just cited.

> Riker looked at the father and daughter. "I suppose," he said, that I should object. I should say that I will have nothing to do with it. I should accuse you of tampering with nature and declare that I will have nothing to do with such an unholy venture." He smiled broadly, but nervously. "I confess that I do feel like a bad boy stealing apples from an orchard. But I was never so interested in anything in my life. Dr. Von Shuler, I am keenly anxious to witness the experiment."
>
> ("Specialization," August 1937)

This author is sensitive to what he "ought" to feel, but at the same time he exhibits such proper sentiment in a new perspective, thus enlarging the perceptions of his reader.

Recall now the original train of thought: we discussed mysticism and the distrust of intellect; this led, by a logical non sequitur, to the concept of the inhuman scientist and thence to the impiety of science itself.

These last sentiments have no direct connexion with mysticism -- but they will help us to frame an answer to a general question: what relationship exists between mysticism and literary ability? More specifically, what mystical stories in Tremaine's magazine exhibited literary merit, and how was such merit determined by the author's mysticism?

SECTION V -- An Important Distinction

Before proceeding, we must say a word about the mystical experience itself, as distinct from the creed to which it gives rise.

According to the Upanishads there are four types of awareness or "aspects of the Self." The first two correspond to waking consciousness and to the consciousness in dreams; the third, to what we should call dreamless sleep. The last state is what interests us here, since it corresponds to what is ordinarily regarded as the mystic "trance" or mystic state of consciousness. "Beyond the senses... beyond all expression is the Fourth. It is pure unitary consciousness, wherein awareness of multiplicity is completely obliterated."

To quote a modern authority,

> Mystical experience is marked by the emergence of a new type of consciousness which is not sharply focalized, or clearly differentiated into a subject-object state. The "subject" and "object" are fused into an undivided one...Deep-lying powers...seem suddenly liberated. The usual insulations, which sunder our inner life into something like compartments, seem shot through... transcendent energies from beyond the margin appear to "invade" the individual self, a larger, environing consciousness, an enfolding presence, makes itself felt.
>
> ("Mysticism," Hastings Encyclopedia, 83-4)

Thus the individual self is diffused into a more inclusive enveloping consciousness, and so experiences (in the words of W.B. Yeats) "that union with created things which assuredly must precede the soul's union with the created spirit."

But to be coextensive with all living things is to experience the perceptions of others as one's own: the true disciple, states the Bhagavad-Gita, is one

> Who burns with the bliss
> And suffers the sorrow
> Of every creature
> Within his own heart,
> Making his own
> Each bliss and each sorrow.
>
> (op. cit.,67)

It must be emphasised that the mystical experience need not be articulated in a specific doctrine. Therefore we must distinguish between mysticism as a metaphysical creed and mysticism as a particular kind of experience. The first is a corpus of beliefs -- in my opinion, false -- about the nature of "reality"; the second is a special kind of consciousness, to which is associated an attitude of universal compassion -- and whatever else is desirable in mysticism.

Related to both of these are two similar modes of perception, which I call the poetic and mystic sensibilities. The alliance between them will furnish the required information about the literary implications of mysticism.

The relationship between these types of sensibility may be clarified through an analogy.

Imagine, first, a drug addict who can recall in exact detail his last night's opium dream, with all the sensations, visual, auditory, and olfactory, which he then experienced. This individual need not possess what is ordinarily classified as "memory," but only an acute sensitiveness.

Next conceive somebody who via his imagination alone can specify the manifold of sights and sounds and smells which constituted the dream. Such a person -- who can recreate an opium dream without taking opium -- would exemplify what I call the poetic sensibility.

As a rough approximation, we can say that the mystic sensibility bears the same relationship to the mystical trance that the poet's imaginative recreation of an opium dream has to the dream-experience itself. Just as a poet, without the use of drugs, can specify the events of an opium dream (cf. Clark Ashton Smith's Hashish Eater), so a mystically sensitive person can approximate at will that particular ramifying consciousness associated with the mystical trance.

Now let us approach the subject in a more analytic fashion.

The poet (more exactly, the poetic writer) may be described as a person who perceives correspondences between external events and his own inward states -- and who uses such correspondence to translate his emotions into sense-data. (The reader, by "decoding" these data, then can approximate within himself the poet's original emotions.)

An elementary example is Paul Verlaine's

> Il pleure dans mon coeur
> Comme il pleut sur le ville

(It weeps in my heart/ As it rains on the town), which conveys a structural similarity between rain and the physical expression of grief.

A more complicated example is Conrad Aiken's "Winter For a Moment Takes the Mind":

> Winter is there, outside, is here in me;
> Drapes the planet with snow, deepens the ice on the moon,
> Darkens the darkness that was already darkness
> The mind too has its snows, its slippery paths,
> Walls bayonetted with ice, leaves ice-encased.

I leave detailed exegesis to the reader; he will notice that this passage expresses (among many other things) a similarity between lunar gradients and cerebral dispositions, and in particular between "bayonets" and unpleasant memories.

A poet, then, is somebody who expresses correspondence between internal and external events -- or who relates external events to one-another by mediation of his own consciousness.

Now imagine that the poet experiences not just correspondence, but continuity -- that he feels the rain in the town and the weeping in his heart to be correlated not accidentally, but necessarily. Anybody with perceptions of this order we can designate as an example of the mystic sensibility. "The mystic is a man who knows by immediate experience the organic continuity between his self and the cosmos" [23] -- and such an attitude is merely an extension of the poetic sensibility just described. The mystic and poetic sensibilities gradually merge into one another, and (as shown, e.g., by William Blake and W.B. Yeats) frequently co-exist in the same person. [24]

Any sensitively written story, therefore, exemplifies the poetic sensibility; it also represents the mystic variety if it expounds some phase of occult doctrine.

In the present context the most relevant example is Harry Bates, "Astounding's" former editor. The following account is necessarily brief; for a more complete discussion the student should consult Arthur J. Cox's essay. [25]

Mr. Bates's early theme is the Failure of Intelligence. From "A Matter of Size (April 1934), this author's first contribution to the new "Astounding," the reader infers that excessive intelligence is repulsive in the individual and debilitating for the species -- a viewpoint stated more explicitly in Bates's next story, "Alas, All Thinking!" (June 1935), where intelligence, as opposed to instinct, is represented as an evolutionary dead-end.

Of course, this theme had been expressed before in the magazine, but (in the editor's words) "never like this."

The story is told by Harlan Frick, playboy and one-time physicist, who explains that he has glimpsed the "horrible cerebral future" which awaits humanity. The initial event was a materialisation, in Frick's laboratory, of a machine, whose passenger is described as "a baroque out of a far future time."

> I was surprised, but somehow I wasn't much frightened. The person of my visitor was not intimidating. She was just a barefooted young woman...clad in a...black shift which reached her knees...she was miles from being pretty. Her hair and eyes were all right...but her face was plain and flat, with an extraordinary and forbidding expression of dry intellectuality.

The scientist asks the girl -- whom he calls "Pearl" -- if he may visit her own civilisation, several million years in the future, and she assents. But on arrival, Frick sees no material signs of progress; there is only a field, "tenanted with a square block of large metallic boxes..."

In each cell there is exactly one human being, whose every instant is devoted to meditation. Frick is assured that the thinkers will not be disturbed by his visit; in fact "they...will be able neither to see nor hear you."

> I saw a man; or some kind of a man...
> ...he was all one gigantic head, or at least a great mass on whose parchment surface appeared a little round two-holed knoll, where the nose customarily is, lidded caverns where the eyes belong...
> By not the slightest movement...did the monster show he knew I was there. He sat on a high dias; his arms were only bones converging downward; his body ..showed every rib...and his pipe of a neck, unable alone to support his head, gave most of that job to two curved metal pieces that came out of the wall.
> He had a musty smell
> And, final horror, the stuff that covered him to the waist was dust; and there were two inches of dust on the top of his head and lesser piles...on every little upper surface!

Later, Pearl "listens" to the cogitations of one such thinker, and relays them to her visitor:

> "Mind force...How powerful -- mm -- yes, powerful -- Basis of everything living...Mm, yes, everything is relative, but everything together makes unity -- therefore we have a relative unit -- or, since the reverse is the other half of the obverse, the two together equal another unity...Sounds as if it might mean something. Einstein was a primitive..."

Frick eventually exterminates these last human representatives; then he journeys back to the present, where he resolves to exercise his brain no more than absolutely necessary.

Certain aspects of this story -- e.g., the thinkers' meaningless cerebrations -- ought not to be interpreted literally; rather, they must be considered as expressions of the author's own distaste toward the purely cognitive existence, with its substitution of concepts in place of direct acquaintance. The shallowness of the purely intellectual life is acknowledged, near the end, by Pearl herself, who expresses regret that "...her poor contemporaries...had died without dreaming life could hold such wealth of emotional experience."

Harry Bates is especially interesting because of his progression through the entire range of mystical beliefs, his next-to-last story, "Death of a Sensitive" (Science Fiction Plus, May 1953), depicting with unforgettable clarify the occult oneness of all life, and his Triggered Dimension (ibid., December 1953) depicting the psychic ocean literally as a body of water into which the individual self is submerged.

Of course, neither of these was printed by "Astounding"; but the first, "Death of a Sensitive," nevertheless will provide us with a standard by which the Astounding story can be judged.

Here, the mystic sensibility is expressed by and in the story, with its two "sensitives," John Inglis and his brother, each finding that his multiplicity of awareness makes existence almost intolerable:

> "We were sensitive, but much too sensitive. The normal person lives within a shell which gives a measure of protection from the disharmonic waves of the psychic Mother Ocean; we seemed to lack that shell. We could be bruised by a look, wounded by a thought; we could be lifted and tossed and battered and half-drowned in the great swells and riptides of animal emotion from the great submerged herd. With increasing divergence we more and more sought quiet and seclusion..."

Strange reports are being circulated about John, who is behaving like a friend to the insects descending into his apartment. "The people upstairs are doing something which drives them down," he states, "I think they are poisoning them..."

Inglis explains how he had once spilled flour on the kitchen floor; afterwards, while preparing to sweep it up, he notices something. As described later, by the narrator:

> Near one edge of the whited area lay a large cockroach, dead. Backward from it lay the trail it had made in its passage from the other side. The trail twisted and doubled; it looked like writing. Suddenly I saw that it was writing. Four words lay spelled out there in a wandering schoolboy hand... They read, "do not kill us." The last "s" was not quite finished, and the writer lay on its back, its legs folded symmetrically inward...
>
> I was frightened. The air around me seemed charged with unknown potential. Somewhere in space-time -- somehow -- an intelligence could conceive this --will this -- possessed the undetectable force to effect this.

The reader will recall similar concepts in an earlier story, "Fractional Ego," by Clifton Kruse (pp.78-79). This author, however, presented no "theme" in the proper sense, but merely a recitation of shocking incidents, starting with a transposition of salesman and Tibetan priest, ending with an exchange of soldiers and schoolgirls -- and containing somewhere in between an explanation by Dr. Eckert, scientist, about the psychic ocean.

By contrast to Mr. Bates, whose mysticism expresses a specific point of view, Mr. Kruse introduces his mystical theory solely as a convenient way to explain irrational happenings. The makeshift character of Kruse's theory is attested, e.g., by his failure to conform with common-sense notions of probability: with several billion people in the world and with the transpositions being (in Eckert's words) by "mere chance," it is improbable that any of the exchanges would concern the inventor's own employees.

Now let us return to our original question, which (stated more precisely) is this: Does there exist a positive correlation between literary merit and the fictional expression of the mystical creed? The answer is yes, provided that the doctrine represents (as for Harry Bates) a mystic sensibility; in such a case, the mysticism informs the story and gives relevance to each of its components.

It was the mystical doctrine without the corresponding sensibility that so often resulted in literary catastrophe; for then the mysticism was extraneous: it represented not a special mode of perception but merely a quick (and sometimes contradictory) solution to a problem. Thus when the doctrine was stated "conceptually" through an occult union or sympathy, it often was expressed stylistically by incoherence in the narrative itself.

SECTION VI -- On "Thought-Variants"

Our previous topic was a type of sensibility belonging to the mystic and the poet; we next discuss a characteristic which poet and mystic both share with the child, namely, the inability to distinguish between one's self and the external world.

Such naiveté is regarded by some writers as implying a general method of composition. W.B. Yeats, for example, quoted with approval a passage from Shelley, who urges us to "recollect our sensations as children," during which time "...we less habitually distinguished all that we say and felt from ourselves..."

Consider the following statement by Paul Valery:

> Let us imagine that the sight of things that surround us is not familiar, that it is allowed us as an exception, and that we only obtain by a miracle, knowledge of the day, of human beings, of the heavens, of the sun, and of faces. What would we say about these revelations, and in what terms would we speak of this infinity of wonderfully adjusted data? What would we say...if the world only appeared very occasionally, to cross, to dazzle, and to crush the unstable, incoherent world of the solitary soul?
>
> Mysticism consists perhaps, in rediscovering an elementary and in some ways primitive sensation... 26

The term "primitive sensation" conveys precisely what is experienced by the child, for he has not yet organised this "infinity of data" into recurrent perceptions. To a child, for example, John Peale Bishop's lines --

> Upon that road a man who goes
> Dragging a shadow by its toes

--might express a literal truth, since he possesses no empirical knowledge about the optical behavior of objects in sunlight.

But the child's naiveté must be lost in order to be recaptured: it can serve as a literary method only for a writer who, in the meantime, has acquired an adult's knowledge and technique and awareness of complexity.

Perhaps the reader has anticipated my next statement -- that many writers of the Astounding story displayed child-like naiveté, not as something deliberately recaptured but as something which never had been outgrown.

She told herself: This can't have changed for years and years. And she sniffed at the breath of coal smoke in the air.

"Yes, that's the way we are," he said. "When murder's done, the murderer's self-hatred lives on. He must bequeath it. To his sons, his friends, to strangers in the street..."

She let the meaning of his words escape, hearing his voice, taking false refuge in the sound of it.

"We carry with us those we've killed in war, and those we've robbed, and those we've worked to death. Century by evil century passes on. The debt accumulates. The compound interest's ours, the world's. Yours, Anne, and mine..."

"It's ours?" she echoed, but paying little heed, her eyes on a vessel moored stern-foremost to the shore, its narrow stack just visible in darkness. Those look like paddle-wheels, she thought, and sails too. Perhaps they use it up and down the river, or along the coast.

"We didn't ask for it-- not we! Yet we must pay-- in mercy quenched, in our compassion twisted, in strangled love's detested other face-- in hatred, cruelty, greed. So I said, I will not-- and, searching always, ran through our fearful night until I found the road. I found this younger land, this younger world. Where guilt's atonement is a penny-price, where coming anguish does not taint the air, where sleep brings rest, and where a Father God abides for any man to understand. That is my England, Anne."

It's all absurd, whispered her mind, and I wish, I wish it weren't. It's queer and frightening. Her fingers, making sure, felt for the solid realness of his arm.

"It's green and fresh, that land," he said. "The promise of each morning is a day, and every spring assures a coming year. One can believe, when I am dead, these children will grow old. Courage avails, and strength's no futile thing. A brave old world!" Loudly he laughed. "How did I find it? Dearest, I don't know. A miracle, perhaps-- or power of will-- or my desire. Each one of us may have a thread to follow, bent or straight, like in a carpet's pattern. Well! For us the carpet has rolled up. Pattern meets pattern, thread loops back on thread. We're slipping through easy as bug through bed-sheet."

He paused a moment. "I've been there, Anne. I've seen those Englishmen, and spoken to them. Oh, not for long-- I knew the bridge might close-- but long enough to know that there's our land. There's our escape from madness and ourselves."

Once more the wall of houses was broken by a street; and here again a mist stood, as though the sea had given up its ghost. They passed through it, and on the other side she saw the houses looming darker now that there were no street lamps, faint light from a window here and there touching cobbles that reached almost to the door sills. And here, too, masts stood against a bright-starred sky, showing yards with canvas furled; and a fresh breeze coming from the sea set them singing above the gentle sound of the sea itself.

I can't have come this way before, she thought. I'd have remembered it. It's silly, but I know those houses. There's a sameness to them... Half consciously she quelled the thought that came upon her. She forced herself to breathe the clean, clear air, and her eyes to view the darkness.

"Oh, it was hard," he told her, "having crossed once, and safely there, to turn about and risk the bridge again. And I'd have stayed had it not been for you. Because the bridge extends-- extends the other way. A little bit too far, and--"

She clutched at him. "You-- you went beyond?"

"Not I! Don't we know well enough what's still to come?

His voice had flattened, thinning out with fear; and fear seized into her. She stopped stock-still. "No!" she cried out. "Oh, Christ! It's nonsense! Beyond-- and-- here! It's all a joke. Isn't it? Isn't it, Ralph?"

He said no word; and she was silent, her breathing quick and shallow. Slowly he shook his head, and they stood there while the night throbbed like a slowing heart. They stood there until it stilled, leaving a void of silence; and into that void she said, with a strange deliberation, "The houses. . looked alike. They..looked the same. Because they are. They're the same houses we passed before. This is the past, Ralph! The past. It's long ago! I have no business here!"

They stood there, far past the turn of the corner, the turn of the century. Again the side street was fifty feet away. She stepped back a pace, tight knuckles at her lips. "The past!" she screamed. "The past is dead! Why, I'll go back! I-- I've got to get back!"

His arms found her as she turned to run; held her there. "Listen!" he cried. "Listen to me! You can return. There is still time. First listen!"

She ceased to fight; stood rigid suddenly.

"You can return," he said. "You can go back to that same day and year. But remember this-- once there, you can not stand still. Once there, there will be one way for you to go-- the other way."

The other way. The payment of the debt. The mountain-weight of blood-guilt's usury.

"No-- it is not your way--" She said that slowly. "Oh, but Ralph, it's mine! If there's a debt, and if I must, I'll pay." Fierce strength ran through her body to her arms, and she broke free.

"It is my time, my place, my legacy," she cried. "Stay here and add to it!"

Then, as the quick contemptuous tears came, she turned and fled, over the bruising stones, back to the side street where the mist was waiting.

With two exceptions, then, the "thought-variants" were "hollow and absurd" -- or simply lacked any noticable characteristic. Only a minority contained specific occult notions ("Galactic Circle," Time Entity, "Before Earth Came"); but nearly all displayed a child-like naivete, akin to mysticism.[31]

At this point we must distinguish between Orlin Tremaine's actual and his ostensible editorial policies. From his printed remarks about "thought-variants" -- that they were "blazing a...new trail" (February 1934) or that they "have injected new life into a field...rutted by habit-driven vehicles (April 1934) -- the reader might have inferred that they were important; but the success, literary and financial, of Tremaine's magazine was mostly the result of superior editorial discrimination.

It was by virtue of his literary discernment that this editor acquired his two most important writers, "Don A. Stuart" and Stanley Weinbaum. Mr. Weinbaum's regular contributions to the magazine were initiated by its acceptance of his "Flight on Titan" (January 1935), but this work was submitted to Astounding Stories only after it had been rejected elsewhere. The rejection itself also can be regarded as an indirect result of Tremaine's ostensible "thought-variant" policy, which had induced a competitor, Charles Hornig, to initiate his own "new story" policy. For, unlike his Astounding counterpart, to whom "thought-variants" were only a facade, Mr. Hornig conceived "idea" (rather than literary merit) as an end in itself.

> Many will recall Wonder Stories' "new story" policy of 1934, when every tale had to embody a new idea or an original twist of an old one. When "Flight on Titan" arrived...the most careful perusal failed to reveal even a microscopic fragment of a new idea...So it was rejected. Anyone could have recognized a great story such as "A Martian Odyssey," but it took Orlin Tremaine to recognize a fine writing style in an ordinary adventure yarn...
>
> So it was...that Wonder Stories lost what might have been an exclusive option on Weinbaum's imagination and the reader-appeal that went with it.[32]

Similar remarks apply to "Don A. Stuart," whose classic story, "Twilight" (November 1934), was accepted by Tremaine's magazine after being rejected by both its competitors.

(to be concluded)

FOOTNOTES

20) According to the captain, "This shunting of the ship... seems to bring the primeval, more degenerate characteristics to the fore"--but the pilot's nail-biting appears to be a reversion to a childhood habit rather than anything "degenerate" in the racial sense. Also, the sexual by-play in the corridor seems not quite the "mental lassitude" noted elsewhere in the story. Even the explanation in this paper is contradicted by the author's final diagnosis, that the strange behavior was caused by malfunctioning of the air purifier.

21) See "The Faustus Tradition in the Early Science Fiction Story," RQ I (1964-5), 3-18, 43-57, 118-125, where it is argued that the wickedness of science and scientists was the central notion of Hugo Gernsback's Amazing Stories.

22) A similar rationalisation--"I have a feeling that one cannot look into the gulf without being destroyed"--appears in John R. Fearn's "He Never Slept" (June 1934).

23) Waldo Frank, "Forward," The Complete Poems of Hart Crane, xiii.

24) The poetic and mystic sensibilities merge into a third variety, the maniacal, in which causation is perceived in nearly everything. All three modes were exemplified simultaneously by the French symbolist poet, Gerard de Nerval, who believed that the moon's orbit was determined by the path he traversed in the garden. Not only this, but "I attributed a mystic meaning to the conversations of the guards and of my companions. It seemed to me that...we were to arrange a new movement of the stars"(Aurelia, Richard Aldington, trans.,50).

25) "A Question of Identity," RQ I, 88-109.

26) "On Painting," Selected Writings (New York, 1950), 224.

27) "Born of the Sun" resulted from a dispute, between Mr. Williamson and another writer, in which it was maintained that "no idea was too impossible to make convincing in a story" (The Fantasy Fan, I (1934), 152).

28) John R. Carroll, September 1936, p.157.

29) Marginalia (Sauk City: Arkham House, 1944), 142.

30) Also enjoying a reputation as satirist was Stanton Coblentz, but so far as I can determine this reputation was based entirely on his work in the earlier magazine of Hugo Gernsback.

31) Cf. Robert Lowndes: "Tremaine was willing to go along with almost any sort of mystical nonsense for the sake of what he called 'thought variants' " (Discord, January 1962, 12).

32) Sam Moskowitz, "Stanley G. Weinbaum: A Comprehensive Appraisal," Fantasy Commentator, III (1951-2), 137.

the other way

BY R. BRETNOR

Not a dozen paces past the turn of the corner, her step faltered and she stopped stock-still, letting her arm drop from the crook of his elbow to touch his sleeve with detaining fingers. Instantly, as they halted there, the night touched her with its terror; the harbour air, as she breathed it, seemed raw and chill. She caught her breath; looked up, searching for his eyes, and saw only a deeper darkness beneath his brows. Very low, almost whispering, she said, "Where are we going?"

She knew already. And yet she knew that the knowledge was not real, because it could not be.

He laughed. "Where? Where else but England?"

"But, Ralph..." She made the words a shield against his reassurance. "Ralph, this is England."

He faced her squarely, took her by the shoulders, held her at arms' length. "This is not my England," he said. "No, nor yours. My England is a fair young land, not grown so great. I'll take you there. We'll live there together." He paused. "Since I first found the way, a month ago, I knew you'd come. I'd not have dared the crossing otherwise. You said you would. You promised, didn't you?"

"I-- I suppose I did," she said.

"Then why are you afraid?"

She did not answer, but she thought: because that England's gone, Ralph; because there is no way; because after a while we'll say goodnight just as we always have, and I'll take the bus, and...

"Come," he said, "let's be on our way. Soon the bridge will close." And she let his arm enfold her, and she let this small security lull her conflicting fears as they walked on.

All along the waterfront, behind her and as far ahead as she could see, dark red brick houses leaned out over pools of muddy light in which street lamps stood. The houses were tall and narrow, and their steep roofs crowded together over many small black windows. Their shop doors, sunken below street level, sent stealthy footsteps echoing after passers-by. Here and there, a window shade glowed sickly yellow; here and there, vestibule signs told of rooms for rent or of beds for the night. The stink of oily bilge rust drifted over the pavement from steamers bulging between dingy covered wharves.

He gestured at the vessels. "All this... It shouldn't be like this..." And she listened while he talked, agreeing silently that there should have been bowsprits jutting out over the cobbles, and carven figureheads eavesdropping on the business of the shore-- with the smell of tar, the whisper of taut rigging, the creak of wooden hulls and hempen hawsers.

Perhaps that is your England, she thought, but it has vanished, Ralph, and this is mine-- this, and what's to come. Her memory, casting back into the war years, framed a single day, a very ordinary day during the last of winter. There had been the usual sorry queues waiting in the cold street, and an army lorry drawn up by the curb, and a delivery boy pumping along on a bicycle. She had had to wipe the steam from the window before she could look out, because the flat was so warm. Dad had just come home; he was laughing in the hall. Out of the corner of her eye, she saw the cat jumping down from a chair-arm-- and then-- and then somehow she was standing in the street watching them dig. Her brain was numb with a leaden, pressing numbness. She was standing in the rain, watching the ARP men pry up timbers in the rubble as the rain fell.

She remembered the days that followed. She remembered brief weeks of surcease; then V-2 following V-1. It had happened not to her alone, but to so many, many others. That had accentuated the horror of it in a way, making it a certainty-- like winter thunder, like the fall of night. And now there were the new things, infinitely more terrible, waiting...

Momentarily, as though he'd caught some faint reflection of that day, his arm tightened-- turning memory's keen edge, bringing her back to actuality. She looked ahead, at the pavement, the wharves, the houses, at the road to that other England. If only-- if only it were so. Very slowly she said, "Tell me about it, Ralph."

"I've told you, Anne."

"Tell me again. Tell me it all again." So I'll remember afterwards, so perhaps someday I'll believe it true.

"Why, it's a different world," he said. "Do you remember old John Garnisher? How he went mad and ran in circles all around his room, and wouldn't rest? Like his own ghost, self-haunting, self-pursuing, self-pursued-- faster and faster though the house burned down? Oh, we're like that! Our guilt pursues us, and we pursue our guilt. Our heritage. Our Old Man of the Sea. Driving us to destroy each other and ourselves."

Breathless, he paused; and she saw that here a side street cut darkly through the tall houses, and that a mist stood in it, thin and gray, and vaguely luminous where its ragged edges brushed the curb. Softly it enveloped them, and for a moment, isolated in its grayness, they seemed suspended in intangibility. Then it released them. She saw that the street lamps here were few and far between, low and flickering. The empty wharves were smaller, dingier; and the familiar red brick houses seemed higher than before, casting longer shadows. Now, too, there were boards under her feet.

She told herself: This can't have changed for years and years. And she sniffed at the breath of coal smoke in the air.

"Yes, that's the way we are," he said. "When murder's done, the murderer's self-hatred lives on. He must bequeath it. To his sons, his friends, to strangers in the street..."

She let the meaning of his words escape, hearing his voice, taking false refuge in the sound of it.

"We carry with us those we've killed in war, and those we've robbed, and those we've worked to death. Century by evil century passes on. The debt accumulates. The compound interest's ours, the world's. Yours, Anne, and mine..."

"It's ours?" she echoed, but paying little heed, her eyes on a vessel moored stern-foremost to the shore, its narrow stack just visible in darkness. Those look like paddle-wheels, she thought, and sails too. Perhaps they use it up and down the river, or along the coast.

"We didn't ask for it-- not we! Yet we must pay-- in mercy quenched, in our compassion twisted, in strangled love's detested other face-- in hatred, cruelty, greed. So I said, I will not-- and, searching always, ran through our fearful night until I found the road. I found this younger land, this younger world. Where guilt's atonement is a penny-price, where coming anguish does not taint the air, where sleep brings rest, and where a Father God abides for any man to understand. That is my England, Anne."

It's all absurd, whispered her mind, and I wish, I wish it weren't. It's queer and frightening. Her fingers, making sure, felt for the solid realness of his arm.

"It's green and fresh, that land," he said. "The promise of each morning is a day, and every spring assures a coming year. One can believe, when I am dead, these children will grow old. Courage avails, and strength's no futile thing. A brave old world!" Loudly he laughed. "How did I find it? Dearest, I don't know. A miracle, perhaps-- or power of will-- or my desire. Each one of us may have a thread to follow, bent or straight, like in a carpet's pattern. Well! For us the carpet has rolled up. Pattern meets pattern, thread loops back on thread. We're slipping through easy as bug through bed-sheet."

He paused a moment. "I've been there, Anne. I've seen those Englishmen, and spoken to them. Oh, not for long-- I knew the bridge might close-- but long enough to know that there's our land. There's our escape from madness and ourselves."

Once more the wall of houses was broken by a street; and here again a mist stood, as though the sea had given up its ghost. They passed through it, and on the other side she saw the houses looming darker now that there were no street lamps, faint light from a window here and there touching cobbles that reached almost to the door sills. And here, too, masts stood against a bright-starred sky, showing yards with canvas furled; and a fresh breeze coming from the sea set them singing above the gentle sound of the sea itself.

I can't have come this way before, she thought. I'd have remembered it. It's silly, but I know those houses. There's a sameness to them... Half consciously she quelled the thought that came upon her. She forced herself to breathe the clean, clear air, and her eyes to view the darkness.

"Oh, it was hard," he told her. "having crossed once, and safely there, to turn about and risk the bridge again. And I'd have stayed had it not been for you. Because the bridge extends-- extends the other way. A little bit too far, and--"

She clutched at him. "You-- you went beyond?"

"Not I! Don't we know well enough what's still to come?

His voice had flattened, thinning out with fear; and fear seized into her. She stopped stock-still. "No!" she cried out. "Oh, Christ! It's nonsense! Beyond-- and-- here! It's all a joke. Isn't it? Isn't it, Ralph?"

He said no word; and she was silent, her breathing quick and shallow. Slowly he shook his head, and they stood there while the night throbbed like a slowing heart. They stood there until it stilled, leaving a void of silence; and into that void she said, with a strange deliberation, "The houses. . looked alike. They..looked the same. Because they are. They're the same houses we passed before. This is the past, Ralph! The past. It's long ago! I have no business here!"

They stood there, far past the turn of the corner, the turn of the century. Again the side street was fifty feet away. She stepped back a pace, tight knuckles at her lips. "The past!" she screamed. "The past is dead! Why, I'll go back! I-- I've got to get back!"

His arms found her as she turned to run; held her there. "Listen!" he cried. "Listen to me! You can return. There is still time. First listen!"

She ceased to fight; stood rigid suddenly.

"You can return," he said. "You can go back to that same day and year. But remember this-- once there, you can not stand still. Once there, there will be one way for you to go-- the other way."

The other way. The payment of the debt. The mountain-weight of blood-guilt's usury.

"No-- it is not your way--" She said that slowly. "Oh, but Ralph, it's mine! If there's a debt, and if I must, I'll pay." Fierce strength ran through her body to her arms, and she broke free.

"It is my time, my place, my legacy," she cried. "Stay here and add to it!"

Then, as the quick contemptuous tears came, she turned and fled, over the bruising stones, back to the side street where the mist was waiting.

SCIENCE FICTION IN RUSSIA TODAY

BY

ROBERT MILCH

The leading form of popular light reading in the Soviet Union today is Priluchenchesko Fantasticheskaya Literatura, a tongue-twisting mouthful that Russian science-fiction fans shorten to a more easily pronounced PFL. Its widespread acceptance by Russian readers of all ages and backgrounds is rivaled only, perhaps, by the recent flood of James Bondian spy novels, minus most of the sex and luxury, and, like PFL, with a somewhat more serious attitude than their western models to political ideology and their mythical American or British villains.

PFL is dear to the ideologues of the Communist Party as a medium for propaganda on the utopian Marxist future and as a means of propounding such socially desirable doctrines as the value of collective effort and the faith in man's ability to control and harness nature. In addition, PFL gives ordinary Russian readers an entertaining respite from the anxieties and frustrations of humdrum everyday reality by introducing them to a fantasy world where all problems are solved or near solution, where science and technology, guided by humane and moral men, are creating that greatest of human dreams -- a perfect society where want, inequality, and war have disappeared and where everyone lives together in harmony and love.

Needless to say, this visionary picture is painted in classical Marxist colours and is seen as the result only of a radical transformation of the world order in which the reactionary powers of the decadent West are supplanted by the progressive, altruistic forces of Russian Communism. It is likely that this vision appeals so much to the average Russian because of his disappointment at the obvious failure of the Communists really to have reformed or democratized Russian society since the Revolution of 1917. The younger generation especially, many of whom are avid PFL readers, does not remember Czars and landlords and it finds vicarious fulfilment of its desire for consumer goods, modern conveniences, and some kind of purpose and individuality only in science-fiction. One might say with great accuracy that it is really a special kind of popular messianic literature.

And popular it is, too. The Central Register of Authors at the Lenin Library in Moscow lists more than two hundred writers of PFL books and stories, most of whom seem to be earning an adequate living. Publication is harder to achieve there than here, because in addition to satisfying all literary criteria a work also must satisfy the censors; but the audience for PFL is big enough to guarantee a minimum circulation of fifty thousand copies for any book that gets into print, and that's an appreciable number even in this country. Moreover, authors profit because royalties in the Soviet Union are paid on the number of books printed rather than the number sold. Thus, a writer who pleases the censor and the director of a publishing house can sometimes do well, even if the public is not exactly enchanted by his work.

As a form of political allegory set in the future, science fiction has existed in Russia for nearly a century. In 1919, for instance, Valerii Yakovlevich Bryusov, a war correspondent, poet, and scholar, published a well-received novella called The Republic of the Southern Cross. Bryusov's story takes place in Star City, the capital of a technocratic republic in Antarctica and describes, in veiled language, the breakdown of Russian society during and after the 1917 Revolution and warns against the worst weaknesses and failings of the new Bolshevik social order. Though Bryusov was a member of the Communist Party, his story was critical of many recent developments and offended some high-ranking officials; but its technique influenced many younger writers and helped establish the vogue of a new genre in Russian fiction, PFL.

Real science-fiction in the more conventional sense, that is to say, still with political undertones (which were now more acceptable to the Party) and concentrating more on science and technology, began to appear in Russia about thirty five or forty years ago. Like almost everything else written during the Stalin era, though, it fell into neat formulary categories of little literary merit -- boy and girl meet tractor (read rocket ship), fall in love, and exceed their production quotas to the great joy of the other members of their collective.

With the beginnings of interest in rocketry and the exploration of space in the decade after World War II, and particularly after the first sputniks went into orbit in the mid 1950's, Russia experienced heightened public concern with science. This was partly satisfied by an officially sanctioned upsurge of PFL, which dramatised its science in a palatable form while still serving its old propagandistic purpose.

Russia's best-selling PFL author today is, ironically, a Pole, Stanislaw Lem, all of whose books are available in Russian translation and many of which sell in the hundreds of thousands. His most popular novels include The Cosmonauts, published in 1957, Invasion from Aldebaran, published in 1959, and The Invincible, published in 1964.

Lem's great success is to be explained by many factors, not the least of which is his avoidance of any explicit discussion or mention of party propaganda or the official Communist line (a revealing commentary on the political attitudes of the typical Russian and Polish reader).

In addition, Lem's stories are not based on formulas or scientific gimmickry and do not include abstruse technical discussions that might confuse or bore the average reader. In all his books he concentrates on the human element and his stories contain real drama, characterisation, and insight. Lem builds his stories around problems that the ordinary man might wonder about -- the physical and emotional stresses of space flight or settlement on other worlds, the moral and psychological problems of contact and communication with alien forms of intelligent life, the tensions of responsibility for highly sophisticated kinds of machinery and scientific equipment, the nature and organisation of an advanced society on Earth.

Second most popular PFL writer in the Soviet Union is Ivan Yefremov, author of Razor's Edge, The Mist of Andromeda, and The Heart of the Serpent, a Communist "answer" to Murray Leinster's First Contact. Yefremov is another writer more interested in philosophical and psychological questions than in technology, and he has the gift of being able to explain complicated scientific matters in simple language. Yefremov differs from Lem, however, in that he sings the praises of Communism and the Communist vision of the future in all his books, a tendency which makes him a far more typical PFL writer and which endears him to the Writers' Union and the Communist Party.

However, some of the other writers of science fiction in the Soviet Union today are not full-time authors. In most cases their books depend more on simple formula-ridden plots and stereotyped characters than on real originality and ingenuity, but nearly all are well written and organised. Among the foremost of these writers are Anatol Dneiprov, a physicist, Alexei Belayev, Anatol Kazantsev, Victor Saparin, a newspaperman, Valentina Zhuravleva, a doctor, and the Strugatsky brothers, Arkady and Boris, one of whom is an astronomer and the other a linguistic scholar.

Though the works of Lem are probably the best, a more accurate idea of the typical PFL story can be gotten from a brief summary of Kazantsev's Burning Island, published in 1962. In this novel an "International Breathing Syndicate," run by a group of half-mad Nazi scientists led by a Professor Bernstein and financed by the First National City Bank of New York and a few other Wall Street bad men, plots to destroy the earth's atmosphere and kill everyone in the world except those who buy stock in the syndicate. Fortunately, at the eleventh hour a Soviet State Security Colonel named Volkov and a university professor named Bakov unearth the plot and save the world.

As this summary shows, the typical PFL epic, except for the books of Lem or Yefremov, has little to offer in the way of real insight into human affairs or world problems, but readers abound nonetheless, partly because there is little of better quality to read. Sustained popular interest in space exploration, rocketry, astronomy, and a better future guarantees that PFL will continue to thrive in the Soviet Union, but there is no guarantee, short of complete freedom of thought for all Russians, that its literary quality will improve.

Due to the censorship of PFL writers, Russian science fiction is markedly inferior to that published in the United States or Britain, though its best works possess more than occasional interest. At least a few sample stories by almost all the above mentioned authors are available in English thanks to Isaac Asimov, who has compiled two representative anthologies, Soviet Science Fiction and More Soviet Science Fiction, and Robert Magidoff, who has edited the collection, Russian Science Fiction.

If nothing else, PFL can provide western readers with a new insight into an almost hidden area of the Russian personality at a time when every added bit of understanding is essential. An American science fiction fan will probably find most of PFL dull, predictable, and, because of its distorted view of the world, a little frightening, but he would do well to remember Isaac Asimov's astute observation about the utopian future it looks forward to: "If only we could believe it is what they really want, and if only they could believe it is what we really want, then perhaps things would yet end well."

FABLE AND FANCY

BY JULIAN BROWN

TRANQUILITY

Once there was a bustling little village.

Just outside the village smouldered a volcano.

Although the volcano ordinarily made its presence known with a gentle rumble, sometimes it would emit growls and a shower of sparks, and occasionally a huge tongue of flame would shoot forth and light the entire countryside.

Late one evening a stranger entered the village. He saw an artist frenziedly at work in a meadow. "Why must you paint by moonlight," he asked, "when your vision would be enhanced by tomorrow's sun?"

"I have many pictures in mind," replied the painter, "and I fear the volcano may erupt before I paint them all."

The stranger walked on and saw a poet wearily writing by a dim candle. "Why do you not wait until morning when the daylight will facilitate your work?" asked the stranger.

"I have many poems yet unwritten," replied the poet, "and I fear the volcano may erupt before my work is done."

"I may be of help in stamping out these fears and anxieties of your people," the stranger said. "Can a meeting be called tomorrow, on yon cliff, of all the townsfolk?"

"Yes," answered the poet.

The entire populace turned out for the meeting, and the stranger told them he happened to have with him a magic pellet, compounded by his grandfather, for extinguishing volcanoes.

The painter and the poet and a few of the elders warned, "Pay no heed, this man is a fraud."

The majority, however, paid no heed to the elders. Each ran and got his life's savings and forced it into the stranger's hand. "Hurl the pellet into the volcano!" they cried.

He did. And lo, the elders had been wrong and the majority right!

Now a great calm settled over the people, for in a very few minutes the fiery roar had expired completely...

And in a very few years so had the village.

WHAT IS THIS THING CALLED SIZE?

The theory that our world is just a cell
Afloat inside of some colossal human
Is not entirely implausible to me.
The fellow, granted, would be rather large,
But by letting his imagination roam
One can picture such a creature,
The planets being atoms twirling in this giant's veins.
Too, while we are using our imagination,
It's feasible this vast fellow's just a fellow
In some cranny in another who's much vaster.
And though admittedly it takes some doing,
One can envisage the fellow he's inside of . . .

Of course, this is another way of stating
That every human is himself a world,
Thus peering through the telescope reversely,
We can easily perceive the corpuscles
Abuzz inside of us as peopled planets.
Undoubtedly these people would be wee--
Say a billionth of a billionth of an inch--
But if we call on really fancy fancy,
They're not beyond imagination's realm.
The only thing which rather gets one is:
The size of the people inside of the people in them.

--Julian Brown

THE SEASONAL FAN

A Riverside Quarterly Column

by JIM HARMON

THE OLD UNDERGROUND MOVIES

New "underground" movies, I understand, are those experimental films, desirous of Art, that are filmed on the streets of New York City. I am more familiar with the old "underground" films being produced still in Hollywood. Many of the space and monster films that aspire, at least, to be science fiction are such Hollywood "underground" products.

These pictures, which often would be flattered by being designated "B" productions, are filmed by earnest, eternally hopeful producers with almost no money, no equipment, no established actors, and all too often, no talent or taste. These underground leaders are not interested in the inventive new; they are in love with Hollywood's old. Their idea of social commentary is restricted to trying to reproduce frame by frame a Warner Brothers gangster film of the 'Thirties on one-hundreth of the budget, and without Humphrey Bogart or Edward G. Robinson. Their ideal Western is not Shane or High Noon, but literally any Buck Jones picture of the 'Thirties. "Landmark" stars such as William S. Hart (who cinematically represents "realism" by a fantastic stylisation that appeared subdued only in contrast to his contemporaries) and Tom Mix ("showmanship," in critical shorthand) seem too "serious" for them--Buck Jones they can cope with and imitate. Johnny Carpenter, "star" of his own productions, has made many such old underground Westerns. Some of these have been shown in theatres because Carpenter, unlike many of his contemporaries, also tries to imitate certain aspects of modern "adult" Westerns, not merely the choreography of the old "program" cowboy pictures of the 'Thirties and 'Forties.

It is the "science fiction" picture that attracts the old underground more than any other, largely because film distributors have such a low opinion of SF movie-goers that they will accept so-called SF pictures with silly stories, sloppy production, and bad acting that would be aghastly rejected in any gangster, Western, or sex quickie. Possibly only the Nudie films have a lower budget and cheaper production values than the monster films that make the theatres and eventually (or immediately) television.

While most SF readers have a generally low opinion of all current SF movies, please note that I am not referring to big budget films of someone like Irwin Allen ("Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea" movie and TV series), which achieve at least a mean level of professionalism, or the films of a conscientious professional "B" picture producer like Alex Gordon ("Atomic Submarine"). I certainly am not talking about the slick Vincent Price-Edgar Allan Poe pictures from American-International. I am referring to films like Eegah!, Attack of the Giant Leech Women, and Billy the Kid vs. Dracula (all real titles, all real pictures).

And while I am talking, do I know what I'm talking about? I admit my screen credits are not as impressive as those of Ben Hecht or Harlan Ellison, but that is precisely why I feel qualified to write of these fringes of film-making. Some years ago, when Charles Beaumont began a short-lived column for Fantasy & Science Fiction called "The Science Screen," he maintained that you didn't have to be a hen to know a good egg from a bad one, but it helped to have once made an omlet. At that time he had worked on one horror film, but had seen nothing of his reach the screen. On and off, for five years since I first moved to Los Angeles, I have been dragged into the camp of the borderline, what I call "old underground," film-makers.

Shortly after my arrival, my then agent got me a job with Jack H. Harris, producer of The Blob, Dinosaurus, and various other legitimate "B" pictures. This was not precisely the "old underground." I reported for work at Producer's Studio (across from Paramount), worked with Mr. Harris on several scripts, and received payment for my services. Through what I like to think was no fault of my own, none of these scripts was ever produced. (In fact, I'm not sure that Jack Harris has produced any further pictures, after several rather successful ones.) The best script I came up with, suitably copyrighted I presume, was a kind of low-budget spectacular in which a strange, unseen monster was prowling through Victorian London and crossed the paths of Sherlock Holmes, plus Jack the Ripper, plus Dr. Jekyll, plus Dr. Frankenstein III, plus Buffalo Bill and his Wild West Show, then on tour in England.

After producing two other scripts, almost as good as the one above, I turned down doing a fourth for the going rate of payment, not exceedingly high.

For some years thereafter, I turned down offers of several producers to do scripts for them on "spec." That is, I was to speculate on ever getting paid, on whether or not the picture was ever made and sold.

However, I nosed about enough to see how such films were made, or not made, and to offer a few free suggestions.

A few years ago, Ron Haydock, with whom I worked on a short-lived competitor to Ackerman's Famous Monsters Magazine, called Fantastic Monsters (Ackerman never appreciated the flattery of imitation), introduced me to a young man named Ray Denis Steckler. Steckler looks remarkably like Huntz Hall, the big nosed boob of the old Dead End Kids and Bowery Boys films, a resemblance he glories in. Steckler is also a director and co-producer (usually with George Morgan) of very low budget movies.

The Morgan-Steckler organisation produced a horror film called The Incredibly Strange Creatures for almost no money, with everybody contributing his art or craft for a share of the picture, and eventually managed to sell it to television, ironically for the "Million Dollar Movie." Haydock became involved with several of their later efforts as both a writer and actor, in Thrill Killers, a criminal picture, and in Rat Pfink, a satire on Batman and Robin made before the current satirical Batman TV series.

While all this was going on, I did some work for Morgan-Steckler. I wrote parts of several Western movies, which never actually got before the cameras. One of these films was to feature a masked Robin Hood, somewhat similar to the Lone Ranger. The character was to be called, I understood, the Black Raven. However, when I last heard of the project this had been changed on careful consideration to the Black Buzzard. There was some talk at one time that I might dub in my "famous" Lone Ranger imitation for the masked man, but then it was finally decided that the Black Buzzard would keep the rather high-pitched voice of the screen actor, Ray Steckler himself--screen name: Cash Flagg.

Finally, late in 1965, I dropped in at the offices of Morgan-Steckler and, thanks to Haydock, was offered an opportunity to co-author the script and appear in a picture called "The Lemon Grove Kids." With their fingers on the public pulse, the Morgan-Steckler organisation decided that the time was ripe for a new picture somewhat like the old Bowery Boys films. Steckler would play the big-nosed boob with the gang; and to me fell the juicy part of the fat kid with the gang. When not working on the script, I donned sweatshirt and beanie and with all the skill at my command I impersonated a fat dumb oaf.

Naturally, as an SF fan from way back, I had rather hoped that my first film as either an actor or writer would be science fiction. And I need not have worried. With the introduction of the indominable Rat Pfink and the rampaging giant ape, Kogar, the film turned into fantasy.

The picture is now "released," I understand, and while it may not be playing your friendly neighborhood theatre, it is being shown in the so-called "State's Rights" market, which means, not for the apparent reason, the South.

The film makers of the "old underground" have learned something from Tennessee Williams and Erskine Caldwell. If a book is too unbelievable, move it further South; if a movie is too unbelievable, book it further South.

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just for kicks

BY JANET FOX

When the phone rang, Jodie pushed the "one-moment-please" button and flew to the dressing table to rake a comb through her dandelion-cut red hair and put on a touch of copper lipstick. The vid-phone was a nuisance, but she was glad to see Ty's sun-tanned face appear on the flickering screen.

"Ty, it's been ages," she said.

"Sorry, kid, but it took me a while to get over my last one."

"Four whole days?"

"Yeah, say, are you glad to see me or not?"

"Sure I am, Ty. It's just that I've been sitting around the house being bored to death and -- "

"And that's the worst way to go," kidded Ty. "I called to ask you out tonight. The gang's going off the top of Salvation Mountain and I wanted you to go with me, okay?"

"Okay. The usual time."

"Yeah." The screen blanked out, and Jodie switched on the interphone to the rec-room. When the pale, deep-eyed face of the latest gigolo appeared, she snapped impatiently, "I want to talk to my mother."

"Yes, dear." Jodie's mother smoothed down her disheveled mustard-coloured hair.

"I just wanted to tell you, I'm going out -- "

"Again?"

"I've got to have some fun, don't I? You always manage to have yours."

"I suppose so. Well, I'll see you and have fun."

"Thanks." She snapped off the interphone, then busied herself getting dressed for the evening. She finally decided upon a skin-tight golden jump suit. "Four days of doing nothing," she told herself. "Now maybe I can get rid of these wicked moods and have a good time for once."

The chime sounded; Ty was at the drive-up window. It was one easy step out of the window and into the car. Jodie snuggled up next to Ty's shoulder, and the car's motor opened a raw wound in the silence of the night.

As the steel-blue bullet-shaped car sped along the streets, it was joined by others, all filled with young couples. "Boy, look at 'em. This is going to be fun," said Ty.

They reached Salvation Mountain after about ten minutes of hard driving, and Ty put the savage little car onto the narrow winding gravel road that led to the summit. A black and silver car pulled up close behind them, then attempted to go around, its powerful motor screaming.

"Look out!" squealed Jodie.

Ty feinted to the left. Metal clashed on metal, but the other driver only waved and grinned.

"He's going around," wailed Jodie.

"No he's not." The blue car swung crazily, crowding the other. With a shrieking of tires the black car left the road and shot over the side of the gorge. It bounced downward lightly as a toy, bursting into a tiny match-spark of fire as it struck, far below.

"Boy," said Jodie, "that was close."

"Nobody's going to beat me to the top," said Ty stubbornly. The car sped faster, throwing behind it white spirals of gravel dust. The engine complained shrilly about the steepness of the climb, but Ty's foot punished the accelerator. "Glad you came?" he asked into her ear.

Jodie nodded and watched the dark forest fly by the windows. At the summit there was a wide space overlooking a sheer cliff. A white rail fence marked the edge; Jodie screamed as it ballooned toward her, luminous in the dusk. "Here we go!" shouted Ty as the car crashed through and hung suspended for a brief second above the chasm. There was nothing like the thrill of falling. Jodie's scalp prickled, and she threw her arms around Ty in a convulsion of fear and pleasure. Locked together, they fell through space, then with the momentum of their long fall they were pounded into the mountainside, crumpled as in a gigantic invisible fist. Jodie saw the steel dashboard leaping for her face.

She opened her eyes, seeing as a first sight a crystal pitcher full of water and a vase of white roses. A young intern was scanning a chart at the foot of the bed. "Hi," she said, pulling herself to a sitting position.

"Hello. You didn't waste any time coming out of it."

"It's my ninth," said Jodie proudly.

"A veteran and at your age, too. Let me call Dr. May."

Jodie pulled back the sheet and examined her body. She didn't really expect any scars, still...

"Here's my favourite patient."

"Hello, Dr. May. Good to see you again."

"She came around sooner than we expected," explained the intern.

"Why not?" grinned Dr. May. "She's a healthy young specimen."

"I saw you when they brought you in," said the intern.

"He's new," chuckled Dr. May. "Just because you had a fractured spine, crushed skull, severed femur--"

"Heck, that wasn't as bad as last time," said Jodie. "That was really a mess."

"There's no mess that we doctors can't take care of," smiled Dr. May serenely.

"Where's Ty and the rest of the gang?"

"Still under. They don't have your resiliency, young lady."

When they had gone out, Jodie rose and dressed, too restless to stay in bed a moment longer. She looked into the mirror to put on some make-up. Her face was the same one. Funny how dying didn't change you at all, even when you set yourself afire and ran through the wind like a flaming torch or went high in a building to jump and flatten yourself on the concrete far below. "There's no thrill like the thrill of dying," she told herself, but she still felt restless and she wished Ty and the rest would wake up.

When the rest had come around, Jodie joined them for a resurrection party in the hospital lounge. "To all my young friends and patients," said Dr. May, draining his glass. Jodie's mind mischievously substituted the words, "guinea pigs and experiments." Long ago she had seen the cold clinical mind behind that jolly exterior. What greater challenge for a medical man than reviving the dead? "It must really give him a kick to do the Lazurus bit," thought Jodie.

After leaving the hospital, the gang split up into couples and drifted off in separate directions. "Well Baby, what do you want to do now?"

"I don't know. Ty, let's do it again."

"Die? But we just got through. Frankly, I was thinking of spending some time alone with you in your rec-room and --"

Jodie gripped his arm fiercely, digging in with her nails. "No, let's die. I want to die. Please?"

"Well, okay kid, you sure do like your kicks."

"Sure, come on."

Jodie dragged him toward the main walkway. "We'll go to the river," she said. "We've never drowned before. It'll be fun." Jodie's hair blew back as the walkway belt carried them across town toward the steel bridge that arched across the skyline like a metal spider web. At last they left the walkway and stood on one of the suicide decks that overlooked the deep black water. They all said that drowning was a special kind of death. "Oh, I hope so," prayed Jodie.

"Ready?" asked Ty, putting an arm around her waist. "This is going to be fun!" Together they fell through space, but the shock of hitting the water tore Jodie from Ty's grasp. The river was icy cold; Jodie could feel it bubbling into her nostrils and open mouth. "No use," she said to herself quite calmly. "I'm still bored." Consciousness began to slip away and she felt her limbs go lax. "What will I do tomorrow?" she wondered. "What will I ever do?"

york engravings: coloured by hand

SANFORD STERNLICHT

A NUN AT WALMGATE BAR, YORK

Leaning, like a rodeo hand, against the cattle stalls,
I rested and waited, camera cocked, for a showdown,
really wanting to be stampeded by the dead.
Then out of the barbican floated a blackbird without feet.
A shadow and a dreaming dream.
Cars and bikes stomped to halt,
the traffic light, a frustrated drill cadre,
shrieked rainbows to the unheeding.
The shadow passed beyond the yellow walls,
the sun eased beneath chevrons of blue clouds.
Then I heard armies trumpeting at the moat,
and, with a stone lariat, I roped all the seas.

AT CLIFFORD'S TOWER (Site of the massacre of York's Jewish population in 1190 A.D.)

It is the law of history:
In time men praise the persecutors.
The brochures and the handbooks speak
of "Jewish Riots" not persecutions nor pogroms,
when the just in anguish slew their Isaacs
and slowly groaned to smoke.
So now they sully the good name
of ancient tourist York.

Come, honest men, where is their monument,
to let the spade of truth root evil
squirming under the stone hearts of men,
so we may burn it with new light?
Or shall Buchenwald become
"that old-age home for wayward Jews"?

AT THE MERCHANT ADVENTURERS' HALL, YORK

Old bones, wherever resting --
in my youth
those with whom you traded wool for goods
rose to gut the Western World
and later rolled screaming in their own offal;
but you could not know that.
Somehow, in this York of yours
time is not tragedy;
perhaps because you did not have to skim
the thinnest cream of hope,
and then we live with rotting flesh
whereas the ribs of your black days are clean.
This tome of wood and stone
sings to me of timbered ship
beached but for the moment by the Foss.

I'm sorry that
the Word lies bleeding in my day
and we share no minor truths.
Still fleets salute the royal wind and wave,
and God ends all in Angel song.

AT YORKMINSTER CATHEDRAL

After midnight
watching with stone soldiers of the Boer War
now guarding some broken benches
in a postage stamp park
vainly I tried to conjure
old Yorkists from the mitred, aproned past.
Out of tomorrow's dawn stole
a boy and girl
beneath gargoyles with broken mouths
by arch-eyebrowed windows far above
into the tomb-scented shadows of the great South Door
where they entwined to a column.
Then she leaned back--
slow buttress to his body...

A man of York
Old or New
finds no perspective hill
to see the pile of centuries.
Perhaps this Cardinal of churches
needs commitment to the ground
heaping over with the Conquerer's earth,
saving in an anonymous mound
as Stonehenge for tomorrow's Bethlehem.

THE SHAMBLES, YORK

Once Street of Butchers--
the reeking flesh of fowl and sheep and ox
hung for flies and men and more flies
swinging as if in memory of their headless agonies
and the blood ran down to the Foss.

Yet, for the honest butcher I have no cutting remark.

Now cleansed by the rains and sands of time,
a jewelled and restauranted street
for Tourist York and British Rail.
One almost forgets until a wall recalls
another butchery:

Blessed Margaret Clitheroe
25th March 1586

Oh God of Butchers
let hands really reach across the houses
and the river of blood;
and save us only from those
who wish to save <u>us</u>.

THE GUILDHALL, YORK (destroyed by air-raid, 1942, rebuilt, rededicated, 1960)

The dog-faced furies
wearing the black cross of broken arms
believed mere bombs alone
could break through stones
into the fabric of tradition,
belied, gave you the gift of phoenix
and were themselves but the cough
of a passing plague.

ON THE TOW PATH, YORK

Walking beside the Ouse
over the dead, echo-less tracks of rivermen,
watching boats pride by--
I came to a landscape of beasts
feeding softly by the waterside.
Our heads pointed and trained
and then slowly fell to order arms--
the password passed,
it was "peace" to living things.
I warmed my too-smooth hands
on the fire of black-faced cattle,
their great coal eyes only reflecting
my love for the portion of life,
for the single breath we shared.
Like other flies I floated
on the sweetness of sweat and feces.
Beyond us, the Cross of St. George
limped over the Archbishop's hovel.

HEINLEIN IN DIMENSION

Part IV: Execution

by Alexei Panshin

1. Stories on Paper

To an extent, any division between the construction and the execution of a story is artificial, just as it is artificial to discuss the context, characters and problems of a story outside their relation to one another. No story exists until it is actually told, and by then construction and execution are so interwoven that a clear separation of them is no longer possible. Still, realizing that the distinction is an artificial one, I'm going to go ahead and make it, mainly because it is convenient. For one thing, it seems to me that the most pertinent criticisms of Heinlein's stories can be made of the things he has done with his basic materials rather than of the materials themselves. When Heinlein has taken time out in his most recent stories for an irrelevant conversation on sexual morality, for instance, the flaw is not in the framework of his story but in the tale built upon the framework.

In this chapter, I'm first going to discuss the words in which Heinlein tells his stories, in other words, his style in narrative and dialogue. I suppose that this could be regarded as a part of his basic materials, but there seems to be this difference, that the author's style is not necessary to a particular story in the same manner that a particular person, problem and setting as seen from a particular point of view are; style is a personal embellishment.

For an analogy, though the Gothic style of architecture may be basic to an architect, it isn't necessary to his building in the same way that bricks and wood and glass are. Style is always a matter of execution.

Next I'm going to take up Heinlein's handling of sexual relations in his stories. This has its intrinsic interest, of course, but it seems particularly worth discussing both because Heinlein suddenly started writing about sex after nearly ignoring it for years and because his originality lapses badly whenever he puts a man and a woman in the same bed, or the same bedroom.

Heinlein's plotting has probably been the most sharply criticized area of his writing through the years. For instance, Damon Knight said in In Search of Wonder that weak plots was one of the two adverse criticisms of Heinlein that he could make (the other was Heinlein's use of slang). Heinlein's plotting is the third major theme of the chapter.

Finally, I mean to abandon the distinction between construction and execution completely and examine three of Heinlein's stories in the light of the points discussed in these two chapters. This time, however, instead of being criticized as examples of fiction in general, as before, the stories will be examined for what they show of Heinlein as an individual writer.

2. Style

Every writer has his own individual way of putting things, his own style. Given a computer and half-a-dozen factors--average length of word, number of words per paragraph, length of sentences, proportion of various parts of speech to the whole, and so on, and identifying any writer should be a simple matter of comparison. The personal stamp of a man is on the things he says and the way that he says them.

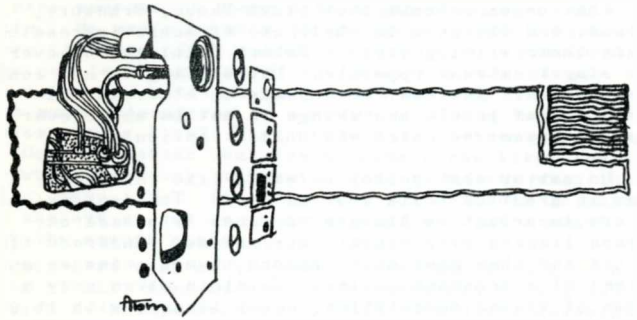
Most writers would just as soon have things this way. They write because they want to be heard as individuals. However, some don't sound individual at all to the ordinary reader, which is their personal misfortune. A man who sounds individually himself is going to appeal to more readers than a man who sounds like a thousand other people. I'm not talking, of course, of the man who sounds like himself not because he sees and expresses himself more clearly than other people, but because he is so lacking in powers of observation and expression that nobody could be quite as bad as he is in his own special way. I'm speaking of writers of ability.

Listen to these two passages, both from heavily sensual writers. First Jack Vance:

> Through the dim forests came Liane the Wayfarer, passing along the shadowed glades with a prancing lightfooted gait. He whistled, he caroled, he was plainly in high spirits. Around his finger he twirled a bit of wrought bronze--a circlet graved with angular crabbed characters, now stained black.

Then Ray Bradbury:

> It had been raining for seven years; thousands upon thousands of days compounded and filled from one end to the other with rain, with the drum and gush of water, with the sweet crystal fall of showers and the concussion of storms so heavy they were tidal waves come over the islands. A thousand forests had been crushed under the rain and grown up a thousand times to be crushed again. And this was the way life was forever on the planet Venus, and this was the schoolroom of the children of the rocket men and women who had come to a raining world to set up civilization and live out their lives.



For all the sensuality they have in common, these are distinctly different writers. I don't see how a page from one could possibly be mistaken for a page from the other.

A goodly portion of what makes style is bound up in the devices a writer chooses to make his work vivid. For instance, Poul Anderson says of a policy that he follows: "A useful device--I think it was first enunciated by Flaubert--is to invoke at least three senses in every scene, remembering that we have much more than five senses." In the opening scene of Anderson's Hugo-winning novelette, "No Truce with Kings," there are the following bits of sensual data: shouts, stamping boots, the thump of fists on tables, clashing cups, shadows, stirring banners, winking light, wind and rain outside, a loosened collar, singing, a chill feeling, a dark passageway, and clattering footsteps--all of these and others in a matter of six hundred words or so.

They tie you to what is happening. This is not a bad policy, but neither is it an easy one to follow, mainly because no matter what a writer may determine to set down, what he actually puts on paper is not completely controlled by his consciousness. This policy is also, as Anderson says, not the only solution to the problem of making writing real and vivid.

Theodore Sturgeon has a good sense of the nuances of speech and of shades of meaning. He draws delicate portraits. This, I think, is the key to his work: he draws word portraits. His writing, even to his similes and metaphors, is visually oriented. He has the artist's eye and it marks his work as something different than Vance's, or Bradbury's, or Anderson's:

> The idiot lived in a black and gray world, punctuated by the white lightning of hunger and the flickering of fear. His clothes were old and many-windowed. Here peeped a shinbone, sharp as a cold chisel, and there in the torn coat were ribs like the fingers of a fist. He was tall and flat His eyes were calm and his face was dead.

The common element that links Vance, Bradbury, Anderson, and Sturgeon is their use of sense impressions to make their writing vivid. Robert Heinlein, however, is an almost extreme opposite. His writing is not sensual in any degree. Instead, he depends on other things--description of people and things in action and clever turns of phrase--to catch and hold attention.

No matter what policy he would like to follow, a writer in practice tells what he sees. The impressions that are important to him are the ones he passes on. Sturgeon lingers over visual impressions. Anderson ticks them off and then goes on to record thumps, clashes and the feel of a loosened collar. Heinlein gives only a minimum of visual description, never lingers with it at all, and gives even less of other sensual impressions.

In speaking of Heinlein's characterisation, I mentioned that he hardly bothers with the looks of his characters. Here are the three secretaries of Jubal Harshaw in Stranger in a Strange Land: "Anne was blonde, Miriam red-headed, and Dorcas dark; they ranged respectively, from pleasantly plump to deliciously slender. Their ages spread over fifteen years but it was hard to tell which was the eldest." (It also seems difficult to keep them separate, since this is all the description you ever get of these moderately important characters.)

Heinlein's backgrounds, although they are well-developed, are also featureless. Glory Road, an open-air adventure much like the Vance story quoted above, is sans color, sans sights, sans sounds. Rooms, landscapes, cities--microcosm to macrocosm--all in Heinlein are given only in outline, never in detail.

Even so, Heinlein's writing is vivid. His solutions are simply different. Since his continuing interest is in process--how things both physical and social work - Heinlein doesn't tell what things look like, he tells what they do. For an example, in Beyond This Horizon, Heinlein has one of his characters introduce a Colt .45 automatic. Physically, it is "novel," "odd," "uncouth," and has a stud on its side which when pressed lets a long, flat container slide out. That's it. That's all you get. If you had never seen a .45 automatic, you would be no better off for Heinlein's description of it. You might mistake it for a gum machine (novel, odd, uncouth; has a stud on its side which when pressed lets a long, flat container--your gum--slide out). On the other hand, in dialogue Heinlein lets us know more about it and he demonstrates how it works very nicely. You still don't know what the damned thing looks like, but you know very well what it does.

"'Value'" --says Colonel Dubois of Starship Troopers--"has two factors for a human being: first, what he can do with a thing, its use to him... and second, what he must do to get it, its cost to him." This is very much Heinlein's attitude in writing. He wants to work out how his characters can use a thing and what it will cost them. He doesn't really care whether it looks like a gum machine or a .45 automatic. He wants to know if you have to put a nickel into it before the long, flat container slides out, and whether what you get is a magazine of bullets or a pack of gum. This is not a bad attitude to have in writing science fiction where so much encountered is strange. Does it matter what the monster looks like? The question is whether or not he bites. Does it matter what the machine looks like? The question is whether or not it works. Does it matter what the character looks like? The question--for Heinlein in particular--is whether or not he is capable of doing the right thing at the proper moment.

Of course, it does matter what these things look like. Not described at all, they become tricks produced from a hat. Some description is always necessary. Beyond minimum description, however, definition by demonstration can be effective. Properly speaking, it isn't an abandonment of detail, but the choice of a different sort of detail to report.

Heinlein relies heavily on clever phrasing to carry his stories. He has an ear for brisk, bright metaphor. In his early writing, this brightness appeared more in narrative than in dialogue. Here is a description of a situation from Beyond This Horizon: "The poor degenerate starveling descendants of the once-mighty Builders of Mars can hardly be described as intelligent--except in charity. A half-witted dog could cheat them at cards."

Heinlein does not have a particularly acute ear for individualities of speech--his characters have always sounded very much alike. In his early stories at most one character was blessed with the ability to speak in brisk, bright, clever metaphor. The rest spoke a simple, utilitarian English. The one character (usually a Heinlein individual of the competent or wise old man stage) was thus enabled to stand out a bit from the crowd.

"Well, it could be that she simply became shocked at overhearing a rather worldly and cynical discussion between the Holy One and, oh, say the High Bursar--taxes and tithes and the best way to squeeze them out of the peasants. It might be something like that, although the scribe for such a conference would hardly be a grass-green Virgin on her first service."

(If This Goes On...)

"'You broke? Shucks, I've been there myself. Relax.' The man waggled his fingers at the waitress. 'Come here, honey chile. My partner and I will each have a breakfast steak with a fried egg sitting on top and this and that on the side. I want that egg to be just barely dead. If it is cooked solid, I'll nail it to the wall as a warning to others.'"

(Starman Jones)

"Uh, Star, I've got a still better idea. Why don't we high-tail it back the way we came and homestead that spot where we caught the fish? In five years we'll have a nice little farm. In ten years, after the word gets around, we'll have a nice little motel, too, with a free-form swimming pool and a putting green."

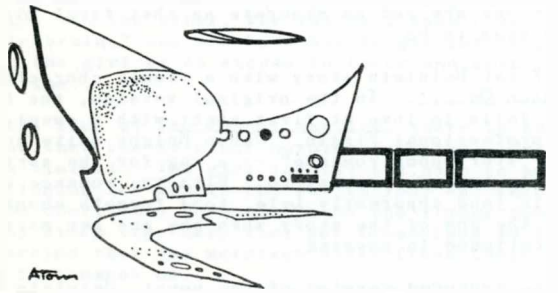
(Glory Road)

There is enough of a cumulative effect in both narrative and dialogue that Heinlein's writing soon becomes easily recognizable. Unfortunately, however, in Heinlein's third period stories there has been a three-fold change. There are now more characters using brisk, bright metaphor in dialogue, those characters speak pithily more often, and the total amount of dialogue in Heinlein's stories has increased. This is not good, first because stories need action to carry them along, not static campfire pow-wows, and second because the more one hears of people who all talk in the same unusual way, the less individual they become. Brisk, bright cleverness in narrative is acceptable since it can be accepted as the author's personal style. As dialogue, it seems mannered and artificial. This may be a contributing factor in the falling off in quality of Heinlein's most recent stories.

3. Relations

There was a story some years ago by Walter M. Miller and Lincoln Boone about a particularly unpleasant comedian named Martin Snyder. Snyder had a trademark--at the punch-line of one of his jokes he would remove a monocle he wore, breathe on it, and then polish it while the audience laughed. One night, just to demonstrate the control he had over his audience, and to justify his contempt for it, he removed the monocle without saying anything, breathed on it, and polished it. He still got his laugh. The comedian was given as thinking of this as a case of conditioned response, but I don't think it was. It strikes me as a case of basic communication.

Communication is a process of symbolization: a person codes a message in such a way that his meaning can be understood by someone else. I speak in a code called English, for instance, and write English in a Latin alphabet. A request for a hamburger in Swahili in the average American restaurant would do me little good, and a message in Braille--although it is written in English--would hardly be enough to persuade the milkman to leave me an extra bottle of milk. Communication is an art. Some people are more adept than others at coding and uncoding messages. However, the basis of communication is always in terms of symbols held in common.



In the case of the comedian, Snyder, that removal of the monocle was a common symbol signalling something funny. When the monocle was removed with no joke, this was unexpected and funny--the monocle changed from a signal to something funny in itself. If the laughter had been a conditioned response, the people would have laughed as often as Snyder yanked the monocle out of his eye, whereas I rather think that if he had done it twice without a joke he would have lost his audience.

Our culture is filled with symbols that are held in common as part of our tradition, some of which are hidden so deeply that they are not even widely understood, but merely felt, as for instance the ritual cannibalism in our Christian churches. Some symbols are dead, though still observed generally, like walking on the gutter side of a lady or the ritual of hat-tipping. Some are still alive and full of meaning.

These symbols, both alive and dead, appear in fiction. Any good writer always deals in terms of symbols. The search for the right word is no more than the search for a proper and effective symbol. The difference between a good writer and a bad one can be described, I think, in the respective percentages of live and dead symbols they use. We can no longer accept "close-set criminal eyes" as a live symbol of a man's character, for instance, and a writer who sticks close-set criminal eyes into a story is likely to be a bad writer. A good writer finds fresh ways of handling symbols, rather than presenting us with old symbols like so many gall stones preserved for posterity.

In general, through his career, Robert Heinlein has used and presented ideas freshly, but there is one whole area of his fiction in which he has never used anything but long-dead symbols. I'm speaking of his treatment of sex. In more than seventy stories Heinlein has presented uncoy, uncliched inter-sexual relations no more than twice, the two cases being thoroughly married couples in The Unpleasant Profession of Jonathan Hoag and "It's Great to be Back." I suspect that Heinlein isn't comfortable with the subject.

At first glance, it would seem that Heinlein almost ignored sex completely for years, mentioning it only when he had to and then obliquely, and then in his third period became obsessed by it, making a complete about-face. There is some truth in this, but in actual fact the old Heinlein and the new one are not as separate as that first glance makes them seem to be.

The first Heinlein story with a female character was 'If This Goes On...'. In the original version, the hero, John Lyle, falls in love at first sight with a sweet, young, innocent, professional Virgin. Damon Knight quite accurately calls it a "story-book romance" -- a tag for the sort of dead symbolism I'm trying to point to. With the romance established, Heinlein (and apparently Lyle, too) forgets about the girl until the end of the story when she and her marriage to Lyle are mentioned in passing.

In the expanded version of the novel, Heinlein tried to make Lyle's relationships more likely. He replaced the story-book romance with another involving Lyle and a different handmaiden of the Prophet. The odd thing is that the new romance is right out of a story-book, too.

In both versions, Lyle is naive, but his naivete is more obvious in the expanded story, partly because the added length gives him more of an opportunity to display himself. Everybody else knows there are all sorts of backstairs assignations going on in the Palace. Lyle doesn't. Zeb Jones, Lyle and two girls go on a nude swimming party. Lyle objects when he finds out what he is involved in. Zeb takes one of the two girls off to a private beach and until he is restrained, Lyle wants to go join them...

The heroine of the new version is as much a stock character as the heroine of the original. This new one is the Good Bad Girl. She is one of the Prophet's sexual castoffs, Zeb's ex-mistress, and has slept around. In a scene rewritten and used again as recently as Glory Road, she offers her fair body to the hero on a sleep-in basis and then becomes flustered when the hero insists on marriage first. In this case, the last you see of Lyle and his love together is in a story-book pose: "We had a twenty-minute honeymoon, holding hands on the fire escape outside my office..." This is typical of Heinlein's representations of inter-sexual relations. His heroes are pure and never have sex without marriage even when women offer themselves openly--and Heinlein adds purity insurance by making all his young heroes sexually naive.

Also typical of Heinlein is the banter he assigns the central characters in "Let There Be Light," the second of his stories to include a central female character. The hero and his girl are represented as being scientists at the very top of their respective fields. However, they spend their time calling each other "kid," "mama," "ape," "lug," "sister," "wench," "chum," and "son." When the hero actually gets up the nerve to kiss the girl, she pushes him away, saying, "Archie, you remind me of the A. G. Barnes Circus: 'Every Act an Animal Act.'" The banter and shying around covers acute discomfort, and the discomfort belongs to Heinlein as much as to his characters.

There are two romances in Beyond This Horizon. One is a case of mutual love at first sight (harking back to If This Goes On...). In the other, the two call each other "Filthy" and "Flutterbrain," and the hero has to get into a physical fight with the girl as an excuse to touch and kiss her for the first time.

By the time of The Puppet Masters, there is some advance: neither the hero nor heroine is naive. But the advance is limited. The girl invites the hero to her apartment, mentioning her bed in the invitation, and then locks her bedroom door. The hero sleeps on the living-room couch. Before they sleep together, they get themselves so firmly, tightly married that the marriage clerk finds their contract something to comment on.

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In Heinlein's juvenile novels, there are a number of examples of sympathetically drawn marriages, but always between adults, always long-established, always seen at a distance. The marriages are given as facts, not as processes being established.

The central characters of the juvenile novels are always protected from the facts of life by their naivete. The hero of Tunnel in the Sky, for instance, is pure and ignorant. The people around him are all getting married and having children but not the hero. He quite literally can't even recognize a girl as a girl even when he meets one. His best friend comes out of an extended period of delirium, and Rod, the hero (why Rod? -- it doesn't seem appropriate somehow), introduces him to another person approximately as follows:

"Meet my friend Jack with whom I've been in close contact for, lo, these many moons. He's a good boy."

Delirious friend, raising head from pillow: "You nut--Jack is a girl."

Rod (wonderingly) "Gosh. Are you certain?"

This business is Heinlein's own choice. It is not imposed by story requirements or even by the fact that the book is a juvenile. Heinlein simply raises sex as a subject and then has his hero blind to it and uninvolved.

Citizen of the Galaxy offers even more reason for wonder. The hero is an ex-slave, ex-beggar, raised in a gutter environment, exactly the sort of person one would think would be sexually knowledgeable if not sexually experienced. However, on two separate occasions in the story he is pursued by attractive girls so openly that everybody else realizes what is going on, and in neither case can he see beyond the end of his nose.

The Door into Summer dates from the end of Heinlein's middle period, after he had been writing for more than fifteen years; it is not a juvenile. The romantic situation in this story is a very interesting, very odd one: it is nothing less than a mutual sexual interest between an engineer of thirty and a girl of twelve ("adorable" is Heinlein's word for her), that culminates in marriage after some hop-scotching around in time to adjust their ages a bit. It puts me in mind of the popular singer, Jerry Lee Lewis, who married an eleven-year-old girl, saying, according to Time, "She may be young, but she's all woman."

It seems to me that the sum of the examples I have given so far, typical of Heinlein before his third period, is that all are naive, clichéd, sentimental, uncritical, implausible, and life-not-as-experienced. I would say they were the result of an internalization of romantic ideals that we mouth but don't really observe.

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The supreme popular example of the romantic idealist in our culture is the Boy Scout. When I was a Boy Scout, we spent a good deal of time on camping trips and each night of each camping trip we would lie awake in our tents and tell filthy stories. In the last ten years I haven't heard one-tenth, or even one-fiftieth, of the filthy stories that I heard and told in two years of Scout activity. Those stories are a normal reaction. They are a way of saying that you're really grown-up, that you're a man, an analogue of the secret cigarette. They are a way of saying that although you are a Boy Scout you really know what is going on. And they are daring.

These stories I'm talking about all seemed to rely on wild props: watermelons, Chinese bells, sledgehammers, flashlights, and motorcycles. It was one of their two common elements, the other being impossible exaggeration, otherwise known as plain unlikelihood.

In 1959, in "...All You Zombies," Heinlein wrote a story about sex. It amounts to a boy seducing himself and getting himself pregnant, with a time machine for a wild prop. And not only did Heinlein get the story printed, but the story has been reprinted, too. It's a dirty joke--fun, daring, and it shows the whole world that Heinlein really knows what is going on. Since then, Stranger in a Strange Land, Glory Road, and Farnham's Freehold have been offered as additional proof to an unbelieving world that Heinlein really does know what is going on. But a Boy Scout is no less the romantic idealist for his dirty jokes, and neither is Heinlein.

Stranger in a Strange Land is a particularly difficult book to discuss because it is so long, so complicated, and about so many different things. Sex is not treated as a single subject, but as an adjunct to Heinlein's religion. So far as the way the story construction goes, the sexual relations are beyond criticism, self-justified. Within the story, anyone incapable of accepting the religion along with its sexual concomitants is not a real person; anybody capable of accepting the religion (or, more properly, being accepted by the religion) is automatically beyond damage. This sort of built-in self-protection for the author is no more than a way of writing around a subject without ever coming to grips with it.

I have added reason for this opinion. In none of the three novels named above does Heinlein describe sexual relations directly. For all the processes that Heinlein concerns himself with, sex is never handled as a process in being. The closest Heinlein ever allows himself to come is dialogue of the "Yes, now" school, without description. It seems a case of deliberately blinding oneself to avoid seeing what is being set on paper.

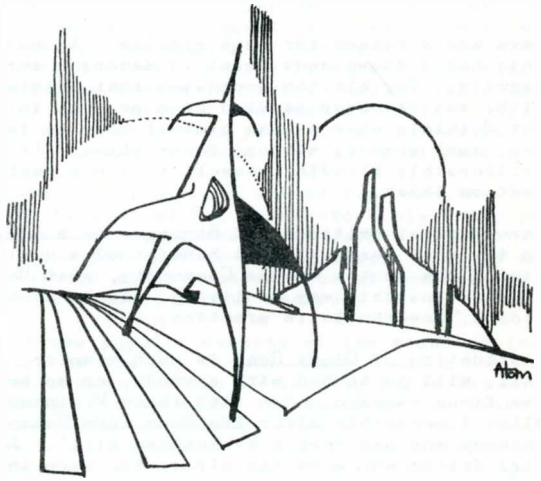
A more central criticism of Stranger in a Strange Land is that in the real world without benefit of a defined-as-right religion, as in the Oneida Community, what Heinlein has given is an unstable way of living. It is another romantic ideal, unworkable in practice.

The situation of Glory Road is much simpler. The hero, Evelyn Cyril, will go to bed with anybody, or so he says. But then he finds excuses. Not with those Vietnamese; they're too childlike (incredible after The Door into Summer; incredible to anybody who has seen a Vietnamese girl). Not with the old girl friend who sent him off to the wars in the traditional way--he assures us it isn't because she is married now; he just doesn't feel like it, that's all. And the heroine, the Empress of the Twenty Universes, she, too, will go to bed with anybody, but when the moment of truth for her and for Heinlein comes she has this convenient wound in her side and just isn't up to it.

Evelyn Cyril is as naive as any former Heinlein hero, any statement in the book to the contrary notwithstanding. It might be claimed for him on other evidence than his sexual oddities that he isn't even half-bright, but I am willing to give him the benefit of the doubt and call him simply another Boy Scout. Just as in If This Goes On..., when the hero's True Love indicates her willingness and points to a clump of grass (I mean this literally), the hero insists on marriage as his price for submitting.

Glory Road is in some ways the Boy Scout's dream. Imagine waking on a beach to find a beautiful naked girl standing and pointing: "You, you clod, you're the only man for me." But the Boy Scout wouldn't know what to do with his dream if he had it, and Evelyn Cyril's reaction is to stammer of marriage. The difference between an old Heinlein hero and this new one is that Evelyn wears a badge saying, "I'm really not so pure." Only he is.

Farnham of Farnham's Freehold does sleep with the heroine the first time he meets her, which does seem a departure, but Heinlein can only let him do it by having Farnham reject both his wife and the pretty little bed-warmer he is assigned by his owner when he becomes a slave. Beyond this, the conventions remain as tired and unexamined as ever. Heinlein's married couples are not notably fruitful, but in Farnham's Freehold, as in "...All You Zombies," conception is the result of one isolated night of love; on that basis, you would think Heinlein's juvenile heroes would have many more brothers and sisters than they do.



The point, of course, is that once Heinlein gets even one inch away from a direct concern with men and women together, his maturity, realism, and ability to think re-assert themselves. As an example, in Methuselah's Children there is a situation that L. Sprague de Camp describes as follows: "the long-lived hero is confronted with the problem of whether to marry his great-great-great-great-grand-daughter. Genetically their relationship is negligible, but such a union still seems somehow incestuous and wrong." De Camp is mistaken, however. The union seems incestuous and wrong only to the hero, not to the other characters, and not to Heinlein: "'I know I'm old-fashioned," he said uncomfortably, "but I soaked up some of my ideas a long time ago. Genetics or no genetics, I just wouldn't feel right marrying one of my own grandchildren.'" In Time for the Stars, as though to demonstrate the exact limits of his ability to look at men and women together (and to refute de Camp), Heinlein has his hero come home from journeying among the stars to fall quite happily in love, at first meeting, of course, with his great-grand-niece and marry her.

4. Plot

Heinlein's plotting has probably been the most continually criticized element in his writing, and there seems to be justice in the criticism. It also seems to me that there are at least two separate factors involved, that we use the word "plot" to cover a multitude of things, and that the separateness of Heinlein's brushes with plot weakness is not always realized.

The thing that is usually meant by the word "plot" is the plan of action of a story, the thing that I discussed earlier as "structure." Heinlein had his problems with this when he first started writing. Stories like "Life-Line," "Misfit," "Elsewhen" and "If This Goes On—" are severely flawed because they aren't told crisply. They begin with an end in mind and eventually get there, but the route they take is a wandering one. Overcoming this is in part a matter of deciding what the story is really about and learning to pick only significant details, and in part a matter of planning in advance.

By the end of his first period, Heinlein was no longer troubled by this kind of plot weakness, as "By His Bootstraps" amply demonstrates. A man who couldn't plan the structure of a story could not have written "By His Bootstraps," "...All You Zombies," or The Door into Summer, to name just three that are extremely involved but which do take the shortest routes to their destinations.

However, by the end of his first period, another and very different sort of "plot weakness" had become apparent in Heinlein's writing. This was not a failure in structure but a failure in providing all the details that the structure demands. Boucher and McComas, for instance, had this to say in reviewing "Waldo": "...'Waldo,' while being his best concept, illustrates the basic weakness in most of Heinlein's work, a tendency to rush the ending and to shirk final developments." The failure, in other words, is one of execution, not of plot structure per se.

This has been a continuing problem with Heinlein. It hasn't been present in every story, but it has been present often enough to make it obvious that Heinlein can, if he doesn't keep close control, let his stories trail away, in de Camp's words, "as if the author had simply grown tired."

In "Gulf," for instance, Heinlein spends one day in time and thirty-six pages in enrolling an agent. He then spends six months, skimmed over in another thirty-odd pages, in training the agent. Then, just to end the story, he kills his agent off in a job that takes him one day, buzzed over in a mere four pages. The gradual loss of control is obvious.

Farmer in the Sky begins in close focus and then gradually slips away until large amounts of time are covered in sentences. Heinlein then tries to recover his story with a large chunk of closely detailed action. The same thing exactly is true of Between Planets, and true again of Time for the Stars.

As another aspect of this same problem, Heinlein has also tried to force his stories to go on farther than their plots will carry them. Beyond This Horizon is one example, but since the extra words are spent on a very interesting society in action, the flaw is a minor one. Glory Road is another example; however since the extra words are spent mainly in discussing the question of sexual and political morality in theory, the flaw is more than the book can stand.

If Heinlein were consistently troubled by his plots, he would be relatively easy to discuss and to sum up, but the trouble is that he has shown such a wide variance in his plots that he becomes very difficult to categorize. On the one hand there is a story like Podkayne of Mars that comes dangerously close to being without any structure at all, let alone a flawed one, and on the other there is a story like Starman Jones that is more than adequately built and one like Have Space Suit--Will Travel that is beautifully built. The only thing that I can say is that given a Heinlein story and asked to guess before reading it what its most serious problem might be, I would guess that Heinlein had had some trouble with his plot. And about sixty per cent of the time I would be wrong.

5. Some Examples

In this section, I intend to discuss briefly three of Heinlein's stories, "Coventry," Have Space Suit--Will Travel, and Farnham's Freehold, one from each of his three periods, in light of what I have had to say about Heinlein's construction and execution.

The context of "Coventry" is the libertarian society developed in the last half of the Future History. One of the advantages of using a general background in several stories is that a complicated context can be given in a short length without need for great explanation. Having established his new society in If This Goes On..., Heinlein is here free to treat it as a given and then show what happens to those who are unwilling to accept it. He has them placed in an area kept separate by a force field and left to themselves, and allows that any man who cares to can rejoin the United States by acceptance of its social contract.

There are only two developed characters in the story, both aspects of the Heinlein Individual. One is the protagonist, David MacKinnon, a literary critic who answers criticism of himself with punches in the nose, and who is sent to Coventry when he refuses psychological treatment. The other is an agent of the United States operating secretly in Coventry who takes MacKinnon under his wing and keeps him out of trouble. MacKinnon is the naive young Heinlein Individual. The agent is the slightly older, more knowledgeable and more cynical version.

There are two story problems. One arises primarily from the context of the story, and the other primarily from the nature of the protagonist. The contextual problem is a planned breakout by the dissident little states within Coventry of which the United States must be warned. The other problem is the rehabilitation of MacKinnon. Unfortunately, Heinlein solves this second problem twice. He does it once by demonstrating to MacKinnon that the sort of rugged individualism he dreams of just doesn't exist, and that for better or for worse he is a member of society. He shows that even the crippled personalities within Coventry find government necessary and that their government is a mess because of their sickness. However, Heinlein then gives MacKinnon a flamboyant chance to demonstrate his new self by sending him off to warn the United States of the potential revolt.

Since Heinlein's two problems are not really closely related, his structure is a divided one and he has to close with an attempt to pull them together. This he does by MacKinnon's flamboyant gesture. This isn't quite satisfactory, however, because Heinlein's realism insists that the potential revolution cannot be a serious threat, that the United States would be well aware of the situation, and that therefore MacKinnon's journey is not as important as he believed it was. He refocuses attention on MacKinnon's rehabilitation by throwing away the revolution, but the cost of the adjustment is that the rehabilitation seems like an anticlimax.

There is a mild romantic interest, lightly sketched, in which MacKinnon moons after a fifteen-year-old girl, but little is made of this. The story itself is told briskly and straightforwardly. What clever wisecracks are included are restricted to the appropriate character--the middle stage Heinlein Individual secret agent.

In sum, the context of the story and the problem of the would-be anarchist are the best things about "Coventry." Heinlein's biggest problem is with deciding what the story is really about--in other words, plot structure.

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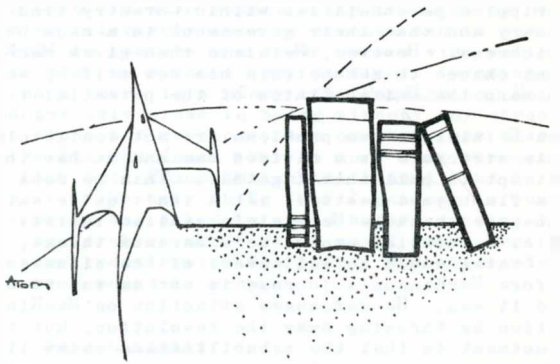
The framing context of Have Space Suit--Will Travel is a near future Earth in which there is a human colony on the Moon but in which hot rods, malted milks, soap slogan contests, and high schools with empty curricula still figure. The story begins with this and returns to it at the end, and it puts parentheses around the novel, but Heinlein concerns himself with a larger context, too, a confederation that unites various races throughout this galaxy and the two Magellanic Clouds.

There are three central characters in the story. One is the Mother Thing, perhaps the most charming of Heinlein's aliens, and a representative of the confederation. Heinlein characterizes her as "the cop on the beat," the epitome of the policeman. The second is an eleven-year-old female genius, perhaps a little too knowing to be quite believable, but good fun. The third is the narrator, a typical young example of the Heinlein Individual, though perhaps not as naive as some. The rest of the characters are background figures, either competents or caricatures.

The main story problem is really handled quite subtly. It is, in fact, nothing less than the determination of the nature of the contact between Earth and the confederation, something to be settled by the thoughts and actions of the little genius and the narrator. Stated flatly, this would be just too much to swallow, but Heinlein leads up to it by very neatly misdirecting his readers with immediate problems and adventures that only in retrospect are seen to be necessary predicates to the central problem.



The story is beautifully plotted. Starting from a mundane tomorrow morning, Heinlein begins a series of little adventures, each one carrying the characters a little farther from that mundane tomorrow, until hardly knowing how one has gotten there, one is set face-to-face with the confederation and accepts it. The structure on which this plot is built, returning full circle to exactly the point at which it left Earth, is very neatly done, too.

There is a hint of romantic interest to come between the little genius and the hero, but it is again very mildly stated, just as one might expect.

Heinlein's taste for the pithy remark is confined for the most part to description; not inappropriate since his narrator is a Heinlein Individual. ("...I was like the Army mule at West Point: an honorary member of the student body but not prepared for the curriculum." "We lived like that 'Happy Family' you sometimes see in traveling zoos: a lion caged with a lamb. It is a startling exhibit but the lamb has to be replaced frequently.") At times, of course, this does sound like something more sophisticated than one would expect from an eighteen-year-old boy, but that is a minor point.

In Have Space Suit--Will Travel, there is probably as close to an even balance between characters and background as Heinlein has ever managed. Though the continuing import of the background is greater, the import of the characters within the story is re-emphasized by the return to Earth and to the original context. The story is theirs. What comes after belongs to the context.

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One of the major flaws of Farnham's Freehold is that it lacks a clearly-defined context. The present-day world is destroyed by bombs by the end of the second chapter. The woods-idyll context is shown to be an illusion. The slave society to which the characters are taken is not seen in detail; all that is seen is one portion of one household. This leaves very little for the main characters to function against.

Only one character is dwelt on at length and that is Farnham himself. He is a Heinlein Individual somewhere in between the stage that knows what-is-what and the stage that knows why. Strangely, however, his competence is questionable, although Heinlein asserts its presence.

There is no story problem in Farnham's Freehold except that of mere survival: survival from the bombs, survival in the woods, survival in a slave society, survival from the aftermath of the bombs when Farnham and his wife return to their own time. For some reason, Heinlein has always regarded sheer survival, as a thing in itself regardless of any other factors, as a comforting and sufficient end. Farnham's survival, however, is an accident and nothing that he himself causes and so on an overt level the story seems pointless.

Part of the problem, of course, is that Heinlein uses the better part of his space in formal little debates on the subjects of freedom and race and family relations and these tangential things substitute for a story instead of adding to it.

However, if one wants to carry a search for meaning in Farnham's Freehold beyond the overt level, another idea of context and story problem does emerge. If the context of the story is really an unheeding universe that treats Farnham like a bemused boy toying with a grasshopper and making it "spit tobacco," then Farnham's futility takes on new meaning. The story may be Heinlein's unconscious way of saying that competence is not enough. The point of the story then becomes the persistent attempt by Farnham to escape from whatever it is that is mistreating him so casually and to find a haven for himself.

In fact, the book may even be taken as the search of a solipsist for a universe in which to be God. If this seems far-fetched, perhaps the following chapter will make it seem less so.

(to be concluded)

a critique of "the once and future king"

by barbara floyd

4: candle in the wind

"The Candle in the Wind" is the last movement of the four part song of life that White entitled "The Once and Future King." Here we find the first really complete characterisation of the antagonist. Mordred, the author remarks, is a "cold wisp of a man," consumed with outrage for his ancestry, bitter about his deformed body, and intelligent and critical in a society too straightforward for intellectual criticism.

Socially he is cornered, for Arthur has seen fit to hush up the whole history and accept Mordred, with love, into the court. The bastard son hardly can raise his illegitimacy as a banner under which to overthrow his father.

Yet he burns to ruin the old king, for revenge, and his brothers provide him with the avenue for his vendetta. "Everyone knows Gwen and Launcelot have been lovers since before the deluge," says Agravaine, "and the king has been told so many times, but in roundabout ways. What would happen if we were to denounce Launcelot in open court, under these new-fashioned laws? Arthur would have to investigate...it would cause a split between the commander in chief and the king...then would be a time for new policy, for discontented people...for revenge."

There follows White's hashed-up version of history. It is the Dark Ages now, he explains. He mentions "legendary" kings like "King John, King Philip" and the bitter cruelties of the Middle Ages. It was the "age of individuals," White notes, when everyone was busy fulfilling the vagaries of human nature.

From there White launches into one of his favourite pastimes, the lengthy descriptions of persons and occupations one might observe at "that period" in time, with every peculiarity of dress and behavior. His penchant for this sort of thing, while delightfully mood-creating, definitely brakes the movement of the action.

Shortly, the hard core of the whole story is put bluntly before the three main characters. The King, knowing for so long about the affair between his wife and his commanding officer, accidently finds them together; he has himself announced and makes a point of explaining Mordred's origin and motives. He plainly states that he will be forced to behead his wife or Launcelot if he is shown any cause, and explains that Mordred is looking for cause. "Don't do anything to give him a sort of handle," Arthur pleads.

But the time is at hand, and Arthur finds the Scottish clan gathered in the court, arguing.

Agravaine and Mordred are the only two to stand and make their accusation of the lovers. A trial is requested, with evidence under the new law, the plan being to catch the pair in bed and produce witnesses. Arthur has to agree.

So the fairness and legality which Arthur had fought all his life to achieve is now to bring about the end of his kingdom.

Although Gareth tries to convince Launcelot that he is going to a trap, the old general does not believe his King would leave the castle if it were not safe for him to visit the Queen. By the time the lovers have decided, between themselves, that Arthur's sense of justice might force him to undo them, it is too late and a horde of yelling knights are pounding on Guenever's bedroom door. Launcelot opens the door and kills the entire crew except for Mordred, who runs away.

Abruptly, we find the queen at the stake, and the remainder of the Orkney clan still arguing in the courtroom, overlooking the burning site. Of course, Launcelot, who has escaped, returns to save Guenever, but in the process he is obliged to kill two Orkney friends, including the faithful Gareth.

But the slaughter necessitated by the rescue means that Arthur must take an army and lay seige to the castle of Launcelot, in France, to which he and Guenever have escaped. Launcelot, after sparing every knight sent against him, finally prevails upon the Pope to call a truce between the two camps.

Arthur's is "a tired voice" in the ensuing ceremony, in which Launcelot restores the Queen to her throne. Bitterly, Gawaine speaks for the King. "What caused you to slay my brother, who loved you more than all his kin?"

The question now turns to that fateful evening. "I had just entered her chamber upon a royal summons when fourteen knights fell upon me. The lady is without shame," Launcelot argues. He begs the King for mercy and re-admission to the court, but Arthur is beyond hope. The procession of hideous events has left him speechless. No one will accept Launcelot's offer of penitance for the death of the Orkney brothers.

Gawaine, still speaking for the King, banishes Launcelot from England forever, while Arthur himself sits silent.

Launcelot is given his fifteen day tour to get out of England, then Gawaine and the King set after him with an army. Guenever is left with Mordred, who has gone quite mad.

Mordred's tragedy is emphasised by White as stemming from his mother's training. "It is the mother's, not the lover's lust that rots the mind," the author explains. Mordred had taken on all of Morguase's characteristics and personal whims. He dabbles in magic, keeps lap dogs, and maintains a continual pretence. Guenever is uneasy, but being so close to him, she can not discern that he has lost his sanity.

She is aghast when he comes to her room and tells her his plan to announce to the country that both Arthur and Launcelot are dead, and that he is the new ruler.

"How could you do that!" Guenever exclaims. "Arthur has always been so good to you, he has gone out of his way to be just."

"I have never been asked to be treated with justice. It is something he does to people to amuse himself," Mordred observes. He then explains that to bring the plot full circle, he will marry Guenever.

The King, in France with his army, is stunned by the news. But Guenever has fled to London, where she is besieged in the Tower, and so Arthur has no choice of action. The English depart at once, leaving the French to wonder why the hills and plains were so suddenly vacated.

A week later Launcelot receives from Gawaine a letter which forgives him for killing the Orkney brothers and beseeches him, the Queen's defender, to save Guenever from Mordred. Launcelot takes an army and sets out.

So the whole system is back where it started. There is no Round Table any longer, no Camelot, and almost no King Arthur.

The elderly King Arthur sits in his pavilion, trying to think, but everything is muddled. He had been taught by Merlyn that there was no such a thing as original sin, that man is perfectible, but all of Arthur's efforts along these lines have failed. Total war has brought total hatred, and his whole life appears to have been in vain. "Perhaps man was neither good nor evil...just a mechanical donkey led on by the iron carrot of love through the pointless treadmill of reproduction." He considers many causes, many results, many origins and remedies, but always ends in the same confusion.

Giving up in despair, Arthur summons a page to carry a note to the bishop. He is touched by the boy's youth and innocence.

"I want to talk to somebody," Arthur tells the boy. "Sit down."

Slowly and labourously the old monarch passes on the history of his reign and the Round Table.

"I think it was a good idea, my lord," said the page.

"No. It was, and it was not. Things went wrong, the Table split into factions, a bitter war began and they all were killed."

"No, not you sir, the King will win."

"They all were killed," repeated Arthur. "Except a certain page."

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In sum, the context of the story and the problem of the would-be anarchist are the best things about "Coventry." Heinlein's biggest problem is with deciding what the story is really about--in other words, plot structure.

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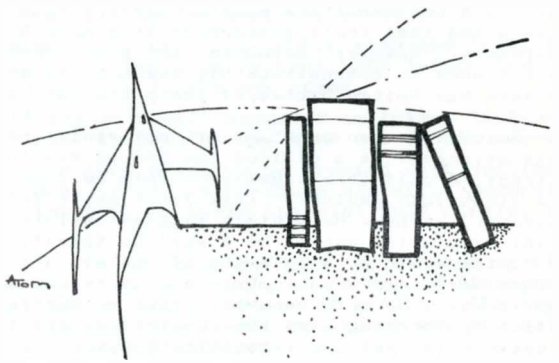
The framing context of Have Space Suit--Will Travel is a near future Earth in which there is a human colony on the Moon but in which hot rods, malted milks, soap slogan contests, and high schools with empty curricula still figure. The story begins with this and returns to it at the end, and it puts parentheses around the novel, but Heinlein concerns himself with a larger context, too, a confederation that unites various races throughout this galaxy and the two Magellanic Clouds.

There are three central characters in the story. One is the Mother Thing, perhaps the most charming of Heinlein's aliens, and a representative of the confederation. Heinlein characterizes her as "the cop on the beat," the epitome of the policeman. The second is an eleven-year-old female genius, perhaps a little too knowing to be quite believable, but good fun. The third is the narrator, a typical young example of the Heinlein Individual, though perhaps not as naive as some. The rest of the characters are background figures, either competents or caricatures.

The main story problem is really handled quite subtly. It is, in fact, nothing less than the determination of the nature of the contact between Earth and the confederation, something to be settled by the thoughts and actions of the little genius and the narrator. Stated flatly, this would be just too much to swallow, but Heinlein leads up to it by very neatly misdirecting his readers with immediate problems and adventures that only in retrospect are seen to be necessary predicates to the central problem.



The story is beautifully plotted. Starting from a mundane tomorrow morning, Heinlein begins a series of little adventures, each one carrying the characters a little farther from that mundane tomorrow, until hardly knowing how one has gotten there, one is set face-to-face with the confederation and accepts it. The structure on which this plot is built, returning full circle to exactly the point at which it left Earth, is very neatly done, too.

There is a hint of romantic interest to come between the little genius and the hero, but it is again very mildly stated, just as one might expect.

Heinlein's taste for the pithy remark is confined for the most part to description; not inappropriate since his narrator is a Heinlein Individual. ("...I was like the Army mule at West Point: an honorary member of the student body but not prepared for the curriculum." "We lived like that 'Happy Family' you sometimes see in traveling zoos: a lion caged with a lamb. It is a startling exhibit but the lamb has to be replaced frequently.") At times, of course, this does sound like something more sophisticated than one would expect from an eighteen-year-old boy, but that is a minor point.

In Have Space Suit--Will Travel, there is probably as close to an even balance between characters and background as Heinlein has ever managed. Though the continuing import of the background is greater, the import of the characters within the story is re-emphasized by the return to Earth and to the original context. The story is theirs. What comes after belongs to the context.

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As implied at the last, Mr. Warner's comments on RQ 5 arrived too late for inclusion in the last (sixth) issue.// Another Work in Progress, by Kris Neville, is scheduled for RQ 8.

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2443 Moreno Drive
Los Angeles 90039

Dear Leland,

I admired your article in the current RQ. I wonder, however, if you may not have overlooked the influence of Charles Fort on the writers of the period. His monism is expressed: "I think we're all bugs and mice, and are only different expressions of an all-inclusive cheese."

Interestingly--to me at least--is that the mystical is getting a considerable push recently by the acid heads, who conceive LSD as being something which somehow associates them with the universe and makes them one with all of life.

The dangerous thing about all this, which Fort nicely avoids, is that a person hung up on this oneness crap is very likely to structure quite absurd universes. The quote from Weinbaum was most apt. Take a true fact and project it. All other true facts should fit into the projected universe. Take a false fact, such as this silly idea of oneness, and project it, and you get a sort of paranoid universe, into which nothing quite fits right. This is the universe of the mystic, the universe of the crackpot, the universe of the fanatic. I think they should be lambasted, since they're capable of doing us much unintentional harm.

Of all of the mystics, currently practicing, and the one, to my mind, who is the most interesting, and who, like Fort, avoids the pitfalls of the genre, is P.K. Dick. His world of ever changing universes seems to me to illuminate our own real universe in a way that the former mystics--other than Fort, perhaps--were unable to accomplish.

Basically, it comes down to this. I think you developed a very serious theme in your article that has implications considerably beyond the immediate subject matter. The world is still full of nuts of one sort or another, and it is nice to have a touch stone by which they can be identified.

Best,
Kris Neville

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Strangely enough, by the criterion of Independence--that our world-picture be independent of where we start--Charles Fort belongs in the scientific rather than the mystical category. To quote Fort's own aphorism, "One measures a circle, beginning anywhere." // Phil Dick's mysticism does indeed illuminate the "real" world--in a way not duplicated, I think, since the fantasies of Charles Williams.

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Dear Leland:

RQ Vol. 2 No. 2 is very much appreciated--and this time around, I think you edge everyone else out with The Mystic Renaissance. To be perfectly truthful, the most impressive item of all is the footnotes on pp. 87-88--comprising as they do a most revelatory and impressive tribute to the wide range of your interests and...your scholarship. Everything from Lucretius to Shangri-L'Affaires, forsooth! All in all, a most enjoyable issue and I do thank you for it.

Best,
Robert Bloch

With an apology to Mr. Bloch for outbalancing his brief informal remarks with a display of irrelevant scholarship, I list one fan whose reading (or memory, at least) is more extensive than mine. In RQ One, while noting the "Faustian" attitudes of the early Church Fathers, I cited a query of Arnobius:

> What business of yours...to inquire whether the sun is larger than the earth, or measures only a foot in breadth: whether the moon shines with borrowed light, or from her own brightness...? Leave these things to God...

Ed Clinton pointed out to me that this, in turn, also derives from Lucretius' De Rerum Natura (Book V, lines 564 ff.), which in James Mantiband's translation reads thus:

> The bright disc of the sun cannot be very much larger or its fire less, than it appears to our senses.
> .....
> And the moon, whether she shines with borrowed light, or whether she radiates her own light from her body, however it may be, her shape as she moves along cannot be any larger than it seems to our eyes.

2141 Baxter St
Los Angeles 90039

Dear Leland,

...An interesting note, which I see you don't miss, is the frequency with which science fiction writers...have used mystic principles or derivatives as physical gimmicks, missing the essence for a game of musical chairs with bodies--as in Kruse's story. Or is this to be explained as an attempt to translate these ideas (always considered as really inexpressible in a conceptual sense, and therefore deucedly hard to talk about at all) into mechanistic terms that would be acceptable in the then-canons of stf?

Sincerely,
Jim Kepner

I'd accept the first hypothesis as correct--and as showing real insight, since it anticipates exactly the conclusions reached in the present issue.

5020 Goodridge Ave.
New York 71, N.Y.

Dear Lee:

Thanks very much for V2 N2 of RIVERSIDE QUARTERLY. It's a worthy successor to Ron Smith's old INSIDE. I'm particularly impressed with Panshin's comments on Heinlein, not so much for the light they shed on RAH as for the revelation of Panshin's grasp of narrative technique...

I'm afraid your own piece on mystic thought in the Tremaine Astounding provoked more irritation here than illumination. I don't quarrel with your scholarship, nor with your interpretation; but after many years of following your exegesis of 1935 pulp s-f, I finally feel constrained to say that I'd rather see you devoting your insight and skill to the modern item. Surely Jack Vance or Theodore Sturgeon or even Heinlein would be a more fertile subject for your examination than Clifton Kruse and Donald Wandrei. It seems almost grotesque to examine Kruse's woeful pulp hackery in terms of Plotinus!

Best,
Bob Silverberg

Although a writer like Kruse or Donald Wandrei has little intrinsic interest, he may be worth studying for the insight he gives into genuinely mystical writers. Compare, e.g., Bates's "Death of a Sensitive" with a story like "Fractional Ego," in which mystic principles are used only as "physical gimmicks" (to re-quote Mr. Kepner), with the essentials of mysticism being missed "for a game of musical chairs with bodies."

English Dept., Chico State College
Chico, California 95926

Dear Leland,

...I think you do a number of things that are invalid. First, you shift the meaning of mystical. Early in the chapter you use it in connection with religious thought; later, in connection with magic and the occult. But these aren't the same thing. You can, obviously, make a good case out for the idea that much Astounding s-f makes use of the mystical in the sense of the mysterious, occult, or inexplicable. But the other case is pretty weak. At any rate, you're considering two varieties of the mystical, not one.

Second, early in the chapter, you seem to mistake a metaphor ("Mystic Renaissance") for a fact; as a result, you push the metaphor too far. That mystics and s-f writers do analogous things (i.e., eliminate categories, work toward the One), does not make the s-f writer a mystic or his story mystical, except in the sense of dealing with what cannot be explained satisfactorily. The romantics such as Burns or Rousseau may wish to eliminate social categories for the unity of the brotherhood of mankind, but this desire and this idea do not make them mystics, nor are they writing stories about religious mysticism.

I hope these comments are of some use.

Sincerely
Edgar Glenn

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I'll concede Dr. Glenn's first point--that rejection of (say) a temporal category does not make a writer a mystic--and a month ago I'd have conceded his second. But since reading W.H.G. Armytage's Heavens Below (on utopian socialistic communities) I think there is a particular mentality that starts by abolishing social distinctions and eventually converges toward mysticism, with its abolition of material categories. See, e.g., the remarks on Kenworthy (p.354) and W.T. Stead (p.358), two utopian planners whose terminating interests were Spiritualism and psychic research.

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139 Joralemon St
Brooklyn, N.Y. 11201

Dear Leland:

Franz Rottensteiner is correct in thinking that I have been writing technical criticism in my Heinlein critique. I have been interested in trying to discover what Heinlein is saying, what devices he has used, and how effective he has been. I disagree completely with Mr. Rottensteiner when he says that purely technical criticism is shallow. If Farnham's Freehold has passages that are vulgar, annoying, and dirty, as Mr. Rottensteiner says, that is between him and Heinlein, or possibly between him and Heinlein's publisher. I don't regard it as my business as a critic to tell Mr. Rottensteiner or anybody else that a book is vulgar, annoying, and dirty unless it has some bearing on technical problems. Moral judgments are not in my province--they would merely reflect the state of my mind, not the significance of a book.

If I have complained of unfairness (again to use Van den Broek's phrase) in Heinlein's books, this is not a moral judgment, as you, Leland, have said, but a technical one. In 1947, Heinlein gave a five-point definition of science fiction in which the last point read:

> And lastly, no established fact shall be violated, and, furthermore, when the story requires that a theory contrary to present accepted theory be used, the new theory should be rendered reasonably plausible and it must include and explain established facts as satisfactorily as the one the author saw fit to junk.

Heinlein has not been establishing his personal view of the world in terms of action in recent years, but instead has been labeling his personal theories as "fact" and continuing without any attempt to give them plausibility in story terms. He has been substituting assertion for development, and in technical terms you can call that "unfair" or "inadequate" or what you will. And Van den Broek has misread my example of a story in which Heaven was open to mass murderers only. I was saying that the premise would be unarguable, not that it would be a poor one for a story.

And to comment on one last point, Farnham's inaction. I don't see that he had any chance to avert the atomic war the second time around. And I never asked of him that he topple governments, oppose galactic civilization, or influence the course of all history. It simply seems a sad commentary on the competent man that the only thing he does in the face of an on-coming nuclear war is dig a competent hole.

Yours,
Alexei Panshin

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Although little is gained by criticising "nastiness," critical judgements are sometimes inseparable from moral judgements--as with Walt Willis's remarks (in the old Rhodomagnetic Digest) on the me-for-myself ethics exemplified by then-current s.f. heroes or my own comments (unprinted because unprintable) on racial bias in the Clayton Astounding. Also, I think it "unfair"--in the technical sense--to cite that particular Heinlein quotation, which is an interdict not on "personal theories" but on theories of Physics.

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2762 Ortmann, Quarb 38
Austria

Dear Leland:

The latest Riverside Quarterly was up to its usual standard of excellence; I enjoyed especially your book reviews... and the lively letter column. Alexei Panshin's piece proved less interesting than that in the last-but-one issue, although I will not go as far as Moskowitz in Zenith and suggest that he [has] nothing to sell but the interest in the name Heinlein...But I think that C.S. Lewis has expounded the difference between realism of content and realism of content and realism of presentation more clearly (in An Experiment in Criticism) than Alexei Panshin does in...his present installment.

Your editorial is sensible, but I have a few minor quibbles with you: it is impossible to buy an old Amazing or Fantastic "at a fraction of the price." Either dealer you name asks at least 50¢ a copy...and you sound unconscientiously (is it the right word?) funny when you suggest "that the reader do it at the magazine stand without making a purchase," if he feels obliged to read the one new story per issue. Apparently you aren't aware that the one story is either a long novelette or short novel or an installment of a serial. When I imagine readers trying to do as you suggest...

I was of course eager to see what changes you would think necessary in my letter. It would appear that you do not make any changes in the grammar...By the way, is it now permissible in American English to say "justest" as you do? Or is it a case of curioser and curioser?

I do object to only one deletion you have made: it should be "a firm moral and esthetical standpoint." "A firm moral standpoint" alone makes me only sound more of a moralist than I really am.

I agree with your remarks concerning Farnham's inactivity the second time; but that's quite a different situation from that "one-man-stops-atomic-war" I remarked upon.

Oh, I did not suggest that Farnham thinks evil of his daughter, and neither do I believe that she thinks evil of him. She fears that he might disapprove of her conduct when he learns that she is expecting a child: but then her behavior is silly and quite unfounded, as you say, in anything that has gone before. And Farnham reacts as if she had said nothing more than "I have just bought some pounds of groceries." And it is my impression that Heinlein expects us to accept this behavior of father and daughter as a perfectly rational and normal conduct. Not that I object to the father-daughter situation per se--I liked Ward Moore's "Lot" and Marghanita Laski's "The Offshore Island"--but I do object to this pseudo-rationality and the use of the word "marry" and that "you have known it for years"...

I am sorry to say that I missed Al Lewis's piece in Zenith, but of course he is right: there is another scene which has no function in the novel and which seems merely to be there to repulse the reader. Karen and Barbara are watching the cat eating its afterbirth and Barbara, who is a student of biology, cries: "Have we to do it also? I won't, I won't!" Are there really American students that stupid? Perhaps now you understand why I am sorry that you left out that "esthetical."

Sincerely,
Franz Rottensteiner

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Concerning my suggestion about Amazing Stories--the time wasted in reading this magazine is less at the news-stand than at home, since the necessity of standing makes you read faster. Naturally, any reader courageous enough to read a novel in Amazing Stories would not be intimidated by threats from the angry news-stand proprietor.

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3412 Ruby Street
Franklin Park, Illinois 60131

Dear Leland,

Enclosed is $1.25 for a year of RQ. Although the investment is somewhat dubious, I am "flush" ...and am willing to risk it. The Panshin article seems definitely worthwhile, even if it did strain for college-boy unification at times, because it was well-written and had some valuable insights. Floyd's "Critique" did not impress me; plot-summary book reports have a very limited value--they are poor substitutes for their subjects, and useless additions. "Kwa Wenderling"--that is, the segment I got--does create an interest of sorts and is competently written..[The RQ] could use more genius in place of competency, but as Mahbubali ruefully remarked to Kim, "That is the need of all of us."

Oh. Almost forgot. The advertisement at the end. Disclaimer! There are really no such things as basic facts about economics, and I am suspicious of anyone who wants to teach them to me free...Henry George never struck me as being the end-all of economic theory. The perspective has shifted since then...

Regards,
Lee H. Carson

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This is the only bona fide letter received in response to a skeleton RQ--a set of sample pages sent to prospective subscribers--and so is a "first," not only for this magazine but possibly for s.f. fanzines in general. // If Mr. Carson doubts the existence of facts about Economics, I suggest he try to re-purchase Manhattan Island for its (alleged) original selling price of $24.

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77 Davis Avenue
Cookeville, Tennessee 38501

Dear Leland:

...Twenty-one twenty-one gun salutes and a standing ovation for the book reviews! You can't imagine how wonderful it is to see someone who doesn't drool over Judith Merril's hopelessly bad, unbelievably pretentious, non-science-fiction anthologies...

...The Nashville Banner ran the following interesting piece in the book review section recently:

> Delacorte has paid six figures for the rights to "Space Odyssey 2001" by Arthur Clarke and Stanley (Dr. Strangelove) Kubrick. Publication: November. The purchase price includes hard-cover and paper rights. Kubrick's movie will be released in late 1967.

The review also held the following jewel:

> Says Donald Fine of Delacorte, "It's much more than science fiction. It's important literature."

Sincerely,
Reece Morehead

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The above paragraphs represent only a fraction of Mr. Morehead's letter, which discusses the new man-machine syntheses called Cyborgs (plus reactions thereto by Campbell, Heinlein, et. al.), since this correspondent is planning a more extensive essay on the subject--an essay which (I hope) he will submit to the RQ.

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Box 516 Radio City Station
New York, N.Y. 10019

Dear Leland,

Thank you for the latest issue of RIVERSIDE QUARTERLY.

In Vol. 2, No. 1 Jim Harmon says,

> In the line of drawings, Wallace Wood's illustrations for Pussyfoot are almost as good as the ones he is currently doing for Marvel Comics' "Captain America."

In Vol 2, No. 2 Ted White says,

> Wally Wood has never drawn "Captain America" for Marvel Comics. Secondly, while Wood (or someone in his studio) did some work briefly on The Avengers, which includes Capt. America as a character, he never drew the Captain America feature, which is in Tales of Suspense. Wood's main Marvel feature was Daredevil. He left Marvel a year or so ago, I might add, and is now doing Thunder Agents and Dynamo for Tower Comics. Finally, most of the drawings appearing in the last year in GALAXY and companions signed by Wood were, as are most of his comics work, by his assistant, Dan Adkins.

Jim Harmon was speaking of the Oct. 1965 issue of GALAXY MAGAZINE and the first instalment of Pussyfoot, illustrated by Wally Wood. Ted White's comments would lend one to believe I illustrated the serial under Wood's name. I assure you that those illustrations were done completely by Wally Wood alone, in that Oct. issue. I have helped Wally on some of his stf illustrations...helped. It would be wrong to say they were done by me, since they were done by Wally and me. But, not by Wally and me for the Oct. issue, just Wally.

Ted is also incorrect in saying Wally never worked on Captain America in Tales of Suspense. He worked on a story called "The Sleeper Shall Awake." The credit was given to George Tuska, but Wally helped on it. It's true that I am Wally's assistant and I have worked on every issue of Thunder Agents but #2 and all the issues of Dynamo, no matter if I was given credit or not. On the stories that Wally and I do, I do most of the penciling and Wally does most of the inking.

Best,
Dan Adkins

Herewith, for public edification, a recent letter from Jim Harmon:

"I'm taking the rap for your punctuation, Lee. You put it: Marvel Comics' "Captain America." I wrote: Marvel Comics' Captain America. I knew very well that Wood illustrated The Avengers, a magazine of the Marvel Comics group, featuring a group of crime fighters including the good captain. However, I was not sure that the typical RQ reader would be as familiar with this comic book as White and myself, but might remember Captain America from his youth. Therefore, I used a shorthand, but accurate, reference."

Finally, a letter, to a younger fan, from RQ's editor:

"Yes, Virginia, there is a Captain America, a gang-buster in The Avengers and Tales of Suspense, but whether there is a comic-strip by that name your Uncle Leland cannot say. No, Virginia, Uncle Leland will not go mad if he is obliged to pursue this matter any further."

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423 Summit Avenue
Hagerstown, Maryland 21740

Dear Leland:

...Kwa Wenderling was an interesting story, both for its content and for the puzzle that it presents: why didn't I enjoy it more? Tentatively, I suspect that the fault lies in the writer's failure to get across strong emotion to the reader. The emotions that do emerge are mostly those that would be felt during an adventure in mundane circumstances, like uncertainty in a strange place and a girl's excitement at meeting the hero. If I were a woman writing this particular story, I think I would try to express somehow an intolerable sense of futility and yearning from beginning to end, intimating at first and later confirming to the reader the doomed nature of the relationship. I can't think of any real criticism of what is in the story, in distinction to this criticism of what isn't there, because the story is refreshingly free from obvious imitation of this or that fantasy writer, it has lots of novel bits of business, and a rarely used basic theme.

Your article on the Tremaine Astounding begins promisingly, although it's not completely clear if you mean "renaissance" to refer to a reappearance of mysticism that had previously pervaded science fiction. I suppose you could equate this interest in "blending" and monotrons and the like to the obsession with simplification and unification that always seems to bob up in science and art once the field of study begins to receive thorough investigation, but before the students realize its full complexity. There was the old belief that all matter could be reduced to one basic thing called the atom, before we began to understand something quite different by the word atom; the searches for the universal catalyst or the philosopher's stone; Wagner's attempt to merge all the arts into one gesamtkunstwerk followed by Scriabin's effort to end the universe as we know it through a specific type of performance of one of these all-embracing compositions; the old pathetic assumption that all a nation's troubles would end if the common man got the right to vote. Even good science fiction seems to run from fifty to a hundred years behind the times, as far as its literary aspects and philosophy are concerned, so quite possibly the Tremaine Astounding apneared at just the right time to sop up the product of science fiction's sudden catching up with much older concepts from other fields.

Alexei Panshin sent me to a couple of anthologies to try to figure out if Heinlein really does fail to describe the characters that seem so firmly outlined. Without taking the time for a thorough research project, I've tentatively decided that Heinlein does tell in words many things about the physical appearance of his main characters, but he doesn't do it clumsily by devoting three paragraphs to a rundown of physical appearance the first time a character appears on the scene. He works in little hints and partial facts unobtrusively and somewhere in the reader's mind these odds and ends of information are pieced together unconsciously until the reader thinks he's created the mental image himself.

Harriman in Requiem, for instance: the first thing we learn is that he wears glasses and squints when he looks at something closeup, then that he's very old, in fact and appearance, a couple of pages further on we are allowed to know that Harriman is thin, little, and narrow-shouldered, later still that his voice is also thin, and so it goes: something like an element that is necessary to life but is tasteless when you get it in your food. Curiously, Heinlein seems to be in the habit of describing plainly the minor characters and supers whom he won't have time to handle the more subtle way. The argument that starts The Roads Must Roll has such speakers as "a sallow little man with protruding upper teeth." Sometimes a character in Heinlein is major and described fully because of his special function:

> He was softly fat, with double chin, dimples, smooth skin; he looked like a great, pink cherub, floating attendance on a saint. But the eyes were not cherubic, and the forehead and skull were those of a man.

That's part of the outright description of Waldo. I also feel quite differently from Alexei about Heinlein's skill with creating convincing women. Perhaps I'm unique in the world, because I think Podkayne is a fully alive and reasonably complex character, something far more skillful than the Gidget that everyone else thinks of her as. The cat in The Door into Summer is the only cat I can remember from any tupe of literature, science fiction or mundane, with the possible exception of the one that got the painkiller in Tom Sawyer.

Considerable relief that you are diverted from fanzines and satisfaction that your new target is dishonest prodom were my main reactions to the editorial this time. I think that one way to break up the outrageous prices asked for rarities would consist of cooperation among the reliable dealers to compile and publish a listing at regular intervals of recent sales of special interest: just the title of the item in question, the name of the dealer who sold it, and the price it brought. I imagine that the overly inflated prices you quote in your editorial are really the equivalent of the "$125.95 value" line you see in discount house advertisements...the dealer doesn't really have great hope of selling at that price, but uses it as a starting point for bargaining...One menace you don't mention: the American dealer who buys British books at retail price, adds postage costs, adds a large profit markup, and sells them at the resulting sum. This gives new collectors a distorted notion of what it costs to buy the fine things published in England...

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

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So Mr. Warner, with two letters in this issue, establishes another RQ "first," but fails to equal Forrest Ackerman's world record (in a professional magazine) of three.// It would be strange if a writer like Heinlein, so skilful at indirect conveyance of background, were not comparably adept in this matter of characters.// The inflated prices quoted were not bluff: I learn from the dealer himself (Malcolm Willits of Collectors Book Store, Hollywood) that the Amazing Annual was sold for its asking price, thirty seven dollars, one week after publication of the advertisement.

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ON LEGALIZED THEFT (EDITORIAL)

Last time, I indicated how Sol Cohen's non-payment policy for reprints in Amazing Stories and Fantastic will make it difficult--and, perhaps, impossible--for a science-fiction writer to earn a living. Since then I have received two letters of protest. One writer claims that the Ultimate Publishing Company will reform once it is financially secure--Sol Cohen already having "doubled the circulation"--so that "mutual recriminations" are not in order. The second pontificates likewise that "science fiction writers would do well to hold their tempers...it might mean more money for them in the future."

These particular arguments--which condone theft on grounds that it will stop after the thief has accumulated more money--I need not answer. However, it will be instructive to examine the writers' other claims.

Correspondent "A" alludes to information "given to me confidentially" about a new editor for "Amazing"--the implication being that a change in payments will accompany this change in personnel--while "B" asserts that "...Cohen does pay for reprints now," and cites as reference the current bulletin of the SFWA (Science Fiction Writers of America).

But "A" is unaware that "Amazing's" editor does not determine the magazine's financial policy, which is the prerogative of Sol Cohen, the publisher, while "B" simply failed to read the SFWA notice closely. For, Damon Knight, SFWA president, emphasises that Ultimate's current flat rate of $25--which relative to a 25,000 word story amounts to a tenth of a cent per word--is only a fraction of a minimal decent payment. The sum now offered can be regarded only as a palliative to somebody's conscience--in the sense that a holdup man might diminish his guilt by giving his victim twenty five cents carefare home.

Two concluding remarks are necessary about the defendant's legality and the plaintiff's motivation.

I must concede, first, that the present thefts are legal. Whether an author's money is stolen directly or he is simply prevented from earning any more money, the final result is the same; but only the first variety of theft is within the cognisance of the law. Ultimate bought the copyrights from Ziff Davis and therefore can dispose of the stories as it pleases, even when such disposition cuts the circulation of paying magazines and hence the incomes of their authors.

The second point is stated most aptly by Riah, in Our Mutual Friend:

> "For it is not, in Christian countries, with the Jews as with other peoples. Man says, 'This is a bad Greek, but there are good Greeks. This is a bad Turk, but there are good Turks.' Not so with the Jews. Men find the bad among us easily enough--among what peoples are the bad not easily found? But they take the worst of us as presentations of the highest; and they say 'All Jews are alike.'"

Prejudice being what it is, one morally reprehensible act by a Jew injures the entire Jewish community, of which the present writer, like Sol Cohen, is a member.

ALAS, ALL SHRINKING! -- or A MATTER OF SIZE

"Six inches tall! Professor Goniff, you must be joking!"

"Dr. Golem, I have never been more serious in my life. With my new process I can reduce every human being to a height of six inches! Thus I will save the world from the deadly consequences of the Malthusian theory. No longer will there be starvation due to overpopulation. One section of farm land will be able to feed a million people! Now watch closely, Golem, while I demonstrate my special tissue diminution solution, Calaphrastadiasulphasuperchlorophoxide."

"It's actually working! Look at him shrink -- four feet high, two feet, one foot, six inches...Professor Goniff, you are making scientific history! But I forgot...Where is the height-restoring liquid? Goniff, can you hear me? Where is the restorative? Professor, I can no longer see you! Where are you?"

And so the professor's secret is lost in the domain of the microscopic. However, to solve social and economic problems you need not be restricted by the Malthusian theory; nor do you have to shrink to a height of six inches. In its adult discussion classes the Henry George School of Social Science enables you to see the important relationships in such problems as unemployment, rural decay, and urban strife.

The Henry George School has classes in the United States, Canada, Great Britain, Australia -- and even in those remote places where the RQ has no subscribers. Consult your phone book, and if no Henry George School is listed, inquire about free correspondence courses from International Headquarters, 50 E. 69th St., New York, New York 10021.
