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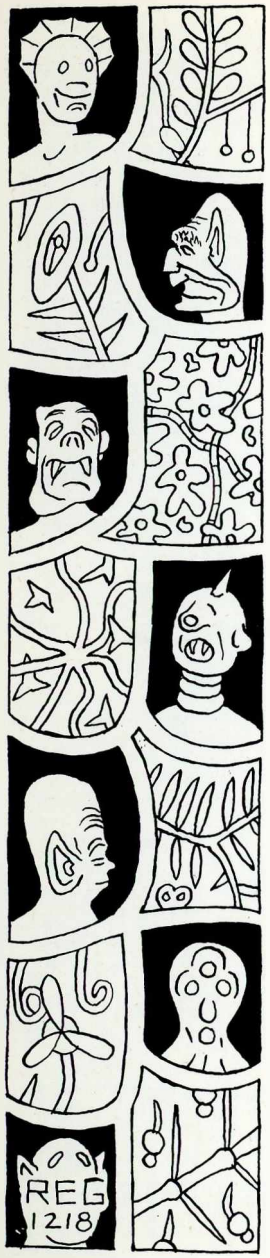

RIVERSIDE QUARTERLY
August 1968 Vol 3, No.3

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Read picture-panel from top down to identify members of RQ's editorial staff: Jim Sallis, Bill Blackbeard, Leland Sapiro, Redd Boggs, Jim Harmon, Jon White.

RQ Miscellany

HAPPENINGS UP NORTH

Thanks are owed to Ivor Rogers and the University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee for their May "Secondary Universe" conference, the most informative fantasy event in recent years. Inspection of local breweries made it difficult to behave with the dignity expected from the Crown's Canadian representative--and I found myself attending Professor Kilby's keynote address in absentia and sleeping through Judith Merril's lunch-hour speech. However, I can attest personally to other interesting events, including symposia on contemporary s.f. and on its precursors (with Samuel Delany, Tom Clareson, etc.), a showing of Ed Emsh's film, "Relativity," and performances, by Prof. Rogers' students, of plays discussed this issue under the heading, "Ray Bradbury off Broadway."

Also to be praised are Peter Gill, Ken Smookler, et. al. for their July Triple Fan Fair at Toronto. Difficulties--but no complaints--resulted from the open-air exhibit of paintings and its three-block separation from the Fair's cinematic portion; what remains clearest in memory are the convention's positive aspects --Roger Zelazny's speech (his best of the year), a symposium on Space Odyssey: 2001 (with explanations why banality was deliberately introduced into this movie), and what was possibly the only edible convention dinner (at L'Escargot's French restaurant) ever served.

COMMEMORATIVE ISSUES

The current J.G. Ballard and Cordwainer Smith items originally had been scheduled for special issues dedicated to these writers --and are printed now because financial troubles may cause these issues to be postponed forever. There is a puzzle with regard to Cordwainer Smith, who stated in the interview described on p.233 that his first published story, "War No. 81-Q," appeared in a 1928 Amazing Stories. A search through my files and the Bleiler-Ditky Index reveals no such title in any s.f. magazine of the 20's--and there is no explanation I can offer.

Relative to Jeweled City, Kris Neville explains that he made no attempt to mimic the literary style of J.G. Ballard because--

> ...while style is central and unique to a writer, it's somewhat peripheral to a writer's ideas except in those cases where it is a substitute and an end in itself...I was attempting...to take...some of the major elements that Ballard likes to play with (geometric forms, surrealistic scenes, birds, time reversal, decaying landscapes, jewels, evolutionary reversals, etc.) and by his technique of exploiting the reader by...appeals to subconscious responses...to combine these raw materials to tell a story that I felt was more relevant to the human condition than the abstractions he seems to find of such transcendent importance. All I did was to rearrange the elements and try to tie them together--the geometric forms to the birds to the nest-building to the decaying landscapes, and eventually to place the jewels in decaying landscapes befouled by birds, etc. etc. It is intended as a serious criticism of Ballard's writings on Ballard's own terms.

(continued on page 250)

Blish, van Vogt, and the uses of Spengler

by Richard D. Mullen

That Oswald Spengler's The Decline of the West[1] has been of some use to science-fiction writers is indicated in the following note by James Blish:

> The first two published stories by A.E. van Vogt were explicitly Spenglerian--in fact the characters lectured each other out of Der Untergang des Abenlandes at some length while Black Destroyer and the Discord in Scarlet crept closer and closer--but van Vogt soon abandoned this rather difficult thinker for the more manageable scholia of general semantics, Bates eye exercises, and scientology. My own "Okie" stories were also founded in Spengler (though I hope less obtrusively), which may be one reason why they reminded some reviewers of van Vogt.[2]

Spengler is indeed a difficult thinker--or at least a difficult writer--as anyone will discover who attempts to make a table similar to the one that appears with this essay. Part of the difficulty stems from our tendency to equate cultures with empires and other political units, a delusion from which Toynbee should have freed us even if Spengler did not. A related difficulty lies in the title: "the decline of the West" inevitably suggests "the decline and fall of the Roman Empire," and one is likely to assume that Spengler is predicting the military conquest of the West rather than merely arguing that the West is in a certain kind of decline. Still another lies in the fact that Spengler uses the words culture and civilization sometimes in such a way that they appear to be synonymous with society and sometimes as technical terms with opposed meanings. Whatever may be true of things, two words synonymous with a third are not necessarily equal to each other, and we should understand from the beginning that for Spengler culture and civilization are opposed states in the spiritual history of a society:

> A Culture is born in the moment when a great soul awakens out of the proto-spirituality of ever-childish humanity, and detaches itself, a form from the formless, a bounded and mortal thing from the boundless and enduring...It dies when this soul has actualized the full sum of its possibilities in the shape of peoples, languages, dogmas, arts, states, sciences, and reverts into the proto-soul..

> The aim once attained--the idea, the entire content of inner possibilities, fulfilled and made actual--the Culture suddenly hardens, it mortifies, its blood congeals, its force breaks down, and it becomes Civilization, the thing which we feel and understand in the words Egypticism, Byzantinism, Mandarinism. As such it may, like the worn-out giant of the primeval forest, thrust its decaying branches toward the sky for hundreds or thousands of years, as we see in China, in India, in the Islamic world. It was thus that the Classical Civilization rose gigantic, in the Imperial age, with a false semblance of youth and strength and fullness... (I,106).

The West has reached full civilization, and its culture is dead, but its civilization, and its empire, may endure for centuries or millenia.

#1 -- THE SPENGLERIANISM OF "BLACK DESTROYER"

Since "Black Destroyer"[3] is still being reprinted and is probably much better known than The Voyage of the Space Beagle,[4] we will deal with the short story itself rather than with the revision in which it forms Chapters 1-6 of the novel.

Although Mr. Blish is not quite correct in saying the characters lecture each other out of Spengler, it is certainly true that the archeologist lectures the other members of the exploration team out of a Spengler he has committed to memory:

> "There is a mystery here. Take a look, all of you, at that majestic skyline. Notice the almost Gothic line of the architecture. In spite of the megalopolis which they created, these people were close to the soil...Here is the equivalent of the Doric column, the Egyptian pyramid, the Gothic cathedral, growing out of the ground, earnest, big with destiny" (p.187).

Doric, pyramid-period, and Gothic art are products of spring-time cultures; megalopolises are created only by civilizations. Since Spengler hardly allows for such a contradiction, our Spenglerian is right in finding it mysterious. The accuracy of his memory can be seen from this sentence by the master himself: "The Doric column, the Egyptian pyramid, the Gothic cathedral, grow out of the ground, earnest, big with destiny" (II, 92).

The archeologist distinguishes correctly between civilization and culture, but is confused on the Battle of Tours:

> This is not a decadent, hoary-with-age civilization, but a young and vigorous culture, confident, strong with purpose. There it ended. Abruptly, as if at this point culture had its Battle of Tours, and began to collapse like the ancient Mohammedan civilization. Or as if in one leap it spanned the centuries and entered the period of contending states. In the Chinese civilization that period occupied 480-230 B.C., at the end of which the state of Tsin saw the beginning of the Chinese Empire. This phase Egypt experienced between 1780--1580 B.C. of which the last century was the 'Hyksos'--unmentionable--time. The Classical experienced it from Chaeronea--338--and, at the pitch of horror, from the Gracchi--133--to Actium--31 B.C. The West European Americans were devastated by it in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. (p.187)

This description of the "period of contending states" (the English equivalent of Shan-Kwo, a term used by Chinese historians) derives word for word, except for some elegant variations, the use of B.C. and the gloss on Hyksos, from Spengler (II, 40-41), including even the last sentence, where Spengler's prediction has become a fact for our far-future archeologist. Since the Battle of Tours had no effect on the "ancient Mohammedan civilization" other than in halting its expansion at the Pyrenees, I can only assume that the archeologist's confusion has arisen from the misreading of a passage in which Spengler has been discussing the things that would have happened to the Western Pre-Culture if the Arabs had won the Battle of Tours: "That the equivalent of these things actually happened to the Arabian world was due to the fact that the Syro - Persian peoples produced no Charles Martel to battle along with Mithradates or Brutus and Cassius or Antony (or for that matter without them) against Rome" (II, 192). But the "equivalent of these things" happened after the Battle of Actium in 31, not after the Battle of Tours in 732, and their happening had to do with the beginnings of the Arabian Culture, not with any collapse of the civilization--for indeed, the Arabian Civilization lasted right up to its submergence in the world-wide Westernization of the twentieth century.

After they have been attacked by the Black Destroyer, and just as they are preparing to launch a counter-attack, the members of the exploration team are given a pep talk by the archeologist. As the survivor of such a catastrophe (the occurrence of the Period of Contending States five hundred years ahead of schedule), the Destroyer would be, the archeologist believes, not only a criminal of the most vicious type, but also a primitive. Since they are men of a mighty civilization, they can surely defeat any primitive, as all history goes to prove:

> "You may suggest that the sack of Rome by the Germans in the later years defeats my argument; however, modern historians agree that the 'sack' was an historical accident, and not history in the true sense of the word. The movement of the 'Sea Peoples' which set in against the Egyptian civilization from 1400 B.C. succeeded only as regards the Cretan island-realm--their mighty expeditions against the Libyan and Phoenician coasts, with the accompaniment of viking fleets failed as those of the Huns failed against the Chinese Empire. Rome would have been abandoned in any event. Ancient glorious Samarra was desolate by the tenth century; Pataliputra, Asoka's great capital, was an immense and completely uninhabited waste of houses when the Chinese traveler Hsinan-tang visited it about A.D. 635.
>
> (p.202)

The last of these four sentences, except for the addition of "ancient, glorious" and "great," has been taken word for word from a passage in which Spengler is arguing that civilized urban man (the man of a civilization as opposed to a culture) loses the desire to reproduce himself (II, 107) and the second, also word for word, from a discussion, not of the military prowess of civilized men vis-a-vis barbarians, but of the idea that the styles and values of a civilization may survive the death of its culture by centuries or millenia (II, 109). In Spengler this sentence is preceded by "It is a mere incident that German peoples, under pressure from the Huns, take possession of the Roman landscape and so prevent the Classical from prolonging itself into a 'Chinese' end-state" and is followed by "And thus the Classical is our one example of a Civilization broken off in the moment of full splendor." Is not the handling of these passages a perfect example of the tendency of commercial science fiction to bring ideas of the most complex kind down to the level of physical combat?

When the Black Destroyer has finally been defeated, the archeologist has the last word:

> "It was history, honorable Mr. Smith, our knowledge of history that defeated him," said the Japanese archeologist, reverting to the ancient politeness of his race.
>
> (p.106)

As much as I would like to respond with equal politeness, I fear I must demur: it was good old American shoot-em-up tactics that defeated the Black Destroyer. And as for the archeologist's knowledge of history, or understanding of Spengler, if the members of the exploration team ever really have to depend on it, they will find, I'm afraid, that they would have done better to have left him at home.

#2 -- THE SPENGLERIANISM OF THE VOYAGE OF THE SPACE BEAGLE

In fairness to Mr. van Vogt it must be granted that some of the passages quoted above have been eliminated from The Voyage of the Space Beagle. The hero of the novel is not Korita, the Spengler-spouting archeologist, but Grosvenor, the nexialist, who does not appear in the short story. A nexialist is a man who knows everything about all the sciences, which has been made possible by recent advances in education--advances too recent, however, to have benefited any of the other members of the Beagle team. Since the compleat Spenglerian would have to have a full knowledge, not only of all the sciences, but also of all the arts and humanities, Grosvenor has to turn to Korita when he needs to decide what a Spenglerian would do about this or that.

In the affair of the Black Destroyer, Grosvenor is able to spot one of the fallacies in Korita's argument and then to determine just what kind of creature the Destroyer actually is. Having done this, he is able to offer a plan of attack that will defeat the Destroyer by pushing him into doing what he just happens to do in the short story. From the standpoint of logic, at least, the revised version is considerably better than the original. In the remainder of the novel Grosvenor turns to Korita for advice on a number of problems.

In his replies Korita makes some use of Spenglerian terms, but none whatever, so far as I can see, of Spenglerian thought--and indeed, it is difficult to see how anything in Spengler could possibly be applied to the problems at hand. In sum, the Spenglerianism is a mere excrescence that could be pruned from the novel without affecting it in any essential way.

#3 -- CITIES IN FLIGHT AS A TETRALOGY

Cities in Flight[5]--the "Okie" stories of James Blish, the stories in which cities like New York (complete with skyscrapers and subways) fly from star system to star system as migratory workers--must surely be the oddest set of books ever published as a tetralogy. The second volume is a juvenile wholly appropriate for any boy or girl scout, the third is a series of essentially conventional action-adventure novelettes, and the first and fourth are excellent short novels with more of the characteristics of mainstream fiction than we have any right to expect in books bearing the science-fiction label.

In style, in smoothness of sentence structure and in accuracy and vividness of vocabulary, Cities in Flight is far superior to The Voyage of the Space Beagle. Even so, there is no reason to be surprised at the comparison to van Vogt: one of the basic ideas (flying from planet to planet and solving problems on the basis of cultural morphology) could have come straight from "Black Destroyer," whether it does or not, and the narrative structure (the problems usually being, not solved, but instead rendered irrelevant by the emergence of new factors) obviously derives, if not directly from van Vogt, at least from fiction of a van Vogtian kind.

When viewed as a whole, Cities in Flight appears to be a tissue of contradictions. In one place it is said that the subways have not been used since New York went into space (III, 224) but in another one can hear the "edgy roar of the subway trains" (II, 64). In the second volume, young Crispin deFord leaves Earth with the city of Scranton and later transfers to New York, which has been in space some time, but in another volume he is said to have been city manager when New York first left Earth (III, 224). To the delight of surely every juvenile Chris is rewarded for his youthful virtues, at the end of Volume II, by being made city manager on his eighteenth birthday; to the delight of every adult he is said in two other places to have later been shot for managing the city into serious trouble (I,8; III, 16). We have a formal lecture on Okie history in the second volume, and a passage from "The Milky Way: Five Cultural Portraits" as a prologue to each of the others, but the historical "facts" given in this way are no more than dubiously consistent with those given or implied in the stories proper: e.g., it is implied that there was virtually no emigration from Earth to the stars between 2039 and 2375 (I,8; II, 60), but in one of the stories reference is made to "the great Colonial exodus of 2200-2400" (II, 42); again, although Earth is said to be virtually deserted (III, 13), it is able to maintain a military force, the Earth Police, powerful enough to dominate the entire galaxy.

With respect to the Chronology given in the volume I, the dates given or implied in Earthman, Come Home, the heart of the series and much the longest volume, get out of line on the second page of the text proper and stay out from there on--nor do they have a consistency of their own. In both places New York goes into space in 3115, but whereas the story says that Mayor Amalfi was "less than a century old" at that time (III, 16), the Chronology gives 2998 as the year of his birth. Since Amalfi is said to have been mayor for 600 years at the time of the Utopia-Gort affair (III, 18), the date for this should be about 3700, but we find 3602 in the Chronology. Passing over a number of such contradictions, we come to the business of the "Jungle," where the mayor of Buda-Pesht is said to be "two thousand years old at a minimum" and New York to have been in space for 1200 years (III, 145, 147); the former would put us beyond 4000 and the latter beyond 4300, but here the Chronology has 3905. Finally, the fact that the cities can fly little if any faster than five or six times the speed of light is absolutely essential to the stories told in the first half of Earthman, Come Home, but in the second half of that volume, without benefit of technological advance, they can fly at eight thousand times the speed of light. For the lower figure we have the statement that twice the speed of light is less than cruising speed for a city (III, 84). More important, any speed much higher than 5 C's would be quite inconsistent, not only with the awesomeness of the Rift (III, 63-67), but also with one of the principal themes of the tetralogy: the idea that interstellar commerce would be impossible without anti-death drugs, since as many as fifty years may elapse between planetfalls (III, 12, 65, 80). For the higher figure we have the March on Earth, in which the cities are able to cover in eight years (I,9) a distance of sixty-three thousand light years (III, 184). To be sure, it is originally estimated that the journey will take fifty-five years (which would be fast enough to make my point), but on the same page that estimate is found to be too high, and the eight years indicated by the Chronology agrees with the other figures given for dates of departure, distances, and speed in connexion with the March and with New York's flight to the Greater Magellanic Cloud (III, 188-90, 208).

Although some of the contradictions surely result from authorial carelessness, forgetfulness, or indifference, they are too numerous and too prominent to be regarded as anything other than an essential feature of the overall story. Since point of view is rigidly controlled throughout the work, every statement can be attributed to one or another of the various characters. Given this fact, we can make sense of the tetralogy by regarding it, not as a fiction in which a universe has been created by an omniscient, omnipotent author, but as historical narrative with a large admixture of myth; that is, by assuming that behind the sometimes accurate, sometimes erroneous, sometimes mythical narrative there is an actual history.

We would not be fair to Mr. van Vogt if we did not say that the explicit Spenglerianism of Cities in Flight is erroneous in one of its details, highly dubious in others (see below, #5), and rather absurd overall. The flat error is in the statement by Robert Helmuth that the building of the pyramids (which occurred in what Spengler considers the Egyptian springtime) was "the last act of an already dead culture" (I, 166).

The overall absurdity lies in that basic idea which it shares with The Voyage of the Space Beagle--the idea of the "cultural morphologist":

> Chris recognized the term from his force-feeding in Spengler. It denoted a scholar who could look at any culture at any stage of its development, relate it to all other cultures at similar stages, and produce specific predictions of how these people would react to a given proposal or event. (II, 145)

Spengler never uses the term "cultural morphologist," and he would surely never have imagined that his work could be put to any such narrow uses. If cultures are organisms, you can make for a culture predictions of the kind that can be made for any organism: e.g., that a baby boy will become a man, not a woman or a horse, and that, barring accidents, the man will pass through middle age to old age and death. To be sure, the more information you have, the more particular you can be in your predictions, but obviously there are limits beyond which you cannot go. Indeed, that there are such limits in anything and everything is perhaps the most fundamental idea in Spengler. As a matter of fact, the cultural morphologists of Cities in Flight never actually practice their trade: the various "cultures" with which the heroes deal are never presented with enough fullness to allow for any kind of Spenglerian assessment; the various stories turn on coincidence or on individual psychology of a rudimentary sort and would not be essentially different if explicit references to cultural morphology were entirely eliminated--which could be done by deleting a handful of sentences.

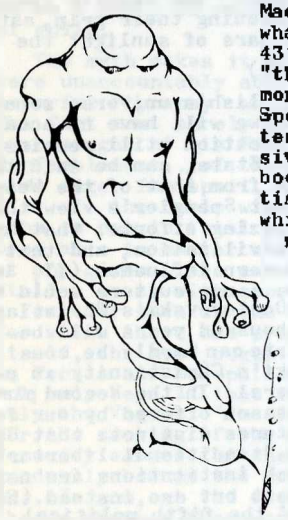
But to say all this is not to say that Cities in Flight is of no interest to the student of Spengler. The first volume gives us an intelligently Spenglerian view of the near future, and the other three, albeit very sketchily, the life story of a Spenglerian culture. In comparison with most science-fiction novels and series, Cities in Flight is a very rich work indeed.

#4 -- BLISH'S TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY: THE COMING OF CAESARISM

In 2013, in the first volume of Cities in Flight, the politics of the United States is dominated by Francis X. MacHinery, "hereditary head of the FBI" (I,25) and later president of the Western Common Market (II, 60). It is evident that his one political purpose is the maintainance and increase of his own power and that his prime political method is to win the confidence of the terrified populace by accusing prominent people of, and successfully prosecuting them for, treason. Bliss Wagoner, senator from Alaska and Chairman of the Committee on Space Flight, is highly dissatisfied with the world in which he lives, but precisely what he can do about it is not clear to him in 2013 or to the reader until the end of the book. He goes for advice to Dr. Corsi, who a few years earlier was drummed out of the government by MacHinery and who is obviously supposed to be the Oppenheimer of the twenty-first century. Dr. Corsi tells him that since scientific method no longer works, he would do best, if he wishes to achieve something on the order of an interstellar drive, not to launch any massive research projects like the old Manhattan District but instead to search among the crackpots for completely new ideas.

Under Wagoner's prodding, however, the government does launch two multi-billion-dollar projects, one concerned with drugs and one with the building of an unimaginably immense "bridge" on the surface of Jupiter. Because of the omnipresent "security" that cloaks all governmental operations, Wagoner is able to keep his real purposes secret both from his friends and enemies in 2013-18 and from the reader. Congress appropriates the necessary funds simply because such huge projects, especially when they have some connexion with "defense," have long been the common thing.

Against this background the book tells two stories in alternating chapters: in one Paige Russell, a space pilot on leave, finds himself mixed up in the drug project and in danger of being charged by MacHinery with a breach of security and thus of being railroaded to prison or death; in the other (the best story in the whole series) Robert Helmuth, an engineer on the bridge, which he compares to the pyramids and to the "Diagram of Power" that the now long extinct Martians had laid out "over the whole face of Mars" (I,66), is in danger of going mad from the senseless enormity of it all. The two stories come together in the next-to-last chapter, where Wagoner appears as deus ex machina to rescue both Russell and Helmuth from danger. Starting with some supposedly crackpot theories, the bridge project has achieved anti-gravity and the interstellar drive, and the other has developed drugs that will give men virtual immortality. Battered old Earth is to be left to MacHinery and his cohorts; freedom-loving people in general, and Russell and Helmuth in particular, can escape to the stars.



Although the term is not used in the book, MacHinery is a successful practitioner of what Spengler describes as Caesarism (II, 431-35). Dr. Corsi's reasons for believing "that scientific method doesn't work any more (I, 20-22), although not expressed in Spenglerian terms, are thoroughly consistent with Spengler's discussion of "conclusive" scientific thought (I, 417-28). The book also devotes some space to an adventist religious movement, the Witnesses, which seems to be a product of that "second religiousness" among the masses which Spengler considers an inevitable concomitant of Caesarism (II, 310-11, 435). Finally, although Helmuth is wrong about the pyramids, he is correctly Spenglerian in regarding giganticism as evidence that a culture is dead (Spengler, I, 291-95), and his remark on the Martian canali is certainly, on the part of Mr. Blish, a brilliant Spenglerian touch. All in all, then, the first volume of Cities in Flight is a thoroughly Spenglerian work.

#5 -- BLISH'S TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY: TWO CULTURES OR ONE?

In Blish's universe "historians generally agree that the fall of the West must be dated no later than 2105" (III, 61). They also agree in regarding the great conflict of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, that between the "West" and the communist alliance (later called the Bureaucratic State), as a conflict between "rival cultures" (II, 59; III, 9-13).

It is true that Spengler distinguished between the Russian soul and the Western:

> The death-impulse...for the West is the passion of drive all-ways into infinite space, whereas for Russians it is an expressing and expanding of self till "it" in the man becomes identical with the boundless plain itself...The idea of a Russian's being an astronomer! He does not see the stars at all, he sees only the horizon. Instead of the vault he sees the down-hang of the heavens--something that somewhere combines with the plain to form the horizon. For him the Copernican system...is spiritually contemptible. (II, 295n)

We find a similar passage in The Milky Way: Five Cultural Portraits:

> Space flight had been a natural, if late outcome of Western thought patterns, which had always been ambitious for the infinite. The Soviets, however, were opposed so bitterly to the idea that they would not even allow their fiction writers to mention it. Where the West had soared from the rock of earth like a sequoia, the Soviets spread like lichens over the planet, tightening their grip, satisfied to be at the bases of the pillars of sunlight the West had sought to ascend. (III, 10)

If we assume that the time stream of Blish's universe separates from our own sometime around 1950, we will have no occasion to speak of sputnik. Even so, the question still remains whether the Soviets, or the Bureaucratic State, can be said to belong to a Spenglerian culture distinct from that of the West. In the first place, to say so is to reject Spengler's view that Peter the Great succeeded in his Westernizing efforts, that Russia is therefore a part of the Western Civilization, and that communism is merely a continuance of Western influence (II, 192-196). To be sure, Spengler believed that a new culture would be born in Russia in the near future--"to Dostoyevski's Christianity (as opposed to Tolstoi's) the next thousand years will belong" (II, 196)--but the Bureaucratic State can hardly be considered an expression of either Dostoyevski's Christianity in particular or of springtime culture in general. In the second place, Spengler would surely reject the only reason offered by our future historians for considering the cultures distinct: that Russia differs from the West in not having "traditional libertarian political institutions" (II, 59), for such institutions are neither universal in nor peculiar to the West but are instead the products, in every Spenglerian culture, of the fifth political epoch, Revolution and Napoleonism.[7] In predicting that the West will reach Caesarism by 2000, Spengler is predicting the end of such institutions in the West utterly without regard to any external conflict. This being so, the conflict between the "West" and the Soviets is simply a struggle between rival power blocs; hence we must regard the victory of the Bureaucratic State as establishing the Final Political Form of the Western Culture.

#6 -- THE LIFE STORY OF THE EARTHMANIST CULTURE

Soon after the Earthmen begin to settle the nearby star systems they find that they have been preceded into interstellar space by the Vegans, who have controlled a large number of planets for several thousand years. In the hundred-year war that follows, the Earthmen finally achieve total victory. The great figure of the Vegan War, its Agamemnon, its Charlemagne, its Arthur, is Admiral Hrunta, who leads the forces of Earth to victory in the climactic battle, who makes that victory permanent by "scorching" Vega II, the capital world of the Vegan empire, and is then tried and condemned for genocide, but who finds enough support among the Earthmen to defy the Earth government and establish himself as Emperor of Space.

The life of a Spenglerian culture begins with the birth of a "myth of the great style" (I, 339). The new myth develops under two kinds of emphasis: that given it by the nobles and that given it by the priests. In the Western Culture, with its early rivalry between emperor and pope, the opposition between the emphases was very strong. For the Classical Culture the equally strong opposition has been largely obscured by the fact that only the military myth has survived in detail (e.g., in Homer). In the Arabian Culture, where the ruler was ordinarily both emperor and pope, the opposition was of little importance. In the Earthmanist Culture, where again only the military myth has survived in any detail, the opposition seems to be of even less importance in that the myth seems to have been overwhelmingly military rather than priestly. Even so, its purpose would seem to be primarily religious in that it has evidently developed as a means of relieving the Earthmen of a great burden of guilt.

The myth makes it appear that a small number of Earthmen were unaccountably able to prevail over a vast and enormously powerful "tyranny" which deserved to be completely destroyed. The fact must surely be that the Vegan civilization was in the last stages of its Final Political Form with the concomitant "enfeeblement...of the imperial machinery against young peoples eager for spoil, or alien conquerors" (Spengler, I, Table iii; cf. the table with this essay). Though outnumbered a million to one in total population, the Earthmen may well have been able to muster nearly as many fighting men as the Vegans at any given place and time, and they must have come into interstellar space with superior weapons or tactics or both--and with a ferocity such as the Vegans had perhaps never experienced but for which there are precedents aplenty in the history of Earth itself, the most cogent being perhaps the destruction wrought in Persia and Mesopotamia by the Mongols of Hulagu. And it was not only Vega II that felt the ferocity of the Earthmen, not only the Vegans: "In 2394 one of the...cities...was responsible for the sacking of the new Earth colony on Thor V; this act of ferocity earned for them the nickname of 'the Mad Dogs,' but it gradually became the model for dealing with Vegan planets" (II, 62). In sum, at the close of the Vegan War the Earthmen had to choose whether they would be proud or ashamed of what they had done. Their shame brought about the trial of Admiral Hrunta for genocide; their determination to be proud resulted not only in the establishment of the Hruntan Empire but also in the birth of the Earthmanist Culture.

"CONTEMPORARY" EPOCHS IN THE SPENGLERIAN WORLD (1600-0-1950)

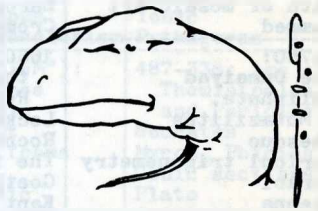
THE EPOCHS: P = POLITICAL; A = ART R = RELIGIO-PHILOSOPHIC; M = MATHEMATICAL	THE CLASSICAL CULTURE
PRE-CULTURAL PERIOD. Tribes and their chiefs; no politics, no State. Chaos of primitive expression forms.	1600-1100 Mycenean Age "Agamemnon"
CULTURE. EARLY PERIOD.	1100-650
P1. FORMATION OF FEUDAL ORDER	1100-750
R1. Spiritual Spring: the Priestly Myth	Demeter cult
the Military Myth	Trojan War
A1. Early forms, rural, unconsciously shaped	Doric
R2. Mystical-metaphysical shaping of Myth	Cosmogonies
P2. BREAKDOWN OF FEUDAL ORDER: THE INTERREGNUM	750-650
R3. Spiritual Summer: the Reformation	Orphism, et al.
A2. Exhaustion of possibilities in Early forms	Late Doric
CULTURE. LATE PERIOD.	630-300
P3. FORMATION OF A WORLD OF ARISTOCRATIC STATES	650-487
R4. First purely philosophical world views	Pre-Socratics
M1. Formation of a new Mathematic	Geometry
A3. Mature art forms, urban and conscious	Ionic
R5. Puritanism; opposition to rising absolutism	Pythagoras
P4. CLIMAX OF THE STATE FORM ("ABSOLUTISM"): Aristocracy held in check by alliance of King (or Tyrant) with Bourgeoisie	487-338: Age of Themistocles and Pericles.
R6. Spiritual Autumn: the Enlightenment	Socrates
A4. Intellectualization of Mature art forms	Myron, Phidias
M2. Zenith of mathematical thought	Conic sections
R7. The Great Conclusive Systems: Mystic	Plato
Scholastic	Aristotle
P5. REVOLUTION AND NAPOLEONISM: Bourgeoisie against alliance of King (or Tyrant) and Aristocracy; victory of Money over Blood.	338-300: partisans of Philip; Alexander.
A5. Exhaustion and dissolution of Mature forms	Corinthian
CIVILIZATION AND SPIRITUAL WINTER.	300-0-300
P6. TRANSITION FROM NAPOLEONISM TO CAESARISM: the Period of Contending States; dominance of Money ("Democracy").	300-100: from Alexanderism to Caesarism.
R8. Materialism (science, utility, prosperity)	The Cynics
R9. Ethical-social ideals replacing religion	Epicurus, Zeno
M3. Mathematics: the concluding thought	Archimedes
R10. Spread of final world sentiment	Roman Stoicism
A6. Art problems; craft art	Hellenistic art
P7. CAESARISM: victory of force-politics over Money; decay of the nations into a formless population, soon made into an imperium of gradually increasing crudity of despotism.	100-0-100 Sulla, Caesar, Tiberius, up to Domitian.
A7. Archaic, exotic art forms; giganticism.	Roman art
R11 (in the masses only). Second Religiousness	Syncretism
P8. THE FINAL POLITICAL FORM: the world as spoil. Gradual enfeeblement of imperial machinery against raiders and conquerors. Primitive human conditions thrusting up into the highly civilized mode of living.	100-300: full power of the Empire, then disintegration in the West.
A8. Fixed forms, giganticism, imperial display	Triumphal arch
THE AFTERMATH.	After 284, Arabianization in the East.

AND THE BLISHIAN WORLD (1950-4004)--SEE FOOTNOTE 8

THE ARABIAN CULTURE	THE WESTERN CULTURE	THE EARTHMANIST CULTURE
500-0	500-900	2289-2464
Persian-Seleucid Period	Frankish Period	Vegan-War Period
	Charlemagne	Admiral Hrunta
0-500	900-1500	2464-3111
0-400	900-1254	2464-3089
Primitive Christianity	German Catholicism	Hruntanism
Gospels, Apocalypses	Siegfried, Arthur	Vegan-War Myth
The cupola	Gothic	---
Patristic literature	Scholasticism	---
400-500	1254-1500	3089-3111
Monophysitism, et al.	Huss-Luther-Loyola	Arpad Hrunta
Proto-Arabesque	Early Renaissance	---
500-800	1500-1815	3111-3025
500-661	1500-1660	3111-3602
In Jewish literature	Galileo, Bacon	---
Algebra	Analysis	---
Zenith of mosaic art	Baroque	---
Mohammed	Cromwell; the Fronde	The Duchy of Gort
661-750: the Ommaiyad Caliphate.	1660-1789: the Ancien Regime.	3602-3900: Earth and Okies vs. Colonials
The Mutazilites	Locke, Rousseau	---
Arabesque	Rococo	---
Spherical trigonometry	The infinitesimal	---
Alfarabi	Goethe, Hegel	---
Avicenna	Kant	---
750-800: the Kufans; the first Abbassids.	1789-1815 Robespierre, Napoleon.	3900-3925 Okies vs. Earth and Colonials.
"Moorish" art	Romanticism	---
800-1400	1815-2522	3925-4004
800-1050: from Caliphate to Sultanate.	1815-2000: from Napoleonism to MacHineryism.	IN CLOUD 3944-4004 New York vs. IMT; Jorn vs. New York
Brethren of Sincerity	Comte, Darwin, Marx	The Stochastics
Movements in Islam	Schopenhauer, et al.	---
Albiruni	Riemann	---
Practical Fatalism	Ethical Socialism	---
Spanish-Sicilian art	Modern art	---
1050-1250: the Seljuk Sultanate.	2000-2105: MacHinery and Erdsenov; rise to full power of Bureaucratic State.	4004: THE TRIUMPH OF TIME OVER SPACE
"Oriental" art	The Jovian Bridge	
Syncretic Islam	Adventism; Witnesses	
1250-1400: rise-fall of the Ilkhanate; rise Ottoman Turks under whom the moribund culture endures to 1920.	2105-2522: full power; then decline and fall of Bureaucratic State.	
Gigantic buildings	---	
1800-1950: Westernization of Arabian lands and entire world.	After 2522, Earthmanization.	3925-4004: galaxy proper conquered by Web of Hercules

The attempts of the Bureaucratic State to bring Hrunta to justice culminate in the Battle of BD $40^{0}4048'$, which is said to have been "indecisive" (II, 62), but which is quite decisive in that it proves the State incapable of controlling more than a very limited volume of space. Since Hrunta's empire is only "the first of many such gimcrack 'empires'...to spawn on the fringes of Earth's jurisdiction" (IV, 12), we can put down the year of the Battle, 2464, as marking the beginning of the feudal order. Up to this time such Earthmen as have not been under the direct control of the Bureaucratic State have presumably been organized simply as tribes or war bands, each man acknowledging his military superiors only as temporary leaders and feeling loyalty only to the abstract concept of Earth; but now the temporary becomes apparently permanent, and loyalty finds a concrete object in this or that leader or "emperor."

In 2522 the Bureaucratic State collapses, the new Earth government proclaims a general amnesty, and the "Empty Years" begin (I, 8); the Earthmanist Culture is thus free to develop in its own way. Admiral Hrunta is poisoned in 3081, and his death is followed by the "rapid Balkanization of the Hruntan Empire, which was never even at its best highly cohesive" (II, 63); in 3111 Arpad Hrunta is "installed as Emperor of Space" (I,8). Here we seem to have the Interregnum which, according to Spengler, occurs in every culture and "forms the boundary between the feudal union and the class state" (II, 375). Since Hruntanism is a religion as well as a dynastic principle, and since periods of religious reformation coincide with the transition from feudalism to the aristocratic state (II, 386), we are perhaps justified in listing Arpad Hrunta in our table as a religious reformer.



In an aristocratic state the king's authority depends for its existence on the power of one or another of the aristocratic factions. The "absolute" state emerges when the King allies himself with the bourgeoisie and thus finds strength enough to suppress aristocratic disorder. In Earthmanist society as a whole, Earth is king, the various empires, duchies, and republics are the aristocracy, and the Okie cities are the bourgeoisie. Here the development into absolutism seems to culminate in 3602 with the "reduction" of the Duchy of Gort, the death of Arpad Hrunta, and the "dissolution of the Empire" (I, 8), all brought about by the "recrudescent Earth police" (IV, 12), for we now have a galactic society in which the Earth police keep the space lanes clear for Okie commerce (III, 184-85). Since the Duchy of Gort represents an extreme form of Hruntanism, and since puritanism is a concomitant of the effort to preserve the aristocratic state (Spengler II, 286n, 424), we can perhaps list the Duchy as an instance of puritanism.

When aristocratic factionalism has been suppressed, the king and the aristocracy become allies against the rising power of the bourgeoisie, who soon become ripe for revolution, as do the Okies after the "collapse of the germanium standard" in 3900.

The gathering of the mayors aboard Buda-Pesht (III, 163-65) and the March on Earth that follows, even though it results in apparent defeat in the Battle of Earth, can be regarded as the 1789, and the passage of the anti-Okie bill in 3925 as the 1815, of Earthman history.

At this point, so far as the galaxy proper is concerned, the story of the Earthmanist Culture comes to a sudden end, for the Earthman domains are invaded and conquered by a non-human "culture," the Web of Hercules (I,9). Since this is so, we are unable to test our evaluation of the 3900-3925 period against later events. Even so, and even though Mayor Amalfi, the principal hero and leading cultural morphologist of Cities in Flight, believes that the Okies have been completely defeated (III, 205-07), I can see no reason to believe that the restoration of the Ancien Regime in 3925 would have been any more permanent than it was in 1815.

Following the Battle of Earth, New York moves from the galaxy proper to the Greater Magellanic Cloud. The military and political events that ensue upon its arrival there are perhaps, and the philosophy of Stochasticism is certainly, consistent with the beginning of the Period of Contending States. Here the beginning is all that we can know anything about, for once again history is cut short--this time by the "totally universal physical cataclysm" of the year 4004 (IV, 14).

#7 -- THE TRIUMPH OF TIME OVER SPACE

The fourth volume of Cities in Flight was first published as an American paperback with the title "The Triumph of Times," but for the hardbound London edition "that title disappeared--not without bowing to Swinburne--when it was found to resemble too closely that of another science-fiction novel" (IV, 5). Since the principal theme here is not especially Spenglerian, my purpose is simply to note that the original title, and indeed the story itself, could have been inspired, whether or not it was, by a passage on Spengler's final page:

> Time triumphs over Space, and it is Time whose inexorable movement embeds the ephemeral incident of the Culture, on this planet, in the incident of Man--a form wherein the incident life flows on for a time, while behind it all the streaming horizons of geological and stellar histories pile up in the light-world of our eyes. (II, 507)

FOOTNOTES

1) The volume-page references in this essay are to the translation by Charles Francis Atkinson (two volumes: New York: Knopf, 1926, 1928). Spengler completed this work in late 1922.

2) The Issue at Hand (Chicago: Advent, 1964), p. 60n.

3) The page references are to Raymond J. Healy and J. Francis McComas, editors, Famous Science-Fiction Stories: Adventures in Time and Space (New York: Modern Library, 1957). "Black Destroyer" was first published in 1939.

4) New York: McFadden, 1957; originally published in 1950. This novel also incorporates the other story mentioned by Mr. Blish, "Discord in Scarlet," 1939, though presumably in a revised version (I have not read the original).

5) The volume-page references are to "the author's final text" as published in London by Faber and Faber: I. They Shall Have Stars (1965); II. A Life for the Stars (1964); III. Earthman, Come Home (1965); IV. A Clash of Cymbals (1965). The first London editions were published in, respectively, 1956, 1964, 1956, 1959. The first New York editions: I. Year 2018! (Avon paperback, 1957); II. A Life for the Stars (Putnam, 1962); III. Earthman, Come Home (Putnam, 1955); IV. The Triumph of Time (Avon paperback, 1958). The two Putnam titles have also been issued in paperback by Avon.

6) See the table on pp.182-3

7) Spengler uses the phrase "centralized bureaucracy-state" in connexion with the Egyptian third political epoch (I, Table iii), but I hardly think that Blish's Bureaucratic State is intended to be an aristocratic state.

8) This table is based primarily on the three tables that appear at the end of Spengler's first volume: "Culture Epochs" and "Political Epochs" (organized as in this table) and "Spiritual Epochs" (organized as spring, summer, autumn, winter). Making the table turned out to be very difficult for me, partly because Spengler does not tabulate the political epochs for the Arabian Culture, partly because the dates in the three tables are not wholly consistent with each other or with those in the text, which is not wholly self-consistent, but primarily because of the need to select and interpret in such a way that a much abbreviated amalgamation would make sense to me, and hopefully to the reader.

H.G. WELLS
critic of progress

by Jack Williamson

Chapter Three: The Limits of Progress: Human

#1 -- THE HUMAN CONFLICT

Turning from the cosmic to the human limits upon progress, we must keep in mind that this distinction is entirely arbitrary, a convenience for discussion but not a fact of nature. If man is just another random atom in an infinite cosmic process, significant only to himself, then everything human is also cosmic. Whatever illusions he may cultivate, man is still, as Wells saw him, a part of nature. In the words of Huxley, "Man, physical, intellectual, and moral, is...as purely a part of the cosmic process, as the humblest weed." The human limits, as we shall discuss them here, are simply those cosmic factors internal to mankind, which restrain possible progress.

However wholly a part of nature, man is divided against himself. The human animal, perfected through evolution for survival as a solitary individual, is forever at odds with the more recent social animal who survives with his group by means of such new adaptations as mutual solidarity and the division of labour. This two-fold and conflicting nature of man, explained and documented by the facts of evolution, gave the early Wells his most significant literary material. For he, like other men, was divided against himself.

This universal conflict between the two natures of man is, of course, no recent discovery. It underlies the symbolism of religion. It creates the problems of psychiatry and the law. Regarded with a sentimental self-pity, it becomes "the human condition." It is the stuff of drama: tragedy and comedy differ simply in viewpoint. Tragedy identifies the observer with the suffering hero--the proud Oedipus, the jealous Othello, the aspiring Faust--who is doomed by the excess of primitive individualism that keeps him from adapting to the rule of the group. Comedy, on the other hand, identifies the observer with the society, inviting not pity and terror inspired by the cosmic destruction visited upon the individual who refuses to conform, but rather the laughter inspired by ridicule directed at some social type of failure to conform. When the offending type is allowed to become an individual with whom the observer can identify himself--as does Wells's Invisible Man, near the end of the novel--the effect veers promptly from comedy to tragedy. Though this human conflict is at the heart of all literature, which exists partly to transmit the required patterns of social response, it assumes a peculiar relevance to the study of Wells's early fiction.

In story after story Wells is dramatising aspects of this conflict within himself, developing his criticism of progress as a pattern of thought.

The conscious awareness of this internal tension so evident in the early fiction must have come at least partly from Huxley, the militant champion of Darwin and Wells's most admired teacher, who writes:

> For his successful progress, throughout the savage state, man has been largely indebted to those qualities which he shares with the ape and the tiger; his exceptional physical organization; his cunning, his sociability, his curiosity, and his imitativeness; his ruthless and ferocious destructiveness when his anger is aroused by opposition.
>
> (ibid., 51-2)

Among civilised men, however, these animal traits are no longer useful.

> In fact, civilized man brands all these ape and tiger promptings with the name of sins; he punishes many of the acts which flow from them as crimes; and, in extreme cases, he does his best to put an end to the survival of the fittest of former days by axe and rope. (ibid., 52)

Within modern man, that is to say, one current of cosmic force has set against another. The ancient law of change that shaped the human animal is now set against the newer rule that is evolving human society. In Huxley's words,

> The ethical progress of society depends, not on imitating the cosmic process, still less in running away from it, but in combating it...the history of civilization details the steps by which men have succeeded in building up an artificial world within the cosmos. (ibid., 83)

This unceasing conflict between the institutions of society and the original animal nature of man gave Wells a dramatic form for such novels as The Island of Dr. Moreau and The Invisible Man.

Sex, anthropologists suggest, may have been the social binding force that cemented solitary animals into the first prehuman hordes, although the sex drives themselves had to be controlled as the family rose. Wells tells in the autobiography (pp.400-1) how Lang and Atkinson's Human Origins showed him the role of primitive taboos in restraining male jealousy to make tribal societies possible. Such views of sex shaped Wells's later and weaker romance, In the Days of the Comet (1906), and gave him his theme for a whole group of marriage novels, ranging from The New Machievelli (1911) to The Research Magnificent (1915). Though sex gets little emphasis in the early fiction, Wells had stubbornly resented the repressions of society from the time of his first rebellion against his mother's harsh religion and her schemes to make a draper of him. The idea of progress came to stand for individual freedom, yet his romantic individualism was always in conflict with a realistic scientific awareness of man's place in the cosmos. His science fiction became a mechanism with which he tried to objectify and solve this inner conflict, but the struggle lasted all his life.

Huxley, by the time he became Wells's teacher, seems to have regarded the outcome of this ancient conflict with a growing doubt. As William Irvine comments in his history of the impact of evolution upon the Victorian world, "One suspects in Huxley --despite his dedicated optimism and his demonstration of clockwork harmony--a deep sense that the universe is hostile."[2] The motive behind Huxley's strenuous campaign to advance progress through better education seems to have been no serene confidence in human goodness, but rather a grim concern with human defects that must be overcome. He writes in "Agnosticism" (1899)[3] that he knows

> no study which is so unutterably saddening as that of the evolution of humanity...Out of the darkness of prehistoric ages man emerges with the marks of his lowly origin strong upon him. He is a brute, only more intelligent than the other brutes, a blind prey to impulses, which as often as not lead him to destruction: a victim to endless illusions, which make his mental existence a terror and a burden, and fill his physical life with barren toil and battle. (ibid., 256)

No friend of progress, man

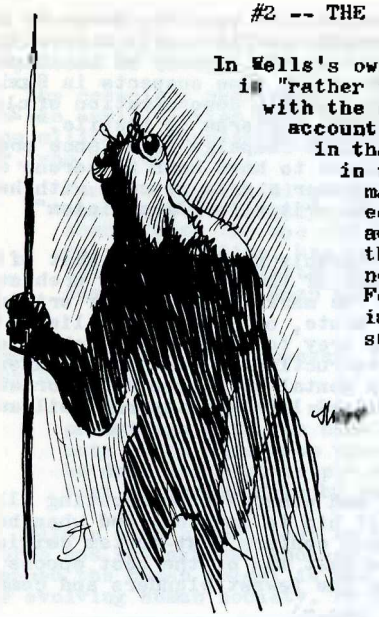
> makes a point of killing and otherwise persecuting all those who first try to get him to move on; and when he has moved a step, foolishly confers post-mortem deification on his victims...The best men of the best epochs are simply those who make the fewest blunders and commit the fewest sins. (ibid., 256-7)

Certainly Huxley himself has no illusions about the possibility of rapid or easy progress. In "Evolution and Ethics" he somewhat gloomily observes:

> The cosmic nature born with us, and, to a large extent, necessary for our maintenance, is the outcome of millions of years of severe training, and it would be folly to imagine that a few centuries will suffice to subdue its masterfulness to purely ethical ends. (85)

Influenced no doubt by Huxley, both in the lecture room and more indirectly, the early Wells seems to have felt that these internal barriers were no more likely to yield to progress than the external limits he had explored in The Time Machine and "The Star." In "Cosmic Pessimism in H.G. Wells's Scientific Romances" Mark R. Hillegas says that these romances were intended "to jolt the English-speaking world" out of its complacent "belief that the world would get better and better," and that Wells's effort "took the form of imaginative presentation of Huxley's pessimism."[4] Though this may be, it is less than all the truth. Wells's real purpose must have been more complex, arising from a set of contradictory attitudes reflecting the inherent human conflict that we have been exploring. Though he may have been influenced by Huxley's pessimism, the restless non-conformist in his being was fascinated by the forlorn hope of progress. The problem of progress, identified with the deepest conflicts of his own inner life, seems to have become a sort of obsession from which he tried to free himself by allowing the antagonistic forces to work themselves into the objective form of the early fiction.

#2 -- THE ISLAND OF DR. MOREAU



In Wells's own words, "The Island of Dr. Moreau is "rather painful." It may be placed, along with the satires of Juvenal and Swift's account of Gulliver among the Houyhnhms, in that class of ambivalent literature in which a passionate love for a human ideal is almost obscured by an equally passionate hatred of human actuality. Although Wells lacks the complex irony of Swift, his novel has its own dark intensity. Few books have stated the native imperfections of mankind with such savage effect.

The second of the scientific fantasies, following The Time Machine, it is based, Wells says, on an idea that he had used in an article in the Saturday Review. Dr. Moreau, a vivisectionist, employs surgery, chemistry, and hypnotism to transform animals into semihuman beings. In a preface, Wells remarks that

> now and then, though I rarely admit it, the universe projects itself towards me in a hideous grimace. It grimaced that time, and I did my best to express my vision of the aimless torture in creation. (SFN, ix)

The novel dramatises Huxley's metaphor of the garden in the "Prolegomena," published in 1894, written as an introduction to "Evolution and Ethics," which he had originally delivered as the Romanes Lecture at Oxford in 1893. With this elaborate analogy, showing how the gardener interferes with the usual processes of evolution, Huxley illustrates"the apparent paradox that ethical nature, while born of cosmic necessity, is necessarily at enmity with its parent" (op.cit.,viii). The gardener suspends "the state of nature" in favour of "the state of art": he substitutes artificial selection for natural selection; he aids his selected plants in their struggle for survival. In the novel Moreau is such a gardener, interfering with natural processes to create an artificial state. When his interference ceases, the state of nature prevails again.

> the ethical process is in opposition to the principle of the cosmic process, and tends to the suppression of the qualities best fitted for success in that struggle. (ibid., 31)

The worship of pain which so darkens the novel may have come from the original essay, "Evolution and Ethics," where Huxley writes:

> But there is another aspect of the cosmic process, so perfect as a mechanism, so beautiful as a work of art. Where the cosmopoietic energy works through sentient beings, there arises, among its other manifestations, that which we call pain or suffering. This baleful product of evolution increases in quantity and in intensity, with advancing grades of animal organization, until it attains its highest level in man. (50-1)

The beastliness of mankind is the theme of the novel, driven home from the very beginning. Written with an air of documentary factuality that echoes Defoe as well as Swift, the story opens with a shipwreck in the Pacific. The narrator, a former biology student of Huxley's named Edward Prendick, survives after the wreck in a dinghy with two other men. By the eighth day of drifting, almost without water, his companions have been reduced by thirst to attempted murder and cannibalism. So superficial is civilisation.

Prendick is picked up by the aptly named Ipecacuanha, the schooner upon which Moreau's assistant, Montgomery, is ferrying a new shipment of experimental animals to the island laboratory. The schooner's captain, a man somewhat less human than the creations of Moreau, sets Prendick adrift again near the island, leaving him Moreau's unwelcome guest.

Wells creates an atmosphere of dark horror and desperate adventure with the smoking jungle of this volcanic island, with Prendick's glimpses of the shambling, enigmatic Beast Folk, with the ominous behavior of Montgomery and Moreau, with the unendurable screaming of a puma under vivisection. Misunderstanding what he sees and hears, Prendick suspects at first that Moreau is vivisecting men. He attempts to escape, hides among the half-human creations of the knife, and is finally recaptured by Moreau, who explains his work. After Moreau's death, his creatures slowly revert toward their original bestial forms, losing their human habits and characteristics. In an ending that recalls Gulliver's return to discover that all human beings are Yahoos, Prendick, back among civilised men, is haunted by the conviction that they are another Beast People, "animals half-wrought into the outward image of human souls." He is obsessed with a dread that they too will begin to revert.

These Beast People have nearly all the human flaws of Swift's Yahoos. They are filthy, stupid, furtively cunning. In the final reversion, they exhibit revolting traits of the animals from which they had been made. The Monkey Man chatters resoundingly empty "big thinks" and the Leopard Man, dehumanised by the taste of blood, stalks Prendick through the jungle. There are reverting Wolf Women, Bull Men, and the odious Hyaena-Swine, all presented with a shrewd verisimilitude and a vast narrative gusto.

> So, panting, tumbling against rocks, torn by brambles, impeded by ferns and weeds, I helped to pursue the Leopard Man who had broken the Law, and the Hyaena-Swine ran, laughing savagely, by my side.

The one striking difference between the Yahoos and the Beast Folk is in sexuality. Swift makes sex, next to filth, the most disgusting trait of the Yahoos. Wells merely mentions sex. The Beast People under Moreau do marry and bear offspring: creatures which he uses as material for more vivisection.

Reverting, they abandon marriage; and some of them, the females first, begin "to disregard the injunction of decency." There is nothing more explicit. The reason for Wells's restraint may lie in his own tolerant attitudes toward sex, or perhaps in a prudent desire not to shock his Victorian readers--even as it stands the novel horrified many reviewers.[7]

From the first chapter, when Prendick and his two shipwrecked companions hand halfpence to determine which shall die to feed the others, Wells emphasises the government of the cosmos by chance. Chance brings Prendick to the island. Chance has ruined Montgomery. Chance dictates most of the plot action, as when an upset lamp burns the laboratory. This reign of chance, of course, is itself an external limit upon the hope of human progress, but it also sets internal limits. Moreau, asked why he models his creations upon the human form, confesses that he chose it by chance. Man, that is to say, are not made in the image of God; the human pattern, through the mechanisms of heredity and evolution, is thrown together by chance. Human strength and human weakness, human goodness and human evil, human survival and human death, are all alike the outcome of chance. Prendick escapes from the island, at the end of the book, through another unlikely freak of chance; his old enemy, the captain of the Ipecacuanha, arrives dead in a drifting boat in which Prendick puts back to sea.

Dr. Moreau is a rather complex symbol, at one level almost coequal with chance. Most obviously, as creator of the Beast Folk and ruler of the microcosmic island, he is God. In the autobiography, Wells tells how his religious faith was shattered when he was eleven or twelve years old by a nightmare in which "there was Our Father in a particularly malignant phase, busy roasting a poor broken sinner rotating slowly over a fire built under the wheel." He says that he saw no Devil in the dream. "My mind in its simplicity went straight to the responsible fountain head...Never had I hated God so intensely"(45). When he speaks of The Island of Dr. Moreau as "an exercise in youthful blasphemy" (Preface, SFN, ix), he is doubtless thinking of this divine aspect of his protagonist. On the one hand, Moreau is the gravely courteous gentleman, concerned about the comfort and the safety of his uninvited guest, willing even to explain his work. But, with the same self-contradiction that had baffled the young Wells, he is the merciless vivisector, "the One with the Whip," whose ill-formed creatures worship him with a satiric litany:

> "His is the House of Pain.
> "His is the Hand that makes.
> "His is the Hand that wounds.
> "His is the Hand that heals...
> "His are the stars in the sky"

But this sardonic expression of Wells's old resentment at what he felt was divine hypocrisy is only a part of Dr. Moreau. At another level, Moreau is an ambiguous portrait of the scientist as planner of progress. Fragments of his appearance, personality, and history seem to have been taken from Huxley, whom Wells had known as another aging and somewhat imperious biologist. Both Huxley and Moreau have the same sense of power, the same stern inclination toward destruction. After an interview with Huxley in 1886, Beatrice Potter, later Mrs. Sidney Webb, wrote of him in her diary:

> As a young man, though he felt no definite purpose in life he felt power...He is a leader of man...He is truthloving, his love of truth finding more satisfaction in demolition than in construction. (quoted by Irvine, op. cit., 301)

As Wells knew Huxley,

> He was a yellow-faced, square-faced old man, with bright little brown eyes, lurking as it were in caves under his heavy grey eyebrows, and a mane of grey hair brushed back from his wall of forehead, who lectured in a clear firm voice without hurry and without delay.[8]

Moreau, a white-haired man "with a fine forehead and rather heavy features" has the same sort of self-confidence, the same firm and steady voice. Like Huxley again, Moreau has been attacked by anti-vivisectionists.

But the differences between the portrait and the model are even more significant. More humane than Moreau, Huxley had been able to convince Lord Shaftesbury and his other critics that he advocated no cruelty to animals. "Like Charles Darwin," his son testifies, he was in fact fond of animals, and "he never followed any line of research involving experiments on living and conscious animals." Huxley writes in "Autobiography" that all of his life he has been "most unfortunately sensitive to the disagreeables which attend anatomical pursuits."[10] The figure of Moreau, on the other hand, seems almost deliberately calculated to arouse anti-vivisectionists; exposed by an enterprising journalist in a pamphlet called "The Moreau Horrors," he has been "simply howled" out of England. Huxley had been an idol of Wells, the scientist as intellectual liberator (Exp.162). Moreau, whom the narrator always distrusts, is the scientist as Lucifer or Frankenstein, whose final destruction is the fitting penalty for his impious meddling into forbidden secrets. As the symbol of science, Moreau forces a sort of progress upon his island, but the changes he engineers are undesired, pointless, and temporary. Calmly ignoring the unspeakable agony of his victims, he abandons them after they have left his laboratory. Symbolically, at the end, he is killed by the torture-maddened Puma Woman.

At another and even more significant level of symbolism, Moreau is neither the Hebrew God of vengeance, nor the symbol of fallible human science. He is Nature. In the microcosm, his will is natural law. His only purpose, which is totally unrelated to the feelings or the welfare of his creatures, is "to find out the extreme limit of plasticity in a living shape." He is amoral as the cosmos. In his own words,

> To this day I have never troubled about the ethics of the matter. The study of Nature makes a man at last as remorseless as Nature. I have gone on, not heeding anything but the question I was pursuing, and the material has... dripped into the huts yonder.

A symbol of the cosmic forces of organic evolution, Moreau shapes his creations "in the bath of burning pain," and he is utterly indifferent to their fate.

At all these levels, Moreau exists as a blackly pessimistic comment on the whole idea of progress. As God, he is wantonly cruel and uncaring. As the human manager of progress, he is trying "to burn out the animal," to create " a rational creature" of his own, but he always fails.

> They build themselves their dens, gather fruit and pull herbs--marry, even. But I can see through it all, see into their very souls, and see there nothing but the souls of beasts, beasts that perish--anger, and the lusts to live and gratify themselves.

The ineradicable animal taint corrupts all his creations, and finally kills him. As Nature, he causes infinite suffering in a cosmos where blind fate, a vast and pitiless mechanism, "seems to cut and shape the fabric of existence" and where survival or death is finally determined by chance alone.

Montgomery is a more tantalising figure than Moreau. He is the civilised man destroyed by his own animal nature. "A youngish man with flaxen hair" and "watery expressionless eyes," he had been a London medical student until he was forced into exile as Moreau's assistant merely by chance, because he happened to lose his head "for ten minutes on a foggy night." A sort of Christ to Moreau's God, he fraternises with the Beast People and attempts to teach them. As Moreau says, "He's ashamed of it, but I believe he half likes some of these beasts." Though he retains the human warmth that Moreau lacks, he is a weakling--perhaps because humaneness is weak. He drinks. After Moreau's death, he goes on a "bank holiday," sharing his brandy with M'Ling, the Bear Man that is "the only thing that had ever really cared for him." Killed at last by his brutal companions--or perhaps by his own compassion--Montgomery dies murmuring, "The last of this silly universe. What a mess--" The ugly futulity of his death is illuminated by the cold splendour of inhuman nature: the rising sun falls "like a glory upon his death-shrunken face."

Wells's satire in the novel is aimed not only at the animal nature of man, but at the folly and futility of human institutions. The Monkey Man has a "fantastic trick of coining new words" and gabbles about names that mean nothing. The law is as useless as learning against the reverting beast. "Not to go on all-Fours; that is the Law. Are we not Men?...Not to Claw Bark of Trees; that is the Law. Are we not Men?" Religion is no better. The divinity of Dr. Moreau does not save him from the Puma Woman. Nor does it help Prendick, when he attempts to keep the Beast People in subjection with the desperate fiction that Moreau is not dead. "Even now he watches over us...The House of Pain will come again." Reduced to the scale of the island microcosm, learning and law and religion become pathetic absurdity.

As a further irony, Wells shows that the good in human nature is no more availing than the bad. The tragic flaw that splits the microcosm is, in fact, human benevolence.

Montgomery dies of kindness. The Dog Man, loyal to Prendick, regresses with the others; still faithful, he is killed by the Hyaena-Swine. But it is Prendick himself, the enlightened humanitarian, who brings about the catastrophe. As Anthony West writes:

> The disaster...is the consequence of turning loose the liberated intellect...It overthrows the crudely effective theocracy and releases the animals from their bondage of pain and terror in the hope that it is setting them free for the pursuit of happiness.

They use their freedom, however, only to revert to savagery. "The enlightened intruder can only appeal to their better natures--a useless course as they do not have any such." Thus Prendick, the image of rational science and human benevolence, appears as the final ironic symbol of progress. Acting with the best of intentions to aid the creatures of the island, he causes first their horrible regression and then their destruction.

All these internal weaknesses of men, seen from the mechanistic viewpoint, are simply reflexions of an external cosmos which has no bias in favour of goodness. The final failure of Prendick's effort at advancement, no less than the rage of the half-made Puma Woman or the blood-lust of the Leopard Man or Montgomery's chance blunder in the fog, is simply another consequence of this blindly indifferent cosmos. West comments that Wells's pessimistic theme is "a kind of treason" to Huxley, who had tried to build a new intellectual foundation for the old moral values. As West states this theme,

> The consequence of the Darwinian intellectual revolution--with its establishment of the machanistic view of the universe on a solid basis of observed fact--will be a moral collapse. (ibid.,69)

Wells dramatises the causes for this collapse with a grim conviction, discovering them in benevolence rather than in more obvious human faults, in the institutions of society as well as in the brute nature of humanity.

The dramatic tension of the book arises largely from the conflict between enlightened reason and primitive emotion. The idea of progress appears here, as elsewhere, to have become a part of this basic conflict, of which Wells himself perhaps was not entirely conscious. Moreau is pure reason, striving with his "bath of burning pain" to consume all the "cravings, instincts, desires" that make his victims creatures of feeling. Progress is presented as an ill-fated effort to advance civilisation by eliminating the animal nature of mankind. Scientific reason is the agent of progress; primitive emotion is the enemy of society, which reason must subdue. Original sin must be overcome by the enlightened will: that was the essence of the traditional religion, which Wells had consciously rejected but not completely escaped. Writing this story must have been a means of giving such old conflicts a comfortable distance. To Wells the biologist, reason is no better than feeling; his intellectual Martians are no nobler than their terrestrial victims, and his Puma Woman has the same right to survive as Dr. Moreau.

Even the island setting is ironical, West suggests, because so many eighteenth-century romances about the natural goodness of man had been set on tropical islands.

Against this conventional romantic backdrop, Wells

> bleakly puts forward the classical view of man as a creature only able to rise above his brutish defects under some system of restraints and goads. (ibid., 69)

In this grim world, charity is a flaw as fatal as stupidity or treachery or cruelty. It is the arrival of Prendick, the modern man of rational good will, that shatters Moreau's symbolic microcosm. Prendick himself reverts at the end, the progressive scientist slipping back toward the ancestral brute. "I am told that even now my eyes have a strange brightness, a swift alertness of movement."

#13 -- THE INVISIBLE MAN

The Invisible Man is a parable of man's inner conflict: of animal man against social man. Griffin (even his name is symbolic of his nonhuman nature) is the utter individualist, the primitive animal. In the words of Kent, the contrasting social man, "He's mad, inhuman. He is pure selfishness. He thinks of nothing but his own advantage, his own safety." He has sought invisibility as a cloak of immunity against all the sanctions of society. In pursuit of purely selfish goals, "he has cut himself off from his kind." He has betrayed and destroyed his father. He has left behind a girl he had known. He lives in complete isolation, and dies at war with his species. The strychnine that he takes as a tonic is a striking symbol of his nature. "It's the devil," Kemp informs him. "It's the palaeolithic in a bottle."

Wells's special concern in The Invisible Man, as in "The Country of the Blind," is with the role of the intellect. No romantic, Wells does not expect human reason to be a source of truth and goodness. If Griffin is pure selfishness, he is also pure intelligence. His brain is simply a useful adaptation in the struggle for survival, as amoral as the larger brains of Wells's Martians in The War of the Worlds and the even huger brain of the Grand Lunar in First Men in the Moon. Intelligence, like any other adaptation, has biological utility only so long as it enables its owner to compete more efficiently for survival. In the case of the Martians, even an enormous brain is not immune to decay. In the case of man, such a mind as Griffin's is equally vulnerable, because survival requires that intelligence, no less than emotion, must yield to the institutions of society.

A solitary human intellect is more viable than a solitary head or gland or cell. Anthony West comments that Griffin's invisibility, like the sight of Nuñez in "The Country of the Blind," is "symbolic of intellectual isolation" and adds that "in both stories men are absolutely corrupted in the sense that they have special knowledge that others do not share"(DW, 69).

The Invisible Man, like The War of the Worlds, was planned and written at Woking, where Wells had moved with his second wife early in 1895 (Exp.,457-8). Published as a book in September, 1897, it shows more careful writing than most of Wells's later work; he told an interviewer that the finished version of 55,000 words had been cut down from an earlier draft of about 100,000 (EHGW, 113). Although some readers have been critical, it is actually among the best of Wells's scientific fantasies in terms of literary craftmanship. The plot has the simplicity of classic tragedy: Griffin uses his amazing invention to make war upon the human race, and he is destroyed by the inevitable consequences of that action. The stark economy of the plot is marred by no conventional melodrama or sentimentality. Griffin's incredible feats are made acceptable by ingenious explanations and a skilful presentation. The strange is deftly interwoven with the known. The contrast of every-day places and people against Griffin's symbolic inhumanity is particularly effective; the Sussex background is solidly believable, and such comic figures as Mr. Thomas Marvel seem worthy of Dickens.

If readers tend to find fault (EHGW, 113), the reason may lie partly in this very artistic perfection. Wells sticks uncompromisingly to his theme that the isolated human animal must yield to society or die. The trouble may be that, even after half a million years of necessary repetition, this sound moral lesson is still unwelcome. As primitive individualists, we want to sympathise with Griffin. We can't help taking some guilty share in his wild schemes for an individual victory over the collective will. Relentlessly, however, Wells shows that his untamed individualism, like our own, is doomed. Logically and morally, we are convinced. Yet secretly, like the comic tramp, who tries to steal Griffin's invention for himself, we long for the power of invisibility: for personal independence from the old opression of the crowd.

Most of the critical quibbles stem from the way Wells handles the point of view. The simple events of Griffin's tragic fall are presented indirectly. Except for a few chapters (19-23) in which he is telling Kemp how he made his remarkable discovery and launched his private war against mankind, we see the action through the eyes of society, from the collective viewpoint of various minor characters. With this social point of view, the effect of the novel is deliberately comic, rather than tragic, until near the end. Wells seizes eagerly upon these comic possibilities to draw a whole series of richly human figures--all selfishly anti-social enough to be convincing, but all inevitably united in the act of social revenge against the supreme selfishness of Griffin. Although this management of the narrative seems "clumsy" to Bergonzi, it would be hard to improve. Wells has at least two good reasons for avoiding Griffin's point of view. First, the use of Griffin's viewpoint would have cost him all of the mystery, surprise, and suspense of the earlier part of the story, in addition to most of the satiric comedy.

Equally important, it would have cost him the best symbolism of Griffin's isolation--for Griffin's remoteness from the reader is symbolic of his denial of society.

Griffin, with his native animal egoism, could hardly have observed all the vividly detailed and richly peopled Sussex background that redeems the fairy-tale notion of invisibility.

> It was the finest of all possible Whit-Mondays, and down the village street stood a row of nearly a dozen booths and a shooting gallery, and on the grass by the forge were three yellow and chocolate waggons and some picturesque strangers of both sexes putting up a cocoanut shy. The gentlemen wore blue jerseys, the ladies white aprons and quite fashionable hats with heavy plumes. Wodger of the Purple Fawn and Mr. Jaggers the cobbler, who also sold second-hand ordinary bicycles, were stretching a string of union-jacks and royal ensigns (which had originally celebrated the Jubilee) across the road.

Griffin as observer could not have seen such a background with this objective detachment, or with this robust affection.

The common reader may object that the story has no really sympathetic characters. Griffin is the enemy of all, but his opponents are no more likable. The minor characters, the grasping landlady and the curious clockmaker, the ignorant vicar and the bumbling general practitioner, are all satirised types, unsympathetic almost by definition. Thomas Marvel, at the end, is pouring over Griffin's stolen papers and dreaming Griffin's selfish dream. Kemp, the scientist as social man, shows a mean duplicity in his attempt to betray Griffin to the police. But each act of animal selfishness or of social vengeance offers its own support to the theme. The inclusion of an unselfish hero or a lovable heroine would have violated Wells's basic statement about the brutal nature of mankind.

More obviously than most of the other "scientific romances," the novel is a fantasy. As Wells himself comments, he is dealing in these stories not like Jules Verne with the actual possibilities of progress, but rather with the type of fantasy that humanises an arbitrary fantastic notion by "translation into commonplace terms and a rigid exclusion of other marvels from the story"(Preface, SFN, viii). Though his scientific patter is cleverly designed to make Griffin's tragedy plausible, he clearly feels no need to be really logical. Merely for the sake of the plot, he glosses over the two serious logical inconsistencies: Griffin's lack of invisible clothing, and Griffin's ability to see.

Griffin's first test of his new secret makes a bit of white wool invisible. He could clearly have provided himself with invisible clothing, but inexplicably he does not. Instead he goes naked through the story, exposed to the weather, suffering from colds, risking his secret to find shelter. All this provides a powerful symbolic support for the theme. It makes him the animal man, "just a human being--solid, needing food and drink, needing covering, too." Lacking the invisible garments and equipment he might have provided himself, he is "wandering, mad with rage, naked, impotent." This predicament, which determines the whole action of the plot and finally brings about the tragic fall of the Invisible Man, is dramatically effective but logically unsupported.

As pure intellect, Griffin might have planned his war against the species with a little more intelligence.

With the same dramatic license, Wells ignores the fact that an invisible man would be blind. As he admitted to Arnold Bennett,

> Any alteration of the refractive index of the eye lenses would make vision impossible. Without such alteration the eyes would be visible as glassy globules. And for vision it is also necessary that there should be visual purple behind the retina and an opaque cornea and iris. On these lines you would get a very effective short story but nothing more.[13]

But the plot requires Griffin to see, as well as to go naked. Coolly forgetting inconsistencies, Wells achieves his aim:"the same amount of conviction as one gets in a good gripping dream" (Preface, SFN, vii).

A multiple symbol, Griffin stands for more than the animal nature of man. He is the scientist--his mastery of nature a tool of selfish personal power, not an aid to the advancement of the race. At the beginning he keeps his research secret because he will not share the credit with his professor; at the end he is trying to inaugurate a private Reign of Terror against mankind. His invisibility, like his superior brain, is simply a new adaptation for individual survival, as inherently selfish as a longer fang or a sharper claw. Symbolically, at the instant of his discovery, he is alone. "The laboratory was still, with the tall lights burning brightly and silently. In all my great moments I have been alone." The discovery brings him a vision of the animal self set free from society. "A shabby, poverty--struck, hemmed-in demonstrator, teaching fools in a provincial college," he sees "all that invisibility might mean to a man--the mystery, the power, the freedom."

Though Griffin is at first aware of no limits to his new power, his fate is soon foreshadowed in a symbolic dream. Sleeping in an emporium where he has found one night's refuge, he dreams that he is back at his father's funeral, being forced into the open grave. He shouts for help, but the droning clergyman and the mourners ignore him.

> I realized that I was invisible and inaudible...I struggled in vain, I was forced over the brink, the coffin rang hollow as I fell upon it, and the gravel came flying after me in spadefuls. Nobody heeded me, nobody was aware of me. I made convulsive struggles and awoke.

Ignoring this clear warning that the penalty for isolation will be death, Griffin wages his lonely war to the end. In a memorably vivid passage, his dying body becomes visible.

"First came the little white nerves, a hazy grey sketch of a limb, then the glassy bones and intricate arteries, then the flesh and skin." Dead, the animal man returns to society: "the bruised and broken body of a young man about thirty...his eyes wide open, and his expression,..one of anger and dismay." Covered with a sheet, he is carried into the Jolly Cricketers.

As the instrument of progress, Griffin illustrates the paradox that the impulse toward advancement springs from a regressive animal individualism rather than from the social nature that makes us human. Social institutions are, in fact, necessarily conservative; only the individual intellect can initiate progressive change. Wells is reminding us, however, that changes initiated by such anti-social instruments as Griffin do not inevitably tend toward the ultimate human good. As Wells's image of the scientist, Griffin belongs with Nebogipfel and Dr. Moreau. He is the scientist not as the benign engineer of progress, but as demon and destroyer. In him, Bergonzi suggests, "Wells seems to have brought the type to final realization before imaginatively casting him out of his consciousness" (EHGW, 120).

Thus the book records another step in Wells's literary evolution. Griffin is more than an arbitrary symbol; he is an expression of the romantic individualist in Wells himself. Bergonzi interprets him as a scapegoat figure hunted out of society, adding that

> it is perhaps not altogether fanciful to suppose that what is being "cast out" is not merely the dangerous pretensions of contemporary science, but also the young Wells's own identification with a highly romanticized kind of scientist-magician (EHGW, 120).

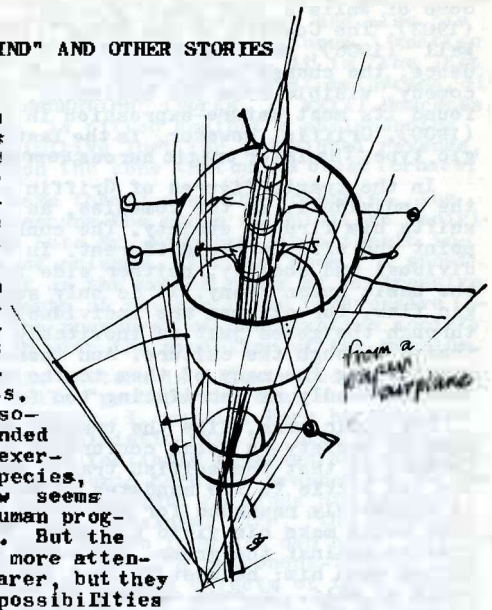
Griffin's tragic fall seems to reflect Wells's reluctant acceptance of the classic view that the evil nature of the individual requires social restraint. The dramatisations of Wells's own internal conflicts in these early stories may have been a kind of catharsis that left him free to undertake all his later campaigns to further the advancement of mankind.

Commenting on these changes in Wells's outlook, Bergonzi writes

> By the early years of this century his utopian and positivist convictions were coming increasingly to dominate his earlier intellectual skepticism and his imaginative attachment to the traditional patterns of southern English life (EHGW, 121).

He observes that Wells was certainly aware of his conflict when, in the twenties, he wrote of himself: "Temperamentally he is egoistic and romantic, intellectually he is clearly aware that the egoistic and the romantic must go." [4] Doubtless the writing of such books as The Island of Dr. Moreau and The Invisible Man helped Wells to reach this self-awareness. Certainly both novels owe their form and effect largely to the freedom which he allowed his own discordant attitudes to express themselves in objective dramatic action: Griffin seems at least as vital an element of Wells as does Kemp, the social man whose mind can travel "into a remote speculation of social conditions of the future" and lose "itself at last over the time dimension." In any case, both novels are clearly related to the problem of progress. In The Invisible Man, just as emphatically as in The War of the Worlds although from a different viewpoint, Wells is pointing out the internal human conflicts that inevitably turn utopian hopes into cruel illusions.

#4--"THE COUNTRY OF THE BLIND" AND OTHER STORIES



Wells shows more concern about the internal limits upon progress than about the external, perhaps for two reasons. As the literary artist, he finds the internal human conflict more complex, more ironic, and more appealing than the conflict with the external cosmos. As the prophet of progress, he is more hopeful of doing something about the human limits. The probable life of the solar system cannot be extended by any predictable human exertion; and no competing species, Martian or terrestrial, now seems more dangerous to future human progress than does man himself. But the human limits seem to merit more attention. Not only are they nearer, but they seem to offer tantalising possibilities of being somehow widened or removed by human knowledge and intelligence.

The short stories, though not deliberately planned to develop any common theme, do reflect Wells's early preoccupation with these human limits. Most of them written before his rebellion against literary form, they are amazingly inventive, solidly observed, and fully imagined. A bright kaleidoscope of comic and tragic and tragicomic moods, they offer such richly varied glimpses and interpretations of life that classification is difficult and generalisation dangerous. Still the literary artist, not yet the propagandist for progress through rational enlightenment, Wells is a perceptive critic of mankind. The elemental conflict between animal man and social man appears again and again, not because he has any thematic axe to grind, but simply because this conflict is the inevitable root of character and drama, because it creates the basic irony of life.

Like the novels, the short stories show a maturing ability to see this conflict as comedy. In Wells's evolution as a literary artist, the most striking change at this period is shift from the tragic to the comic mood. The process, however, is not quite that simple. A shift from emotional identification to intellectual detachment, it does not always mean a growing optimism, for detachment lends itself to satire, which more than tragedy is the natural vehicle of pessimism. Nor was the change ever entirely definite or complete. "The Stolen Bacillus," one of the very first short stories, is a comic farce. The lightly comic Wheels of Chance and the darkly tragic Island of Dr. Moreau were written at about the same time. Comedy and tragedy are mixed in The Invisible Man.

Some of Wells's last short stories, "A Dream of Armageddon" (1903), "The Country of the Blind" (1904), and "The Door in the Wall" (1906), are tragedies. Yet, in spite of such ambiguous evidence, the change seems real enough. Wells's talent for realistic comedy, visible from the beginning, developed steadily until it found its most mature expression in The History of Mr. Polly (1909). Griffin, however, is the last major hero of the classic tragic type. The later tragic heroes represent a different pattern.

In the tragic figures of Griffin's type, Wells is criticising the individual. In the comedies, as in the later tragedies, he shifts his fire to society. The conflict is the same; the viewpoint and effects are different. In the conflict between the individual and society, neither side is right or wring; that is the basic human irony. It is only some excess that makes a tragic flaw, for all men are individuals, inheriting animal traits through the genes just as inevitably as they inherit social traits through the culture. And these animal traits are vital; sacrificing too many of them to the sanctions of society is just as deadly as sacrificing too few.

The comic hero, like the tragic, is an individual in revolt against society--a total conformist would be no hero. The difference is that the selfish tragic hero is destroyed for yielding too little to the mandates of society, while the comic hero is ultimately rewarded for resisting the collective selfishness that would make him yield too much. The tragic hero is the aggressor against the group. The comic hero finds the conflict forced upon him; he must at last revolt to save his own vital spark of self. In such stories as "The Purple Pileus" and "The Crystal Egg" we glimpse the comic hero who is more fully developed in the figures of Kipps and Mr. Polly.

The later tragic heroes, Nunez in "The Country of the Blind" and Heddon in "A Dream of Armageddon" and Wallace in "The Door in the Wall," resemble the comic type more than they do Griffin. Although each of them displays enough of that internal conflict to make him convincingly alive, they are the defenders, not the attackers, in the inevitable clash with the crowd. What each defends in his own way is an individual freedom more precious than survival through conformity. In each of them, the essential traits of individual selfishness are overshadowed by an overwhelming collective selfishness. In each case, the tragic ending results from a choice that proves the vital worth of self.

Wells's favourite fiction pattern brings everyday reality into collision with something exotic. The familiar element in this group of stories is usually provided by the institutions and pressures of society. The fantastic element is often some device which allows the hero at least a glimpse of individual freedom. In the comic versions of the pattern, the hero makes some kind of escape. In the tragic version, his excessive individualism results in his destruction.

"The Diamond Maker" illustrates the tragic pattern. The hero is another Griffin: a selfish and solitary individualist who finds a way of making artificial diamonds. Because of his self-centred greed, which he sees reflected in the competitive society in which he lives, he works in secret. Successful, he finds himself a social outcast, unable to benefit from his discovery. Carrying a fortune in diamonds around his neck, he can find neither food nor shelter.

Another tragedy, "The Cone," shows Wells's early recognition of this human conflict as a barrier to progress, and also his early awareness of "the conflict of the two cultures." Written before the final revision of The Time Machine, it is "the last surviving relic...of what was to have been a vast melodrama, all at the same level of high sensation" (Works, I, xxii). Horrocks, the progressive ironmaster, is pitted against a philandering aesthete. Overcome by a primitive lust for individual revenge, he burns the poet alive upon the cone that caps a blast furnace.

"The Moth" states the same theme: even the scientist, the agent of progress, cannot escape the curse of primitive individualism. "The Story of the Late Mr. Elvesham" is a tragic indictment of the amorality of science. "The Red Room," a ghost story, displays fear itself as the primal enemy of progressive rationalism. In "The Argonauts of the Air," the progressive individual is destroyed by the pressures of conservative society, which has failed to keep up with the evolution of the machine.

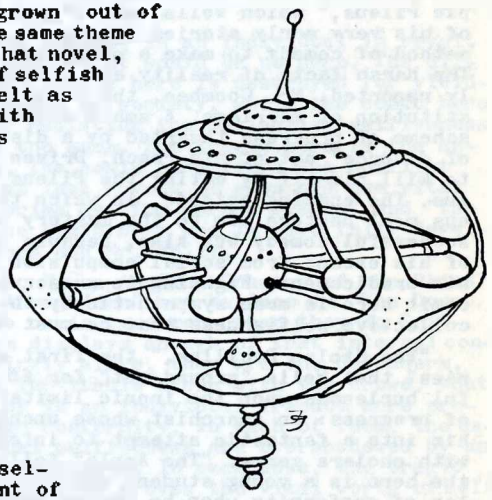
The comic version of this pattern is illustrated by "The Purple Pileus," which Wells calls "perhaps the best and reallest" of his very early stories (Works, I, xxiii). Here he uses the method of comedy to make a pessimistic view of life endurable. The harsh facts of reality are feelingly observed and accurately reported. Mr. Coombes, the comic hero, is trapped in the institution of marriage. A small shopman, he finds his private scheme of progress thwarted by a disloyal wife, "the luxuries of divorce" out of his reach. Driven from his own home, he tries to kill himself by eating the Pileus, a poisonous-looking fungus. The ensuing episode, in which the effects of this dangerous meal restore him to the mastery of his fate, is not only successful comedy but also, because of the very improbability of his escape from social compulsion, an ironic restatement of his predicament. Fighting to preserve his essential self, the comic hero is made sympathetic by the shadow of the greater collective selfishness that he must defy.

"The Stolen Bacillus," the first of the "single sitting stories" that Wells "ground out" for £5 each (Exp.433), is a cheerful burlesque upon the ironic limitations of a typical promoter of progress: an anarchist whose unchecked individualism betrays him into a fantastic attempt to infect the city water supply with cholera germs. "The Apple" follows the same comic pattern; the hero is a young student who sacrifices progress upon the altar of conformity when he throws away a magic fruit from the Tree of Knowledge because it would make an unsightly bulge in his pockets.

"The Man Who Could Work Miracles," which Wells later rewrote as a film play,[15] gives a comic twist to the theme of The Island of Dr. Moreau. A sceptical young clerk, George McWhirter Fotheringay, finding that he has an unexpected miraculous gift, calls upon his pastor to help him hasten progress. They reform drunkards, change beer and alcohol to water, improve railway service, drain a swamp, enrich the soil on One Tree Hill, and cure the vicar's wart. Seeking more time for progress, they stop the earth's rotation--with cataclysmic consequences. Thus, as in The Island of Dr. Moreau, the benevolent effort to aid progress ends in disaster. For all its good humour, the story is darkly pessimistic. Bad as the world may be, human enlightenment can only make it worse.

"A Dream of Armageddon" is a tragedy of self against society, more complex and intellectual than The Invisible Man. Hedon's refusal to sacrifice personal love to public duty is followed by a holocaust that he might have prevented, and by his own destruction. Yet he seems more like the comic heroes than like Griffin, because the Armageddon is not of his making. Sex in this story is an element of the essential self, not its enemy, as in the later marriage novels. Hedon's selfish passion is overshadowed by the destructive collective selfishness around him, and his death for love seems a sort of victory.

Between "A Dream of Armageddon" and "The Country of the Blind" the role of love is neatly reversed. Love to Hedon is the vital expression of self, worth more than even the survival of society. Love to Nunez is the enemy of self, the most powerful force crushing him toward conformity. "The Country of the Blind" is one of Wells's finest stories, and perhaps his most mature and sophisticated survey of the basic human conflict of the self against society.



The story must have grown out of Wells's simpler study of the same theme in The Invisible Man. In that novel, describing his early mood of selfish elation, Griffin says, "I felt as a seeing man might do, with padded feet and noiseless clothes, in a city of the blind." Later, becoming aware of the tragic consequences of his intellectual solitude, he says, "I saw...a blind man approaching me, and fled limping, for I feared his subtle intuitions." Nunez, the seeing man among the blind, is at the beginning somewhat like Griffin, planning to use his unique advantage selfishly, but the development of the story shows a significant change in Well's attitude toward both sex and self.

Nunez is the romantic individualist, his sight the symbol of self and the agent of progress. He falls into an isolated Andean valley where a blind tribe has been isolated for fifteen generations. With a flash of Griffin's tragic ambition, he recalls an old proverb, "In the Country of the Blind the One-eyed Man is King." The blind folk, however, shatter his selfish dreams. They are society. Their world is small, static, closed, comfortably ubran. They adhere to a classic theory of the innate evil of man. "Our fathers have told us men may be made by the forces of Nature," Nunez is informed. "It is the warmth of things and moisture, and rottenness--rottenness." Refusing to believe what he says he can see, they tell him that there are no mountains, that their universe, at first an empty hollow in the rocks, is covered with a smooth stone roof from which the dew and the avalanches fall.

Two original minds in the past, sent as Wells says by "the chance of birth and heredity," had been agents of progress among them, but now they are middle-class conservatives, their stable ways of life fixed by tradition, supported by learning, sanctioned by religion.

Nunez's talk of sight is not only incomprehensible but blasphemous. His attempt to use force is a failure. He soon abandons his selfish ambition to be king, but Wells has not finished his dramatic study of the worth of self. Reduced to slavery, Nunez falls in love with a blind girl, Medina-sarote. The match is opposed because the blind regard him as "a being apart, an idiot, incompetent thing below the permissible level of a man." A blind doctor proposes at last to cure him of the disease of sight.

> "Those queer things that are called the eyes, and which exist to make an agreeable soft depression in the face, are diseased...in such a way as to affect his brain."

For the girl's sake, Nunez consents at first to the surgical removal of these irritant bodies. When the day comes, however, he looks upward at the beauty of the morning, with the sun above upon the slopes of ice and snow, and begins "very circumspectly" to climb.

> When sunset came he was no longer climbing, but he was far and high. He had been higher, but he was still very high. His clothes were torn, his limbs were blood-stained, he was bruised in many places, but he lay there as if he were at ease, and there was a smile on his face.

As the symbol of self, Nunez's sight, like Hedon's lady, is more precious than life. Even though Nunez should die where he lies "peacefully contented under the cold stars," his death is not defeat but victory.

"The Country of the Blind" is by no means simply a tract on progress. It is a complex aesthetic creation, rich in significance, concretely imagined, more emotional than intellectual. The seeing man, not merely a symbol of self or intelligence or progress, is also an intricate human being, haughty at the beginning with his imagined superiority, quickly responsive to visual beauty, unable to strike a blind man, capable of love, yet ready to sacrifice everything for the sight that is self. The closed world of the blind is fully created, from the guiding curbs along their uncluttered paths to their myth of their own creation. The dramatic tension which shapes the story arises from the antagonism between two views of life, a collision too nearly universal to be contained in any neat set of labels. It is the enmity between classic balance and romantic unrest, the clash between permanence and change, the incongruity between the poet and the plowman, the chasm between reckless youth and prudent age, the contrast between the self-directed liberalism of Wells's own father and the rigidly conforming conservatism of his mother. The story is successful because it gives an objective resolution to Wells's own conflicting attitudes toward self and society--and toward sex as an agent of society. The idea of progress is involved because society is regressive and the self is the instrument of change. The closed world of the blind rejects the instrument of progress, as in fact the real world commonly does.

This same conflict appears in many more of Wells's stories: in the complex mythical and personal symbolism of "The Door in the Wall," and even in the practical jokes played upon society by the uninhibited hero of "The Triumphs of a Taxidermist." The stories reflect the varied experiences of Wells's own life; the unlucky student whose moral fragility is revealed in "A Slip Under the Microscope" might almost have been Wells himself. Written mainly for his own amusement, these tales seldom display explicit thematic intentions, but the criticism of progress reappears as a persistent comment on that central human conflict. Taken as a group, they emphasise the realistic awareness of human limitations with which Wells approached the problems of progress. Comte and Marx and Spencer planned their vast systems of reform with a lofty disregard for the human atoms involved. Wells, however, always knew that the coming world, whatever its shape, must be put together by the efforts of individual men, whose private lives are more precious than society, and whose limiting stupidity and ignorance and greed are as old and stubborn as the fact of life.

FOOTNOTES

1) Thomas H. Huxley, "Prolegomena," Evolution and Ethics and Other Essays (New York, 1898), 11.

2) Apes, Angels, and Victorians (New York, 1955), 301-302 .

3) Science and Christian Tradition (New York, 1898), 209-262.

4) Papers of the Michigan Academy of Science, Arts, and Letters, XLVI (1961), 856.

5) "Preface," Seven Famous Novels, vii. Written in 1895, simultaneously with The Wonderful Visit, The Island of Dr. Moreau was published in April, 1896.

6) "Note," SFN, 156-7; the article is "The Limits of Individual Plasticity," Saturday Review, January 19, 1895.

7) Bernard Bergonzi, The Early H.G. Wells: A Study of the Scientific Romances (Manchester, 1961), 97-99.

8) H.G.Wells, Experiment in Autobiography (New York,1934),161.

9) Leonard Huxley, Life and Letters of Thomas Henry Huxley (New York, 1901), 466.

10) Methods and Results (New York, 1898), 7.

11) "The Dark World of H.G. Wells," Harper's Magazine, CCIV (May, 1957), 68.

12) A shorter, serial version of The Invisible Man ran in Pearson's Weekly, April-November, 1897.

13) Harris Wilson, Arnold Bennett and H.G. Wells: A Record of a Personal and Literary Friendship (Urbana, Ill., 1960), 34-5.

FOOTNOTES (continued)

14) Atlantic Edition of the Works of H.G. Wells (New York, 1924), V, ix; quoted in EHGW, 121.

15) Man Who Could Work Miracles (New York, 1936).

16) In 1939, Wells rewrote the story with a happier ending, in which the blind girl escapes with Nunez and later marries him, but refuses medical aid because she is afraid to see. Published in a limited edition, this revision has been generally ignored. See Sam Moskowitz, Explorers of the Infinite: Shapers of Science Fiction (Cleveland, 1963), 135-6.

MAGAZINE PUBLICATION DATES

(for short stories cited in text)

"The Story of the Late Mr. Elvesham"-- The Idler (May, 1896)

"The Stolen Bacillus" -- The Pall Mall Budget (June 21, 1894)

"The Diamond Maker" -- PMB (August, 1894)

"The Argonauts of the Air" -- Phil May's Annual (1895)

"The Man Who Could Work Miracles" -- The Illustrated London News (June, 1898)

"A Dream of Armageddon" -- Black and White Magazine (1901)

"The Country of the Blind" -- The Strand Magazine (April, 1904)

"The Door in the Wall" -- Daily Chronicle (1906)

ABBREVIATIONS USED IN CHAPTER THREE

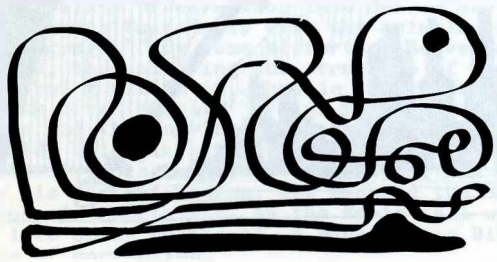
SFN -- Seven Famous Novels of H.G. Wells

EHGW -- Bernard Bergonzi, The Early H.G. Wells

Exp. -- Experiment in Autobiography

DW -- Anthony West, "The Dark World of H.G. Wells"

Works -- The Works of H.G. Wells



Some Religious Aspects of Lord of the Rings

Sandra Miesel

J.R.R. Tolkien's Lord of the Rings, like its prelude, The Hobbit, is fundamentally the tale of an odyssey. Thus the story stands in a venerable tradition, for the epic journey to conquer evil, a theme as ancient as Sumeria, is the basis of countless fairy tales. Moreover, this kind of plot is common in literary works that try to expound spiritual or philosophical truths. (Pilgrim's Progress is an obvious example.) Tolkien's art is neither didactic nor allegorical but nevertheless manifests a deeply Christian philosophy of life. This paper will attempt to explore the framework and expression of the author's views.

At first glance, Tolkien's world is strikingly devoid of religion. While moral sensibilities are highly sophisticated, via elvish influence, there are no cults or rites. Prayer is unknown in Middle Earth though in our world it exists even in non-theistic religions like Buddhism. The only acts of worship recorded are those of Sauron by depraved men and the monster Shelob by Gollum. Perhaps the Speaking Peoples feel no need of liturgy because they live in such harmony with life, with beauty, with goodness that their ordinary actions are implicit worship. The good beings' lives are a continual celebration of wonder.

Drawing upon the findings of anthropology and comparative religion, the author has developed his own unique salvation history. First he has borrowed from that scholarly abstraction, the universal paradise myth. Eliade describes the specific marks of paradisal man as "immortality, spontaneity, freedom; the possibility of ascension into Heaven and easily meeting with the gods; friendship with the animals and knowledge of their language."[2] By some misfortune Heaven and Earth became estranged, thus altering the structure of the cosmos and man's mode of being within it. Thus in the golden Elder Days of Middle Earth, the 'angelic' Valar visited men. Long lives were the rule and the Undying Lands still lay within the circles of the world. But this perfection was irreparably spoiled by the Great Enemy, poisoner of the Two Trees. His malice was continued by his servant Sauron, who seduced the Numenoreans with promises of immortality. As the Edain fell under the Shadow, their life spans shortened--a parallel to Biblical and Vedic notions of corruption.

Yet the fall of Numenor is not the primal Fall of Man as the Judeo-Christian, or indeed any other major tradition conceives it. A fallen "angel" as tempter and man's tragic attempt to seize eternal life are points of resemblance between the Biblical and the Ring account. But the Numenoreans were the ancestors of the Dunedain aristocracy only, not of all men. Though glorious, Numenor lacked the serene timelessness of paradise. The islanders sinned and dwindled long before their final destruction. Ancient Edain privileges were not forfeited by racial guilt. Although Tolkien's characters remark upon the inherent imperfection of mankind, they do not connect this observation with any concept of Original Sin. How could they in a world lacking supernatural revelation or apparently, even legends of humanity's beginnings? The very sharp fallen-unfallen dichotomy of C.S. Lewis's cosmic trilogy has no place in Lord of the Rings.

The remoteness and silence of Tolkien's unworshipped One is typical of primitive theology. The Sumerians, Norse, Polynesians, Australian aborigines, and some African, American Indian, and Turco-Ugaric tribes, among other cultures have believed that once the Creator-God's work was completed, he committed the world to the care of messengers, guardians, or demi-gods. These then became the chief figures of interest and evocation. Thus Middle Earth honours the Valar, the Guardians of the World. They are invoked at Aragorn's coronation.

In this pre-evangelic world the notion of survival after death is quite vague. In the beginning, death was called the Gift of the One to Men; later it became the Doom of Men. Men envy elven immortality but it is not an unmixed blessing. It can indefinitely prolong sorrow, as in Elrond's case. Only in her last years does Arwen come to understand the Numenoreans' fatal lust for endless life. Acceptance of death without despair is the final test of Aragorn and Arwen. Aragorn's hints of reunion "beyond the circles of the world" are the only allusions to an afterlife in the story. There is no promise of Heaven for the races of Middle Earth. There is only some unexplained reunion Elsewhere won by fidelity and submission to destiny in the absence of any certain hope.

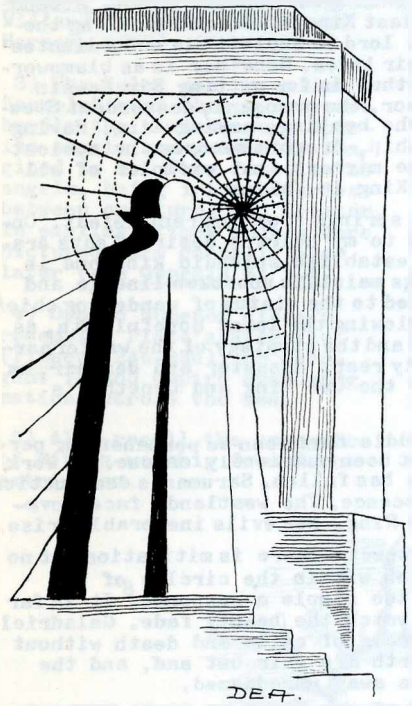
While the cultural framework is religionless, the attitudes expressed within it are traditional Christian ones. Contrary values are condemned by Gandalf as pagan. Moral issues in the trilogy cluster about three major antitheses: good and evil, true and false kingship, victory and defeat.

Tolkien adopts the usual Augustinian description of evil: it is a perversion of good, not a positive entity. "Not even Sauron was evil in the beginning," says Gandalf. Depravity is measured by the greatness of the good corrupted. The Great Enemy was once a Valar, Saruman a wizard, and the Chief Ringwraith a king. In general, each class of being has a dark analog: Ringwraiths of men, great orcs of elves, lesser orcs of dwarves, trolls of ents, Gollum of hobbits, and the Nazgul steeds of honest horses and birds.

The seat of good and evil is the will. Confrontations between adversaries are primarily duels of will. The One Ring acts like a lens to focus and magnify the wearer's will to power. The Dark Lord's maleficent will is his direst weapon. Without this motive impulse, his slaves cannot function. Likewise, the stern will of Aragorn holds his followers firm in spite of desperate perils.

Sauron's minions submerge their identities wholly in his. The Lieutenant of the Black Gate has even forgotten his own name and calls himself the Mouth of Sauron. Contrarily, the Defenders of the West emerge from the conflict more perfectly individuated than before.

Evil cannot create, only destroy. Under the Shadow cities fall into ruin, fields wither, forests harbour deadly gloom. Sauron can blast and tear the very earth. The reeking slag heaps of barren Mordor and the clanging foundries of its Dark Tower seem all the viler in contrast to the green-gold groves and timeless harmony of Lothlorien. During Saruman's occupation, a noisome mill pollutes the Shire.



Arrogance is the mark of evil as humility is of goodness. These character traits presage the tragic end of Boromir and the triumph of Aragorn. The fruits of evil are fear and strife as in the madness of Denethor. But these very consequences can mar the Dark Lord's designs as in the reduced efficacy of the Dead Army and the lucky quarrels among the hobbits' captors. Forgetting old enmities, Sauron's foes of every race and nation and degree of civilisation band together against him. Solidarity is the key to victory.

While the Enemy lusts after universal dominion, his opponents counter with complete renunciation. The Three Rings are sacrificed to destroy the One. Frodo, a Christ figure, willingly dies to the joy of living. As he tells Sam: "It often must be so... when things are in danger: someone has to give them up, lose them, so that others may keep them." The personal price Frodo pays epitomises that which all the non-human races are paying to win a respite for man's sake. The ancient magic of Middle Earth must fade if any goodness is to survive. Men will inherit the whole earth when the others have passed away.

Each principal character is tempted in proportion to his strength and according to his role. Frodo's greatness is demonstrated by the intensity of his challenge, Aragorn's by its duration. But their triumphs are not unexpected, for Frodo and Aragorn are in all ways remarkable persons. It is the apotheosis of humble, utterly mundane Sam that strikes the reader most forcefully.

Only love for his master leads him from the Shire, fuels his unfailing loyalty, and transforms him into his master's equal. The Ring harms him least, perhaps because he is unused to seeking his own will. The quest could not have succeeded without Sam, and he is rewarded with passage to the Undying Lands.

Tom Bombadil, the oldest living individual in Middle Earth, serves as a counterpoint to the stark contrasts of good and evil. He is a sort of incarnate nature spirit, as literally amoral as the Elf Queen in "The Ballad of Thomas the Rhumer." The Ring has no power over him for he lacks the will to power. Like a Thomistic angel, he is the sole member of his particular species. Tom's wife Goldberry is a lesser female analog.

Kingship is the second of the principal themes. Tolkien contrasts true kingly heroism to ofermod, overweening high spirit. This rash pride destroys followers as well as leader. Ofermod is exemplified by Beowulf fighting the monster alone, Roland refusing to summon aid, and the last King of Gondor duelling the Chief Ringwraith. It tempts the lord to exploit his subordinates' devotion and needlessly risk their lives. Denether is as blameworthy for imperiling his sons as Arthur is for pitting Sir Gawain against the Green Knight. Denethor, the arrogant, despondent Steward is supplanted by Aragorn, the healing, saving King. Having won his crown after so much hardship, Aragorn becomes the noblest of mortal kings. In his glory he mirrors that exemplar of all Middle Earth rulers, the Elder King in Valinor.

In Lord of the Rings victory springs from apparent defeat. "Only through darkness shall I come to my heart's desire," says Aragorn. The Numenorean survivors establish splendid kingdoms in exile. Heirs of the northern kings maintain unbroken lineage and uncorrupted hearts through reduced to the status of wandering chieftains. Success is attained by following the least hopeful path, as in the mission of the Ringbearers and the strategy of the westernarmies. Demanding too much security reaps disaster and despair, as in Isildur's refusal to destroy the One Ring and Denethor's suicide.

Yet no victory over evil in Middle Earth can be permanent or perfect. The effects of evil have not been completely undone. The work of Mordor continues though Mordor has fallen. Saruman's destruction does not restore the Shire's innocence. The westlands face invasions long after the War of the Ring. New evils inexorably arise.

This is the story's tragic aspect: there is mitigation but no full redemption or reconciliation within the circles of the world. Yet Eowyn's fatalism is too simple a response. It is far easier to die than to live and watch the beauty fade. Galadriel and Arwen meet their personal dooms of exile and death without rancour. The tales of Middle Earth are fair but sad, and the beings of Middle Earth must pass away unredeemed.

For those who have called Lord of the Rings an idyll have not read it aright. This is no story of a happy never-never land but an elegy for fading wonders. Though the heroes have triumphed, the elven ships depart, the leaves of Lothlorien fall, and Arwen lies in a lonely grave. It is the voluntary renunciation responsible for these losses that makes them meaningful. Some have given up what they love most so that others may live fruitfully. Marvels cease so that more homely realities may endure. Thus the saviors of Middle Earth foreshadow a greater Redemption which they were never promised.

To us, this epic of a Secondary World is a magnificent sign of consolation and hope.

> It does not deny the existence of...sorrow and failure... It denies (in the face of so much evidence...) universal final defeat and in so far is evangelium, giving a fleeting glimpse of Joy, Joy beyond the walls of the world, poignant as grief.

FOOTNOTES

1) Yet meals have a certain quasi-sacramental significance, especially for the hobbits.

2) Mirces Eliade, Myths, Dreams, and Mysteries, trans. Willard R. Trask (New York: Harper, 1963), 60.

3) The Valar can be called "angels" even though they are hardly the sexless pure spirits angels are generally imagined to be. They function as angels, being intermediaries between creatures and Creator. In earliest times angels were pictured more carnally than later (see Genesis 6: 1-4).

4) Doomed Numenor closely resembles Plato's Atlantis (Timaeus 24e-25d), an arrogant island empire enslaving nations across the sea.

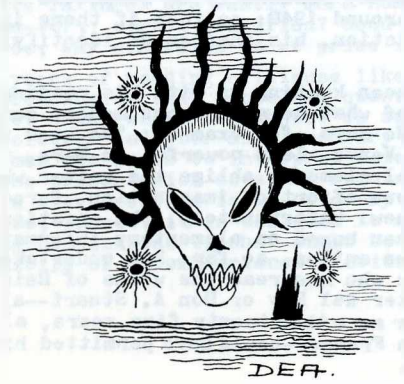
5) Also recall the emergence of Mithra-worship from Zoroastrianism.

6) Sam's position as the faithful subordinate is even clearer in the light of Tolkien's remarks on ofermod ("The Homecoming of Beirhtnoth, Beorhthelm's Son," The Tolkien Reader (New York: Ballentine, 1966), 22-4. This places Sam on a par with Beowulf's Wiglaf and Arthur's Gawain.

7) Also consider the marriage of Aragorn's parents, the fall of Arnor, and "The Song of the Ents and the Entwives."

8) Eowyn's reaction to the threatened fall of Minas Tirith resembles that of Aeneas to the imminent fall of Troy (Aeneid ii. 268-704). Both at first try to die fighting, then are convinced to take the harder road of survival.

9) J.R.R. Tolkien, "On Fairy Stories," in "Tree and Leaf," op. cit., 68.



ON SCIENCE-FICTION CRITICISM

BY

james blish

Michel Butor's "Science Fiction: The Crisis of its Growth" (Partisan Review, Fall 1967) has two serious deficiencies: it gives a completely misleading impression of the present state of the genre, and it proposes a future course for it which would destroy everyone's interest in either writing or reading it.[1]

I

For some reason, most critics who undertake to discuss science fiction for a literary but non-specialised audience do so from a limited and largely antiquarian knowledge of the field, heavily weighted toward Jules Verne (d. 1905). That this is true of M. Butor may be seen in the fact that he mentions no living science-fiction author but Ray Bradbury.

This might be of little importance in older genres, but science fiction is uniquely dominated by living authors, since it is based upon modern technology. There are, to be sure, a few dead giants--Verne, Wells, C.S. Lewis, Orwell--but the field as a modern phenomenon dates back only to 1926 (when it diverged from the mainstream of fiction into specialised magazines of its own); and as M. Butor's title admits, it is still growing vigourously. Hence a critic who fails even to mention such figures as Isaac Asimov, Arthur C. Clarke, Robert A. Heinlein or Theodore Sturgeon may reasonably be suspected of having lost track somewhere around 1940; so that if there is a "crisis" in modern science fiction, his chances of identifying it cannot be of the best.

Had M. Butor been keeping up with his reading, he would have known that much of what he says about modern science fiction is in fact untrue. He says, for example: "We know that gravity is more powerful on Venus, less powerful on Mars, than on Earth, etc. These several elements oblige the writer who respects them to make an enormous effort of imagination, force him to invent something truly new. Unfortunately, the creation of another 'nature,' even when based on elementary information, is a task so arduous that no author, so far, has undertaken it methodically." No critic who has read the works of Heinlein, Clarke, Hal Clement, Lester del Rey or Don A. Stuart--all well-known authors active for more than twenty five years, all still alive, and all in print in France--could have permitted himself so categorical an error.

A closely related point is M. Butor's abdication of any attempt at a definition of the field he is talking about. The best he manages is, "You know, those stories that are always mentioning interplanetary rockets." (And two paragraphs later he is saying that "There exist for the moment no interplanetary rockets," a statement which denies existence to a long and well-reported series of such probes.)

Within the field itself, there is wide agreement on the following rule by Theodore Sturgeon: "A good science fiction story is a story with a human problem, and a human solution, which would not have happened at all without its science content." (N.B. the second word.)

By this rule, it can be seen that such examples of M. Butor's as H.P. Lovecraft and Ray Bradbury are not science fiction writers at all, since their works contain no trace of any science whatsoever. (Both in fact were terrified of science; they belong to that part of the Faustian tradition which may be summarised in a line common to all horror movies, "There are things that Man was not meant to know.") They are writers of pure fantasy. M. Butor seems to think Bradbury to be one of those authors who try to stick to the few known facts about such a place as Mars; but the "Mars" of Bradbury bears not the faintest resemblance to the real planet of that name--it is, instead, a sentimentalised, displaced rural Illinois county.

Clothing quite ordinary Earth settings (and, it might be added, plots) in a few futuristic trappings is a common failing of routine commercial science fiction. M. Butor stresses this point, but omits the two key words: "routine commercial." As specialists in the field are bitterly aware, no other genre in literary history has been so consistently judged by its worst examples. This observation, too, was made some years ago by Sturgeon, who went on to note that non-specialist critics seem to take a positive delight in pointing out that ninety per cent of all science fiction is worthless--without pausing to reflect that there is no field of human endeavour which is immune to exactly the same stricture.

If a field is to be considered worthy of critical examination for an audience of non-specialists, the critic owes it to that audience to weigh the field's achievements as well as its failures. If its failures are vastly more numerous, why should we be surprised--or, worse, gratified? Good work in any field is always scarce; why otherwise do we prize it at all?

After many years of reading critiques like M. Butor's, I am driven to the conclusion that schoolboy questions like these simply never get asked when the subject is science fiction. Hence I am emboldened to offer an elementary prescription to the next such man who wants to interpret science fiction to non-experts. The prescription does not require him to read every awful story in every routine issue of every commercial science fiction magazine; indeed, it is designed to save him that trouble, by sending him instead to what might be called the semi-permanent exhibits of modern science fiction, as follows:

JAMES BLISH

(1) Three different collections of "best" science fiction stories are published annually, edited respectively (in order of decreasing age) by Judith Merril, by Terry Carr and Donald Wollheim, and by Harry Harrison. They all have their biases, but together they offer a reliable sampling of the non-routine work that is going on in the genre.

(2) Each year, too, two sets of awards are offered in the field: the "Hugo" awards (from the readers) and the "Nebula" awards (from the writers). The shorter award-winning stories appear in annual collections; the award-winning novels are so identified on their jackets by their publishers.

There is nothing infallible about these choices, of course; but a critic who has failed to pay any attention to them is incompetent to talk about the past of science fiction, let alone its future. It might also be useful for him to have read the specialist critics in the genre.[2]

II

From his gallery of dead authors M. Butor proceeds to derive a prescription of his own for science fiction: "It must become a collective work, like the science which is its indispensable basis." He offers a specific example of how this might be done:

> We all dream of clean, well-lighted cities, so that when an author situates a narrative in such a place, he is certain of striking a sympathetic note. But we find ourselves, in the present state of SF, facing an enormous choice of barely sketched future cities among which the imagination hesitates, unsatisfied.
>
> Now let us imagine that a certain number of authors, instead of describing at random and quite rapidly certain more or less interchangeable cities, were to take as the setting of their stories a single city, named and situated with some precision in space and in future time; that each author were to take into account the descriptions given by the others in order to introduce his new ideas. This city would become a common possession to the same degree as an ancient city that has vanished; gradually, all readers would give its name to the city of their dreams and would model that city in its image.
>
> SF, if it could limit and unify itself, would be capable of acquiring over the individual imagination a constraining power comparable to that of any classical mythology. Soon all authors would be obliged to take this predicted city into account, readers would organize their actions in relation to its imminent existence, ultimately they would find themselves obliged to build it. Then SF would be veracious, to the very degree that it realized itself.

(pp. 601-2)

Can anyone imagine a more totalitarian view of the function of creative writing? Quis custodiet ipsos custodes? Who would hand down the "descriptions" in this Zukuftskulturkammer?

The prescription would freeze the very worst elements of routine commercial science fiction--its paucity of imagination and its tendency to conventionalise the future--into a set of dogmas much like thirteenth century canon law. At best it would limit the scientific or technological substrate of all science fiction to whatever some appointed tenth-rate engineer deemed "possible" at the time of writing (as all of Verne's stories were limited, though apparently M. Butor doesn't know this); no room would be left in which to extrapolate from the known to the unrealised possibilities, in the sciences alone, although science itself is today in a ferment of speculation utterly unlike the body of dogma M. Butor imagines it to be. (In fact M. Butor knows nothing about science either, as his remarks on gravity, his vagueness over what is meant by a "galaxy," and his failure to differentiate between science and technology make painfully evident.)

Secondly, such an agreed-upon or dictated city (or universe) would preclude the individual human speculation upon the future which is the life blood of the fiction part of science fiction.[3] Let us not forget that it is above all else a branch of fiction that we are talking about here, not a body of myth, or an attempt at a self-fulfilling prophecy like Das Kapital.

As it happens, there does exist a collection of eleven science-fiction stories each one of which is set in a completely different vision of a future city (Damon Knight, ed. Cities of Wonder (New York, 1967)), each one utterly personal to the writer. M. Butor's recipe would rule out all of these visions, and all others like them, without giving us anything better in their place but another of those "interchangeable" cities of which he simultaneously complains. What he wants us to do, in fact, is to become less imaginative and more interchangeable than ever, by limiting ourselves to his version of a "clean, well-lighted" city of the future, as laid down in every important particular by some combination of the French Academy and Robert Moses. It seems never to have occured to him that the city of the future may be even less clean and well-lighted than our own--or that a rational future may choose to abolish the folk-custom of the huddling-place entirely.

It is, I submit, a curious sort of critic who wants not only the future, but fiction about the future to be put in a strait-jacket.

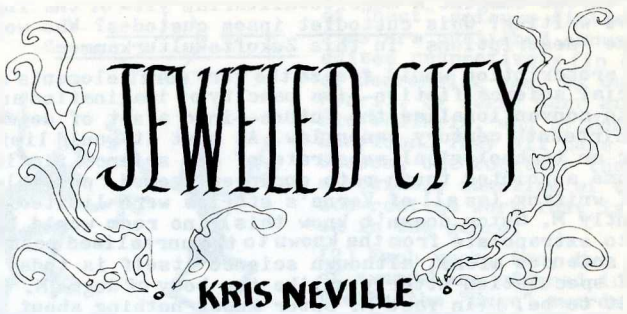
EDITOR'S UNSOLICITED FOOTNOTES

1) Mr. Blish's rebuttal originally was sent to PARTISAN REVIEW, and was returned, six months later, with a note, "Sorry, a little too late...to use this now."

2) The standard critical works on s.f. are Damon Knight, In Search of Wonder (1956) and James Blish, The Issue at Hand (1964).

3) There once was a similar proposal by Carl Jacobi, and it's interesting to compare one writer's reaction:

> ...While I can see Carl's point, I'm personally dead set against the idea...It positively scares me to think of the good tales that would go glimmering if an author were bound by an artificially conceived geography. Take Mars, for example. Should we have an Edgar Rice Burroughs or a Stanley Weinbaum Mars? (Clifford D. Simak, The Fantasite, May-June 1942, 17).



Ken Fields, designer of buildings, lived with his wife, Judy, in a suite on the twelfth floor of a high-rise apartment.

The building was two years old. Because of improper sealing, two jagged cracks ran the length of the diatto flooring of the terrace, creating an illusion that the terrace itself might any minute crumble and go crashing down to the far-below landscaped patch of green. Cracks, too, had developed in the plaster around the sliding doors that opened onto the terrace. These cracks in total annoyed Ken out of proportion to their structural significance.

Standing on the terrace, putting the cracks out of mind, Ken could lose himself in the view until time was seemingly suspended for his convenience. When the sun hovered at the rim of the sea, as it did now, it was as if some universal architect had converted the buildings into massive settings for precious stones. Later, when the sea and sun did what they do every night together, when the people moved switches to shut out the dark imagination of the world, lo!, a million different jewels would bloom against the darkness. Night would become a setting for them, and buildings would wash away against the earth and sky, and the whole surface of the world for miles around would be converted into one huge, million-faceted gem. The whole surface, that is, save for the ocean, dark and restless and foreboding: for the ocean was a highway for the gulls as they followed boats, feeding on refuse pitched from the fantails, from the orient. Birds bringing, perhaps, subtle plagues and strange distempers.

Birds churned his thoughts toward suppressed terror, for the birds were put here for a frightful purpose that defied analysis. Ken turned his thoughts from the birds.

He looked down and his thoughts twisted in the streets among the buildings, across the lawns and parks, over the fences, around the trees, until they seemed a product of the city. It was almost as though he were the city, and the city were he, as though the city were a giant computer, and the thoughts the city thought were his own thoughts, as though his brain were attuned to the convolutions of streets and buildings and racing motor cars and swarming people: both making an identical pattern somewhere.

So, perhaps, the architect needed a rationale, and the buildings he built, glass everywhere to open out the rooms to the sun and the world and shield them from the moving air and the birds, was this justification. The city was nothing more than diamonds and rubies and pearls and opals and saphires, crystaline, opaque, like fire, like ice, like the sunset, like the sea. He felt, sometimes, in creative moments, as if his whole body had turned into a great jewel.

Glass surrounded the terrace on four sides, making it into an abnormal cube, a weird geometric construction, isolated like a greenhouse, the glass an invisible barrier to keep people from jumping off, perhaps: custom-made for Ken, for which he paid a month's salary and which, during the summer days became like a hot, dry desert where only cactus could grow naturally.

Inside, Judy felt the edge of her second martini cutting into the tension of muscles, relaxing her, letting her skate between reality and unreality with feigned emotions. Thinking was too much trouble, when you could move automatically through accustomed routine. Set the table. Check the pots. Open the wine.

Ken came inside to trail her footsteps.

"I had to see Masterson," he said. "You know how I hate to see Masterson."

Judy, at first, had thought Ken hated to see people like Masterson because of what the builder was doing to the building: and the lies he had to tell, that both knew were lies, and that people like Masterson had to pretend to believe, thus both pretending they were speaking about reality while constructing these fantasies.

Take the new medical building. It required the outer appearance of solidity and luxury, with expensively appointed offices and piped-in music and deep carpeting and illusions of space and quiet. Appearances were costly. So Ken was forced to delve into the interior of the building, into the building codes, into the engineering aspects of the problem.

But in the beginning, Ken planned the building to last ten lifetimes, like a post office, and on the basis of these plans, the builder got a loan commitment for eighty per cent of the construction costs. As construction progressed, difficulties developed, and the builder took his plans to Masterson, representing the agency lending the money, and said, "Look, we're running out of money already and we can't afford to bring it in on the costs we figured, because everything's gone up lately, and our subs are losing money, and we can't afford any more of our money because we don't have any more, and you can't afford any more of your money because you're right up to the hilt on it and you don't want it as a bad loan like it stands now, because now it isn't any good to anybody, and you could never unload it. So, we have a hell of a problem, and let's put our heads together and see if we can't cut a corner here and a corner there to save a little money so we can at least finish the building."

Masterson, pretending that this sort of thing had never happened to him before, was solicitious. "What do you suggest?"

And Ken dropped around in a week with the new plans. "We can save eighty thousand dollars if we can use dry wall instead of plaster and nobody will notice it. These steel girders aren't required to make it earthquake proof; they're just a safety factor we don't really need."

Masterson would think about it for a week or two, and disallow a change here and a change there, but the major changes where the savings were would be approved, and now the builder had his full construction costs; and additionally pulled out the quarter of a million dollars the land was worth. From this sum he took fifty thousand and made a deposit on another piece of land and got the owner of it to subordinate his remaining equity by means of a second mortgage which the builder could worry about someday if he wanted to. Immediately plans were begun for a new building, conceived to last five hundred years, that Masterson or someone like him would approve a loan on, and the builder took the two hundred thousand dollars he'd cleared from the excess loan and from the kickbacks from the subcontractors and moved to larger office space to impress people more and was on his way another step forward on the fragile bridge across the chasm of overextension.

At first Judy had thought Ken resented cheapening the buildings after he had planned so well to make the best he could. But after a few times, that excuse evaporated and she realised he was in a business, nothing more. The reason he always had a bad day when he went to see Masterson was this.

Masterson had a parakeet in his office, in a cage by his desk, where it made noises while Ken talked. It was a tame parakeet, and Ken was afraid that Masterson would let it out of the cage to fly around the office. It had taken Judy a number of questions to find out that simple fact: that Masterson kept a parakeet.

Parakeets, robins, sparrows, starlings, canaries, all the exotic creatures in the aviary of the zoo: no matter. Take a trip with him, during the day, to the beach, and the sea gulls sent him in a panic, circling there above the sand, dipping and swooping and floating, talking a strange semaphore language between themselves composed of wing movements and neck movements and tail movements and head movements.

She often wondered what the birds were a symbol of: and how they connected with the nightmare forms that haunted Ken's imagination. And in the end, she came to this conclusion, which she kept to herself, for Ken did not want to talk about it: the birds were a symbol of the nest-building instinct.

Birds have a nest-building instinct, man does not. The knowledge has been lost from his genetic code. And he misses this instinct, in which he is inferior to the birds, this behavior pattern that tells a bird who it is and what it must do, more perhaps than anything else in life: so that man's most recurrent dream and nightmare is of flying or falling. And lacking the nest-building instinct, he feels afraid of the birds, who are better equipped than he is for survival.

She saw architecture as an expression of this lack, a perversion, as it were, of the nest-building instinct. Mankind of all ages continually drew together in an attempt to build a nest of some kind: cities on top of cities have been found by archaeologists. Seven, eight, nine, even ten, one upon the other.

The history of man is the history of cities. There is no history without cities. One marvels at the architectural constructions of the past, divorced from utility. Man needs only an excuse to build a pyramid, a cathedral, a stonehenge, a geometric shape proliferated beyond the need for shelter--the whole proliferated beyond the need for shelter--the whole process welling up from the subconscious in an attempt to make a good nest. Perhaps the birds in their queer way were a symbol to Ken of the city, itself, and of the city building instinct, but then, again, perhaps not. Perhaps this was merely a fantasy and the birds represented something else to Ken.

But somewhere it was tied together. The birds. The forms. His nightmares of her, when he saw her as a womb symbol, like the ocean, with birds building nests in her hair; when he saw her rising from the ocean, some wet, wild Ophelia; some Lydia with the swan; some aerial creature, something hatched from an egg! His nightmares were all jumbled together, but they, too, must go back to the city, his jeweled city, somehow.

But perhaps it was Judy's own imagination that made these things to account for Ken's attitude. Judy, at twenty-nine, wanted children: but she was afraid they would never have children so long as Ken had this childish fear of birds, this childish fear of building a nest: so childless, they lived in this apartment building, designed by an architect.

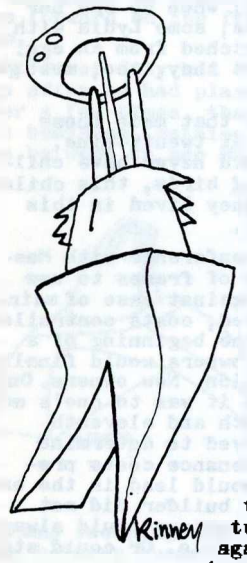
Over dinner, Ken and Judy discussed the conference with Masterson. The conference turned upon the types of frames to use for the windows, and they traded off costs against ease of maintenance, and, in the end, as might be expected, costs controlled. Maintenance problems of a structure hardly the beginning of a skeleton pyramided for the future: when new owners would finally discover the hidden secrets of the construction. New owners. One always sold buildings at a profit as soon as it was to one's advantage to do so, sometime between the seventh and eleventh year, depending on the accounting firm employed to determine these things, but in all events before maintenance costs predicted the downward spiral of profits that would lead in the end to miserable exploitation of a wreckage. The builder did not build the building to keep. And the lending company could always get out from under, if it wanted out, on the sale. Or could stay in, if it wanted in, and let the buyer beware.

After the meal, when the dishes were in the dishwasher, Judy felt restless. The wine was wearing off and the tension was returning. She rebelled at the thought of more alcohol, tomorrow was a hard day, leave the drinking for the weekend, for Saturday night. Tonight she wanted to get out of the apartment, it was unendurable, she could not stand the sight of it.

She wanted to drive down along the beach, up to Malibu, maybe get out of the car and watch the ocean under the moon, when everything was still. There were no birds at night. "Let's take a drive, Ken," she said. "Let's take a drive around somewhere, drive up to the beach, like we used to, want to?"

Ken liked the early part of the evening when the buildings were lighted and the street lights divided the city like a grid of necklaces.

They took the elevator to the garage, and together in the Austin Healy, they drove along the broad streets of Santa Monica and along the Coast Highway, beside the sweeping cliffs, along the ocean front, until the city fell behind and the first accumulations of beach-side restaurants were behind, and ahead, the stretches of ocean, beside which you could park in sand-filled lots along with other cars and hear the sighing of the waves and sea, for it was that time of year when the red tide was in, phosphorescent flashes along the crest of the breakers, and look up at the overcast sky, just you and that great water, the Pacific, which reached thousands of miles outward in search of land to caress and love.



Because of the red tide, fish were dying, and the sea odours of kelp and iodine were overlaid with a faint odour of decay, not strong enough yet to be violently unpleasant, but strong enough to make one uneasy, since life was dying out there, somewhere, huge puddles of life, hugh schools of life, and if something were ever to happen to the ocean: goodbye, it's all over, if something ever poisons the ocean, and the life out there, the incredibly myriad life out there dies, it's goodbye people, goodbye everything, for the rich swirling sea is the cradle from which all life comes, and perhaps, to which, some day, all life must return: the ocean was the beginning and the end, and someday, in the inconceivably distant future, when the sun grows old and the atmosphere at last has been stripped down to a thin veil, then the ocean will slowly boil away under reduced pressure, and life will ingather along the advancing beach, seeking life-giving water, and in the end, all life on the land will be gone because it cannot return to the ocean, because it cannot go home again, and evolution will reverse itself, and in the end, the ocean will all be gone, and there will be nothing on the face of the earth that moves and thinks and feels, only the vast forces of nature that were in the beginning, before life, and will be, in the end, after life: so now, with the ocean and land full with life, was a time of richness, and tomorrow was forever, beyond the life time of anything now alive, of anything now thought of, in the distant future, when the sun, growing cold, unnaturally warms a dying earth.

So Judy looked at the ocean and thought that the ocean was like a woman, and she wondered why men sail upon it with ships, why they try to conquer it, for it always rolls on and on, indifferent to them, for it is woman, it is the mother of everything that breathes and moves and thinks and feels.

And Judy thought that women were like that, like the ocean, like the great womb symbol, the first and the last, the beginning and the end. Women were the things that rolled on and on, driven by their instinct, which, like the tides, were regulated in their rhythm by the phases of the moon and by blood in salty congruence with the waters of the sea.

The beginning and the end. Birth and death. In the end, the earth becomes the mother and all return to it: so the custom, beyond memory of time and place, the universal custom, of burying the dead. In the end and the beginning, there is nothing but woman.

The women, ageless, endless, could rule the world, like the ocean rules the world, if only they were one and not many, if only they could determine their own desires, if only they could understand themselves! Ah, the women! Their nature divides them against their best interests, each continually in competition with all the others in her restless, needful, hungry search for a mate, a man, a child, for a future beyond themselves. And so the men cooperate to rule the world, and the women, lost and helpless, chained to their bodies, chained to the raising of men's children, ah, the women: they are nothing, neither the end nor the beginning, for they, like man, lack the nest-building instinct.

Judy was saddened by the ocean, and the two of them, seated side by side, were alone with their own thoughts. At last Ken said, "I guess we may as well be getting back; it's getting late, and I have an appointment first thing about the new building on Fairfax."

It was actually later than he had intended, and the lights were winking out in the city. He was driving in the darkened business section, where the buildings were nothing but strange geometric forms. This made him think of the city as being without life, and only the structures remaining, stripped of any relationship to function, without any inner illumination.

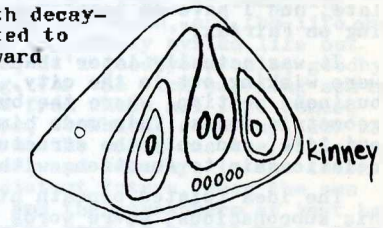
The idea twisted beneath his conscious thoughts, deep into his subconscious, where words play freely with each other like demented children, and where the only order is the great, looming symbols to which words cannot attach. In this region of the mind, the supporting framework is nothing but geometric forms, the forms a person is first aware of, the forms that define the world, the foundation of all thinking, the forms of reality, the forms that the infant first sees, the crazy geometry of the uncomprehending baby mind. In his dreams, sometimes, he walked through endless geometric forms with mirrors on them, the mirrors reflecting himself and the forms diminishing to infinity, and he saw, in the deepest part of his being, that these forms were symbols for the birds, for the birds which are everywhere, light and airy, sailing on the free winds, these birds which menace him.

He tried to make his own buildings refute the image. He was never building cathedrals, he was never building airborne structures, he was always building thrusting phalli, functional buildings, office buildings, apartment buildings, stripping down to the essentials of construction, utilising every bit of available space, making the buildings solid, compact, rooted, monumental, with no free space in them to lift them upward like balloons. But at night, when the lights were turned out, even the solidly rooted structures were frighteningly like those geometric shapes that lurked in his subconscious, for they were nothing but shapes, but ideas, but forms, divorced from reality: and forms may be changed with a stroke into other forms, for they are not real, and so they were always changing, always moving, like birds, and so the geometric forms were like the birds, and they frightened him in the silence of the night, and he drove faster to escape from them.

"In twenty years," he said, "we'll have to demolish these and build new ones. How many commercial buildings are there in Los Angeles that are fifty, seventy-five years old? The only one I can think of is the Bradbury Building. They're trying to save it, not because it's good architecture, but just to save something: not because it's functional, there's too much space in it, but because it's just old, because it somehow ties them to the past."

Judy sometimes closed her eyes and saw buildings as she imagined Ken saw them in his nightmares: buildings as they would look in fifty years, stripped to skeleton forms: divorced from utility, and this may be the thought that, in the end, terrified her husband.

"If we don't build new ones," he said, "we'll be left with decaying landscapes all over the city, all over Los Angeles, all over Southern California." It's a continual, organic process, he thought, destroying the old, building the new. But we're falling behind every year. Something has gone wrong with time itself, most likely: everything has started to move faster and faster.



To Judy, Ken was obsessed with decaying landscapes. He was addicted to fantasy stories such as Howard Lovecraft wrote about decay and the smells of the sea and the refuse from the sea, and it all went back to the buildings, she thought, the decaying landscapes, as well as the jewels of his imagination, the terror of the sea and the refuse of the sea, in terms of the birds it brought to it, all intertwined in his mind.

They were in the garage. Ken cut the motor. The garage was silent, lighted by small-watt bulbs, and it reminded her of a cold, damp morgue, a morgue for automobiles, shiny and new, with nothing wrong with them at all except they wouldn't start up, they had all gone permanently to sleep.

What a strange way to control an environment, she thought, when we make a place for cars to sleep without dreaming, when we produce an endless series of things to get us from one place to another, to foul the atmosphere, when we pollute the oceans and the streams and the rivers. What a strange way to control the environment: by hating it, by trying to poison it, by killing ourselves, willy nilly, to no demonstrable purpose. Oh, how we control the environment, a thing men can do that birds cannot! Birds can only build nests, that's all in safe places, away from the wind, away from the cold, over and over again, for millions of years, the same nests, because they know how to build nests, and what nests are for, and birds know when it is time for the nests to be abandoned, and when it is time for the young to fly. The poor, helpless birds, being poisoned by us, as we kill the insects, the poor insects, and the great civilisations of the ants and the bees.

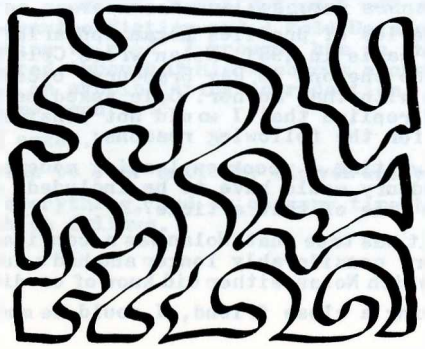
And Ken: in the beginning, four years ago, when Judy first met him, when he had just graduated from college, looking for his first job, ah, then: his mind was filled with grand landscapes and intricate designs. Now that was gone, because he had convinced himself that it was futile to try to clear even the existing slums, because mankind was just building more and more slums of the future, faster and faster, and the cities were being turned into slums, somehow, and soon Ken would begin to imagine jewels in horrible, decayed environments, jewels befouled by pigeons, jewels befouled by nightingales and mocking birds, jewels winking in the dirt and filth among strange geometric forms with mirrors on them.

As they ascended the elevator to their apartment, to prepare for bed, to prepare for sleep, to prepare for dreams, she thought: if we could just figure out how to build nests, that would be nice, that would be the best thing in the world.

But, of course, the environment isn't right for it, the world is sick, and the world isn't interested in building nests, and mankind is only interested in poisoning itself, in killing itself, in destroying itself and everything else, because maybe they've never been taught any better, maybe because they've never been raised in a proper nest, and now it's too late to build a proper nest, all by yourself, for to do that, you would have to make a world where geometric forms are sweet and harmonious, where the sea is loved rather than hated, where people are never afraid of the birds, and the birds, soft as dreams, strong as thought, the lovely birds can fly high above the land...into the open sky...to the landscape of a tomorrow filled with hope and love...and ever the promise of a rainbow.

To do this, you would have to extend man's control over the whole earth, to make the whole earth a place where nests could be built, that's the kind of environmental control it would take. And then, maybe, if we made the whole world a place like that, where you could raise children, maybe we could learn to build nests, and if we could build nests, what children we would raise then!

In their apartment, she want to the terrace, with the cracked diatto in it. The overcast had dissolved. She looked out through the glass, and she wondered where those children would go when they left their nests, and she looked up at the sky and at the stars, sparkling like jewels. Where would they go?



Ray Bradbury in *FRANCE*

sam moskowitz

The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction at any given time may have anywhere from one to five foreign editions. Usually these foreign editions take almost all of their material from the American and pay a flat rate for it. This can even include the covers. Others print what they wish, either publishing incomplete contents or filling in with reprints from other sources or by the use of new material from local writers. In this latter class is Fiction, a French science fiction magazine which runs most of its contents from MoF&SF, but varies by printing original science fiction from French writers and on occasion a reprint from elsewhere. This publication, now in about its 173rd monthly issue, runs 160 digest-sized pages and is published by Editions Opta, which also does Galaxie and Mystere Magazine. They also have the French science fiction book club (Club du Livre d'Anticipation), which publishes deluxe printings in handsome bindings. Their policy is to publish two books in one volume bound in fine leather with head bands. They have bought rights to my articles on Cliford D. Simak, A.E. van Vogt, C.L. Moore, Isaac Asimov, and C.S. Lewis and together with a photograph of the author run them in the respective books. In each book they run a bibliography of all the appearances of the author in question in the French language, certainly an unusual bonus.

Fiction is an especially fascinating magazine to watch to see how they handle features from F&SF that might be regarded as a bit "in" for a foreign reader. This was particularly true of an issue like the May, 1963 F&SF, which was the special Ray Bradbury number, with two new stories from him: To the Chicago Abyss and Bright Phoenix, plus an appreciation and index of his works by his Number One Fan, William F. Nolan.

When my series of profiles began appearing in Amazing Stories on a regular basis in 1961, Nolan wrote Cele Goldsmith asking if he couldn't do the one on Ray Bradbury, because he had a close relationship with that author. Cele asked me if I would have any objection. I replied that I would not consider it under any circumstances, for the following reasons:

1. I was writing a book on leading modern science fiction authors. Bradbury would have to be included, so why should I lose the magazine sale of that article?

2. While it was true that Nolan was a confidant of Bradbury, I had known Bradbury considerably longer and had a substantial amount of information which Nolan either did know of or did not have access to.

3. Not being a close friend, I could be much more objective.

My article appeared in Amazing Stories, Oct, 1961 under the title of "What Makes Bradbury 'Burn'." With some revision it was included in my book Seekers of Tomorrow, published in 1966.

Bradbury was pleased with it for he wrote me on September 25, 1961: "Just the briefest note to thank you for the complete and efficient and really fine job you did on the PROFILE. You must have spent a fantastic amount of time researching it, and especially you must have talked an arm off dear Julie Schwartz, for which I am grateful. I never dreamt, back in '39, when first we met, that one day you would be doing such an article on me. I hope to be worthy of your friendly interest and curiosity over the coming years. Again, my deepest thanks and good wishes to you in your work."

Nolan got his chance when he led off the special Ray Bradbury issue of MoF&SF with an appreciation titled "Bradbury: Prose Poet in the Age of Space." Everyone should have been happy.

Early in 1964 I received a cheque from Fiction for the use of my Ray Bradbury article from Amazing Stories. I was puzzled as to how they planned to run it. I got my answer when I received the February, 1964 Fiction. It was the Special Bradbury Number. It did not run Joe Mugnaini's F&SF cover showing Ray Bradbury in the foreground with scenes from his various stories in the background, but it did run the two new Bradbury pieces, Nolan's appreciation and index, and preceded Nolan's article with my own (which obviously had not been part of the original package).

I was flattered that they had gone to such pains, but left it at that. There was a rather lengthy introduction preceding the articles by myself and Nolan, but since I couldn't read French, I assumed it contained the usual generalities and dismissed it.

As part of my job I edit Quick Frozen Foods International, a business magazine which prints sections in German and French, though most of it is in English, which has become the international language of business. Willy Ley does regular German translations for me and a young fellow, born in France, who worked as a newspaperman there and came to America where he did editorial work for the French language paper in New York, edited Companion magazine and then worked on my staff for about a year, does my French translations. His name is Didier Delenouy, and one day when the staff had a slack moment we happened to be discussing science fiction. Another one of my associate editors, John Tenor, had corresponded with Bradbury at considerable length some years back on the subject of play writing and, being something of an artist, had done a colour portrait of Bradbury from photographs.

The switch in the conversation to Bradbury suddenly reminded me of the French magazine Fiction and I told Delenouy I would bring him the magazine to read. I brought him in the Bradbury issue and as he glanced through it his eyebrows arched and he said: "Oh, my, isn't that an ego-inflating introduction. Is that why you offered to let me read it?"

"How's that?" I asked.

"This introduction to your article; did you write it yourself?"

I had him stop everything, and on company time he translated the piece for me which follows.

The following two articles deal with the same subject: they aim at giving an analysis of Ray Bradbury through a study of his life, his works, and the image his fellow citizens have of him.

To avoid publishing both articles, was it then possible to use only one?

In that case one could have considered only their respective dates of publication: Sam Moskowitz' article was first published in Amazing of October 1961; William Nolan's appeared in our American edition dated May 1963, which is enough to guarantee that it is a larger source of information (if only because Nolan would have read the previously mentioned article).

On the other hand, Moskowitz is infinitely better known and more gifted than Nolan: his series of monographic articles on science fiction's greatest writers, of which Fiction will start publication at a later date, makes him the greatest historian of his kind in the United States.

Opposite this remarkable talent, Nolan has only one trump, but one of importance: for the past thirteen years, he has been one of Bradbury's closest friends. Assuredly, good intentions are not enough, and his hagiography does not avoid a conventional tone or naivete. But his closeness to the master allowed him to write a well informed article in depth, which is valuable because of the amount of original statements by Bradbury contained in it.

Finally, the main interest of this confrontation is to compare two viewpoints on the author: Nolan, a devotee of Bradbury, paints a nuanced apology, but one in which everything adds up, according to him, finally to enhance his portrait of the great man; Moskowitz, as far as he is concerned, is much closer to the orthodoxy of science fiction, and behend his apparent erudite impassiveness, his article reflects the rancour of science fiction amateurs against the writer.

In view of these contrary lights focused on the same life and the same work, the reader will be able, if he so wishes, to indulge in a beneficial exercise a la Pirandello; moreover, he will be able to choose his own truth. All the elements of the file are before his eyes.

A last word. The worshipper and the critic have in common that they are both American; their articles have in common more than one aspect that will surprise the French reader. It should be remembered that both articles have been written for the American public, which feels that financial success for the writer and for everyone else is an important goal.

(Fiction, February 1964)

We pay a price for everything in life, however, and when Seekers of Tomorrow containing the Bradbury article was sent to reviewers by the World Publishing Company early in 1966 it received forty one separate reviews from magazines and newspapers outside the science fiction and fantasy field. Of that number, forty were very favourable. The one that was not appeared in The Los Angeles Times for May 22, 1966 and was signed by William F. Nolan.

Ray Bradbury off Broadway

by John Boardman

Four centuries ago, the world stood in constant danger of the black plague and other epidemics. Starvation and poverty were the lot of most of the human race, and all but a handful of warriors and priests were sentenced to a lifetime of back-breaking physical labour. Superstition had so great a grip on the mind of men that half of Europe went to war with the other half over religious ideologies which today are able to co-exist comfortably. Aristotle's writings were used to settle questions of natural science and Galen was seriously regarded as an authority on medicine. No man could travel faster than a horse could carry him. Very few people ever journeyed twenty miles away from their birthplaces, and these narrow physical horizons produced narrow intellectual horizons. Human life was, as Hobbes put it, "nasty, mean, brutish, and short."

The only thing that has made our lives any different from that of our predecessors of the sixteenth and earlier centuries is the application of scientific discoveries, and the new economic and technological systems which these discoveries have made possible. Without these things we would be plunged back into the abyss of disease, dirt, and drudgery from which we have so slowly and painfully crawled. But these considerations do not seem to have affected Ray Bradbury, to judge from the three short plays, all adapted accurately from his short stories, which appeared off Broadway in October 1965 as "The World of Ray Bradbury."

The three plays were selected so as to attack science from both sides. The first two, "The Pedestrian" and "The Veldt," show human beings ground down by a hyper-efficient technology. The third, "To the Chicago Abyss," shows a society of neo-barbarians after an atomic war. But Bradbury apparently regards prosperity and poverty as equally culpable, when induced by technology.

"The Veldt" is perhaps the fullest development, among these three plays, of Bradbury's notions. He shows that "old Adam" coming out in the human-kind of the future, as children use their electronic play-room to make real a fantasy of hatred against their parents. His message is the discredited old fable of "original sin," that makes man miserable and vicious despite all that his technology can do to widen his life. Totally ignoring the differences in human life between pre-technical and technical societies, he sees in science and technology only greater scope for the same Pleistocene brute.

Actually, Bradbury is a little late with his message. He should have presented these ideas to humanity back in the days when some technically minded caveman brought down a rabbit with a well-aimed rock, instead of running it down on his own legs. Bradbury could have shown how the hurling of rocks would cause man's legs to atrophy, and would deprive him not only of the use of his legs but also of the exhilarating feel of the dewy grass against his skin as he sprinted through a field at dawn to run down his breakfast. He could have foretold that people would lose all joy in the hunt, as the collection of game became a mere mechanical act. In the end, of course, cave-man society would break down as men quarreled over supplies of throwable rocks, hunted out all the rabbits in the neighborhood, and started throwing rocks at each other instead of at game.

Bradbury's propaganda might have had some effect then, at the very beginning of the age of technology. But now, in a century when we are so deeply committed to technology that scarcely a man among us can dress a raw hide, distinguish the scent of a lion, or kill a timber wolf single handed, his shrill outcry against science--actually against civilisation--comes just a little too late.

Bradbury, with his amiable idiosyncracies, has of course perfect freedom to make his thoughtless attacks on science. In a pre-scientific era, the chances are that he probably never would have become literate, let alone find people who could spare time from the endless search for a meager living to enjoy his books and plays. Reflection on this point tends to dull the impact of his assaults on our civilisation.

"The World of Ray Bradbury" holds the dubious distinction of being one of the most outstanding failures in the history of the off-Broadway stage. Not only did it run for less than a week, but when it closed the theatre in which it played went out of business!

EDITOR'S UNAUTHORISED APPENDIX

Relative to these same plays another critic writes:

> The audience was largely unappreciative...The sets and technical work with lights, sound, etc., were excellent, and some of the acting...the scripts, unfortunately, were bad. "The Veldt," especially, suffered from bad scripting, most notably in the incredible moment when Daddy looks out over the African landscape and says, "It's quiet," and Mamma, frowning, says, "Too quiet." In general, the trouble seems to be that Bradbury was writing down to a non-s.f. audience, spelling everything out, and actually the audience was far more hip than he gave them credit for. The s.f. content came across as Buck Rogery ("Now I'll push the stud on our automated electriceye dinneromatic," etc.), and the philosophical content was just naive.
>
> (Terry Carr, Metrofan Bulletin #3, Oct. 1965)

There is room for one more opinion, that of your editor, who attributes the failure to the essentially lyric (as opposed to dramatic) character of Bradbury's talent--which means that the "metaphor of sensory impact" is lost when his lines are spoken instead of read.

CORDWAINER SMITH BY roger zelazny

I never met Cordwainer Smith, although we lived within maybe ten miles of one another for the better part of a year.

I wanted to, very badly. But I have a thing about me, when it comes to writers. I don't like to bother them or take up much of their time unless I know them and know it's all right. I am constitutionally incapable of picking up the telephone, calling some writer I've never met, introducing myself and engaging in a pleasant conversation. I can do it if it's a business matter, but not just chitchat. So I never called Cordwainer Smith, though I knew who he really was...

Maybe you all know by now that he had his Ph.D. at age twenty two, out of Johns Hopkins, and that he was only fifty three years old when he died, or that he wrote straight fiction back in the 40's under the pen-names "Carmichael Smith" and "Felix C. Forest." Or maybe you don't, so I'll tell you some more--everything I know about him, actually.

He lived here in Baltimore, in a row house, with his wife (who is a linguist and a part-time writer for the Encyclopedia Britannica), a feline named Cat Melanie (whose abbreviated name, C'Mell, might ring a bell), a seven thousand volume library (including a first edition of the King James Bible dated 1611, for which he had hunted thirty years), and he was a reserve army colonel who'd written a much-consulted book on psychological warfare.

He once lost three thousand years. It was the period between 6,000 and 9,000 A.D. They were contained in a pocket-sized notebook with a red spine. He inadvertantly left it on a table in a dockside restaurant on the Isle of Rhodes. When he checked back it was gone, and though he offered a reward for its return, it never showed up. It contained hundreds of handwritten pages of notes on characters, plots, ideas--the bones of stories he wanted to write one day. It may still be around somewhere. Had he lived, maybe he could have reconstructed it. I just don't know, and now it's too late.

I'd give a lot to have that notebook. If anybody ever turns it up, please let me know. I'll give it back to his widow, I promise. I'd sure like to look at it, though.

I could never match him. I could never write those stories the way he would have written them. But I wish I could eavesdrop on his thought-processes to the extent of reading through it. I know I'd learn a lot, because he was so much better than I am, in so many ways.

I'll bet you didn't know that when Cordwainer Smith got stuck on a story, his wife would often bail him out, in a manner similar to the functioning of the Kuttner-Moore team. She'd sit down at his typer, write a page or two, and he'd take it again from there. Afterwards, he couldn't always tell who had written what.

The reason I know this much about him is that I was interviewed a while back by a local columnist--James Bready, the man who does the "Books and Authors" column for The Baltimore Sun. We spent about an hour and a half talking that Sunday afternoon, and he mentioned that the only other s.f. writer he'd ever interviewed was Cordwainer Smith. I then pumped him for all the information I could get, and then got him to send me a tear-sheet of his column of 9/26/65--the Cordwainer Smith one.

Mister Bready would probably have provided me with an introduction, had I met him a bit earlier and asked for one. But Smith was already dead.

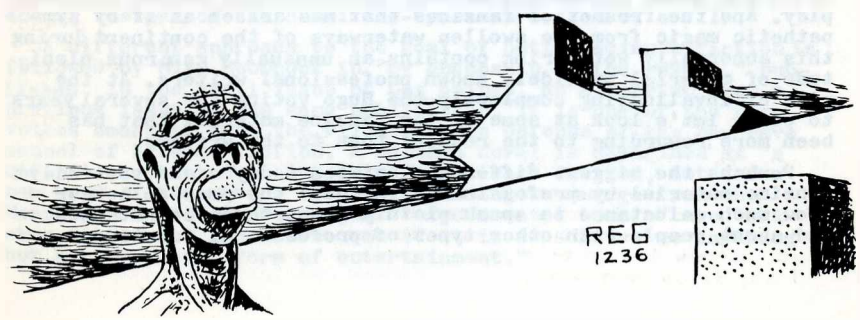
I don't really know what relevance all these little facts have, except that they may not be known to science fiction fandom in general, and I'm sitting here in my living room on a rainy day with my typewriter in my lap and the flu in my guts and my throat and thinking about Cordwainer Smith because Jim Sallis asked me to, and writing down everything I can think of because it might help to broaden your picture of a man whose memory should be preserved.

It is a lie that s.f. writers can see the future. Because I can't. If I could, I would have picked up the telephone despite my constitutional indisposition, feeling all the while like a sixteen year-old girl at her first prom, and I would have dialed his number, introduced myself, and then said something doubtless very stupid and then something very complimentary. Then he would have known that his words had reached one more individual to whom they meant something.

I wish I had.

Now, Jim, I suppose I should talk about his style, his characters, his ideas. I can't though. I liked them, that's all; and there won't be any more, so I'm sad and very regretful.

Just do this one thing, people, please. If you've never read a Cordwainer Smith story, pick one up and read it. Then you'll know the way I feel, and why I'm sorry I never said, "Hello, I think you're great," and blushed. If you have, you already know.



opere citato

BY

HARRY WARNER, JR.

DISJECTA MEMBRA

Strife and disorder have arisen over a question of definition. The Hugo categories established in 1967 for fan achievements were won by some people who had professional credentials: author Alexei Panshin and artist Jack Gaughan. Objections were based on the claim that simon pure amateurs should receive awards intended for fan accomplishments. Those who objected overlooked the fact that it is increasingly difficult to separate the professionals from the amateurs. Perhaps half of the best material written for fanzines today emerges from typewriters of people who have professional taint, in or out of science fiction and fantasy; there are novelists, editors, copyreaders, journalists, teachers of English, agents, and members of a smattering of other professions somehow related to the written or the published word.

It's curious that the opposite complaint wasn't lodged about Hugo awards. A sizable proportion of Hugo awards for professional science fiction has gone to men who have made one or more recent appearances in fanzines. By the logic that criticises the awards for amateur accomplishment, there should be objections to the categorising of a Zelazny or an Ellison as a professional writer.

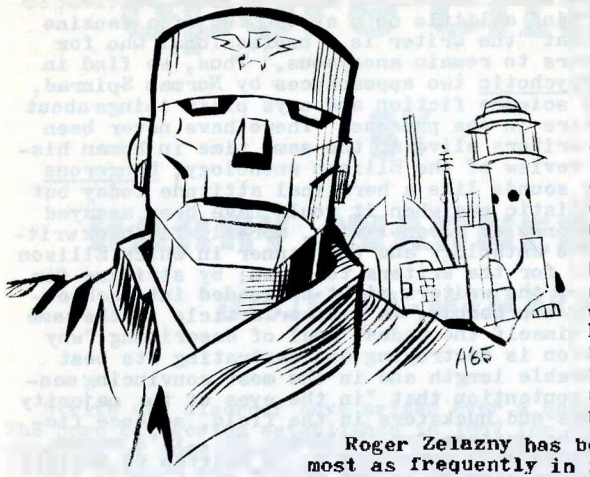
Fortunately, this type of logic has no effect on the professional qualities of the prose that normally appears in fanzines under the byline of men who have made their reputations primarily on the basis of the things they wrote for pay rather than for play. And the freshet of fanzines that has arisen as if by sympathetic magic from the swollen waterways of the continent during this abnormally wet spring contains an unusually generous plenitude of material by widely known professional writers. At the risk of invalidating completely the Hugo voting for several years to come, let's look at some of the fanzine material that has been more rewarding to the readers than to the writers.

Perhaps the biggest difference between today's and yesterday's fanzine material by professionals is this: the pros no longer show much reluctance to speak plainly about their compatriots and about people with other types of professional functions.

As recently as the 1950's, Jim Blish was using his William Atheling pen name when he wrote critically about science fiction; today we almost never find a little note at the top of a fanzine article explaining that "the writer is a professional who for ethical reasons prefers to remain anonymous." Thus, we find in the March issue of Psychotic two appearances by Norman Spinrad, who fiercely defends science fiction and says plain things about this type of literature in the process. "There have never been thirty-two great sf writers alive at the same time in human history," he says in a review of the Ellison anthology, Dangerous Visions. This hardly sounds like a heretical attitude today but there was a less realistic era when it would have been assayed as a body blow to scores of clean-living, morally fit hack writers. Spinrad likes the anthology and the manner in which Ellison "set impossible goals for the writers to reach; by striving for the impossible some of the writers might be goaded into achieving the merely highly improbable." In another article in the same issue, Spinrad sets himself the modest goal of describing "why and how science fiction is destroying and castrating its best writers." At considerable length and in the most convincing manner, he details his contention that "in the eyes of the majority of publishers, editors and hucksters in the field, science fiction is something to be written for children. No...it's worse than that: science fiction is something to be written to satisfy what so-called adults imagine to be the tastes of children."

The March-April issue of Kallikanzaros doesn't reveal the origin and routing of the material by Kurt Vonnegut that it publishes. It's a transcript of a speech whose where and when is not revealed. But from internal evidence it's fairly recent and was heard at a college or university somewhere in Ohio. The written version of a talk is frequently an appalling travesty of the original form, even when the transcript is accurate, because there's so much difference between effective spoken and effective written language. But Vonnegut even provides amusement with his jokes in this published version, the severest test of all. He starts by giving a three-minute course in the art of writing the short story--a horizontal line, occasionally intersected by another line which rises and falls in accord with the state of the hero's fortunes. Toward the end Vonnegut becomes quite serious about books and the reasons why they must not become obsolete. "In order to be free, we must have much new information coming from people facing life this very day. The cheapest way to do it is with a book," and because only two or three people are major influences on that book--the writer, the editor, and maybe the editor's boss--it can reveal individual human experiences, instead of the committee-type expression of a film."

A different approach to the goal of better science fiction is followed by Mike Moorcock in "By Spaceship to the Psyche," published in the April issue of Les Spinge, as a reprint from a previous issue of the same publication. It is one of the rare voices emerging from the wilderness in defense of the new wave school of science fiction. A Ballard novel is described as "a definite breakthrough not only for science fiction, but for a new kind of literature that is beginning to emerge from the Mean Ages." William Burroughs' "experimental novels" are "science fiction as it must become if it is to survive as anything but a superficial form of entertainment."



Moorcock sees Cordwainer Smith as one of the pioneers in the journeys away from the more orthodox patterns of looking at the world and writing about it. "He is a writer who sees in the developments of modern physics a future world of brilliance, mediocrity, cruelty and wonder. He draws his inspirations from inside, not from the Sunday supplement science page."

Roger Zelazny has been appearing almost as frequently in fanzines as in professional pastures. The October-November, 1967 issue of Hugin and Munin was distributed only when Spring was arriving, at a time when a couple of major science fiction movies were ready for release generally. Planet of the Apes and a couple of other productions have begun to get cautiously favourable reviews in the fan press, but Zelazny is pessimistic about the general usefulness of film as a medium for science fiction. He feels that there is a great burden of sin to expiate, in the form of the vast quantities of terrible science fiction movies up to now; he fears that the very nature of the film is difficult to equate with the imagination that should be the reader's contribution to a science fiction story; and finally, he warns "that if you want to make SF popular you'll have to water it down for popular consumption and cater to the popular consumer...and in a sense, therefore, we would have to pimp for it."

John Hayden Howard is not a professional name that automatically induces a mental genuflecting gesture for the science fiction reader. But The Eskimo Invasion has begun to make it better known, and the author has appeared at least twice in fanzines of recent date, once in reply to an unfavourable review and again over a sort of story behind the story similar to the ancient Thrilling Wonder Stories feature. In the February issue of Speculation, Howard tells how the novel was influenced by his skin-diving adventures in the 1950's, his attempt in 1960 to integrate that hobby into science fiction, and the eventual amalgamation of the population explosion with his previous thoughts. "The Esks represent population pressure regardless of race, colour, creed or country of national origin," Howard says. "The rest of the people in the novel may represent the rest of mankind--although I hope not!"

He defines the disastrous turn of events in the novel as inspired by this difficulty: "The problem of the multiplying Esks was too big for any man. Because nations acted for their short-term interests rather than for their long-term imperatives, and were as unable to cooperate in popular control as they have been in nuclear arms control, all men failed. There was chaos when there need not have been."

The line between prodom and fandom seems to grow less clearly defined. We find John D. MacDonald, who has written fantasy in addition to suspense and mystery, writing letters of comment and requesting help from fandom in identifying the places of publication of some of his early stories. Ted White, who has made the transition from fandom to prodom, suddenly begins to review mystery novels for a fanzine. A Tolkien-slanted fanzine paints an unforgettable picture of W.H. Auden wandering through a Tolkien fan meeting, holding a copy of a fanzine, and baffled not by any of its slang or in-group jokes but by the identity of a mundane novelist mentioned therein.

So maybe it's time to stop segregating verbally the two manifestations of one breed. If there should be wider distribution of the concept that it is quite possible to do some writing and drawing for the fun of it, without destroying one's ability to earn money with the typewriter or pen, we should have a friendlier attitude when a Hugo is about to be awarded, and increased quantities of high quality material in fanzines.

Psychotic: Richard E. Geis, 5 Westminster Ave., Venice, California 90291, 25¢ per issue.

Kallikanzaros: John Ayotte, 1121 Pauline Ave., Columbus, Ohio 43224, 35¢ per issue or four for $1.25.

Les Spinge: Darroll Pardoe, 95 E. Twelfth Ave., Columbus, Ohio 43201, no price listed.

Hugin and Munin: Richard Labonte, 971 Walkley Road, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, 25¢ per issue.

Speculation: Peter R. Weston, 81 Trescott Road, Northfield, Birmingham 31, England, 30¢ per copy or three for $1.00.

EDITOR'S UNSOLICITED ANNOUNCEMENTS

Admirers of John D. Macdonald should contact Len Moffat (9826 Paramount Blvd., Downey, Calif. 90240), editor of The JDM Bibliophile. // Fans with poor eyesight are cautioned that Les Spinge is now printed in elite micro-type (which would make reading difficult) and in purple--which removes the contrast ordinarily provided by black-on-white and makes reading virtually impossible. Such preciosity, I think, is motivated by the same source that sometimes prompts editors of Little magazines to abandon punctuation and print exclusively in lower case. // I just learned that Richard Geis no longer lives in California, so anything mailed to Psychotic presumably is forwarded to Governor Ron Reagan.

THE SEASONAL FAN

BY: JIM HARMON

"THE ECHOES ARE LOUDEST OVER HERE"

With the publication of my book, The Great Radio Heroes, I received many complimentary reviews in the New York Times, Newsweek, Saturday Review, Los Angeles Free Press, and other. I also received a number of suggestions to cover omissions and errors. These requests came from Leland Sapiro, editor of this journal, to give Witch's Tale more than a mere mention; from Leslie Charteris, author of the Saint novels and radio plays, to give Simon Templar more than a mere mention; from George W. Trendle, creator-producer of the Green Hornet and Lone Ranger, to stop giving writer Fran Striker so much credit; and finally from me to give at least a brief example of an actual Buck Rogers radio script. The Rogers example in my book was only an approximate reconstruction (but of course I gave this fact only passing reference).

Mr. Sapiro has shown unsmiling determination to get this particular column out of me for a year or more, and so after more than nine months, it has decanted from its former position. It has, I haven't. For those who came in late, however, I would like to point out that writing about old radio programs is not really my only Thing. Since 1947, I have been writing for fanzines. I wrote fan-of-fans type articles when everyone thought the only permissible subject for such articles was Al Ashley. I wrote about comic books when Jerry Bails was going to school, instead of teaching it, and when Ted White was being pedantically certain (even when in error) only for members of his immediate family. I was criticising Robert A. Heinlein virtually before Alexei Panshin could read, much less write. I did these things neither first nor best, but I have done them. I have also written several million words of fiction--mostly science fiction--most of which is still lying where it fell, and one "B" (or under) budget picture, The Lemon Grove Kids, now in release. I also write about old radio shows.

Witch's Tale: This fantasy radio series began in May of 1931, pioneering the fantasy field in broadcasting for such radio programs as Arch Oboler and Willis Cooper's Lights Out and Cooper's own Quiet Please. Such television entries as Twilight Zone and Star Trek owe some ancestor veneration to Witch's Tale. The series was created and written by Alonzo Deen Cole (with a double e), who also played many leading roles himself.

Cole got there first, but only someone dazzled by the gentle passion of nostalgia can really say he did it best. Willis Cooper did it best later on; even Arch Oboler, who had legal permission to slightly rework old Cooper scripts from NBC who bought all rights, was somewhat better at it than Cole.

However, Cole was a proficient actor and a bit too much of an extrovert (a judgment made entirely from his work) to really be at home with mood-and-doom stories. His scenes of humour and romance in his fantasy scripts usually came off better than his moments of horror. Of course, he came into the field when it was entirely fresh, and those old enough to have heard the original broadcasts (I am not) remember the intensity of their reactions, just as for certain old magazine readers no one will ever be able to touch David H. Keller or E.E. Smith. Cole actually achieved more lasting success as the regular week-in, week-out writer of the adventures of Casey, Crime Photographer, a mildly cynical, wise-cracking newspaperman. He could have acted the role quite well too, but did not. (Casey was Staats Cotsworth.)

Alonzo Deen Cole's fantasy scripts for Witch's Tale were not, in my opinion, the best radio fantasy, but here is what they were.

Cole wrote of "grisly specters of the restless dead arising from their tombs at midnight...Sorcerers brewing weird and awful potions by the light of a pale new moon...Ravening werewolves pursuing helpless prey...The horrid vampire...the mischievous poltergeist...the ghastly zombie of Haiti...the ferocious djinn of Arabia...the stupid golem of the Hebrews...the mournful banshee of the Irish...Magic--Satanism--Alchemy..."

A number of these stories were adapted to appear in the pages of Weird Tales and finally into a magazine especially for them, whose first issue appeared November, 1936 in 8 x 11 inch size with two colour illustrations. The first issue contained an introduction supposedly written by the continuing narrator of the radio show, old Nancy, witch of Salem (played on the air by Adelaide Fitz-Allan). Old Nancy turned out to be an even worse speller than Rick Sneary; not even her demonic cat-familiar, Satan, could help her.

> Deer folks: ever since me an Satan fust begun ter spin our perty leetle bed-time stories...frends haz been writin us letters sayin they wud like ter be able ter read our yarns ... in celerbration ov my buthday--hunner an thuteen year ole I be terday--we've got around ter having our tales writ down in this heer magazine. Dunt read em in the daytime, tho--wait for a good dark nite when the wind iz moanin round the house outside--ten draw up ter the grate an by the light ov the ember or by a single flickerin candle..let yer imaginations go ter work. Yores for plessunt dreams.
>
> NANCY an SATAN

There is very little imagination left in broadcasting. I was even gratified by the recent appearence of a "topless" weather girl on KRLA Los Angeles--KRLA radio. There were several comments about the use of imagination in radio in the September 1968 Magazine of Horror. Steffan B. Aletti wrote: "...I've mourned greatly the demise of radio as a dramatic vehicle...how much more powerful it was than TV...the imagination of the individual reader or listener...can always think up something more horrible than you can show him; by being too graphic, one always runs the risk of becoming silly..." Editor Robert Lowndes replied: "I entirely concur about the general superiority of radio presentations of horror over films; I thrilled week after week to "The Witch's Tale"... and while a few movies...have chilled me then and now, most have been inferior to radio even when there was an honest attempt at artistic and effective presentation..."

For that first issue of The Witch's Tales (the magazine's title had a plurality missing from the radio series, possibly to appear more similar to Weird Tales for the magazine buyer), Cole adapted one of his most sensationalistic, if not best, stories. However, one does get a not atypical glimpse of this pioneer fantasy program when it is converted back from narrative text to script. The young hero and his wife have fallen into the clutches of a mad sorcerer-scientist who has just zapped the young man with a paralysis ray gun.

BETH: Help-help-help!

GIDEON: My dear young lady, don't waste your valuable breath. The walls of my home are sound-proof.

BETH: Please turn that ray away from him. Please don't hurt my husband.

GIDEON: It won't hurt him. I assure you he doesn't feel the slightest physical discomfort... Of course, as his mind remains active he may feel considerable anxiety, under the circumstances.

BETH: Stop it--release him, please!

GIDEON: Stand still. Step into the rays of my dynajector and you too will be paralysed.

BETH: Stop torturing him!Stop, you madman!

GIDEON: Madman, you say? Madman! Fools have made that mistake about Ellis Gideon before, fools who twenty years ago said my wife was dead--she who is of the undead...Fools who think they are sane and I--(breaks off into fit of coughing).

Gideon could have probably gone on to point out that they thought Fulton and Alexander Graham Bell were insane. Why, they even said the Marquis de Sade was crazy!

The listeners to Witch's Tale in the early Thirties, however, were not mad. They just had not had the opportunity of hearing the ravings of as many madmen as we have.

The Saint: Leslie Charteris writes:

> I have just been enjoying your book...but was sorry to discover among its encyclopedic collection of "trivia" a very grievous mistake on page 143...I can assure you that Denis Green, before his death several years ago, was no pseudonym. He was a very real person, a former actor who had played in almost every kind of show from the late Leslie Howard's Hamlet to the movie of Frenchman's Creek...I did indeed collaborate with him on at least 40 Sherlocks Holmes radio plays

> I supplied the plot synopses, and he wrote them up...The two executives at Young & Rubicam with whom Denis and I negotiated our deal were named Bruce Eels and Glenhall Taylor. So I made myself a merger of "Bruce Taylor." Anthony Boucher was a mutual friend, and when I got too busy to go on with Sherlock, Denis brought him in, in the same capacity of plot engineer. I don't know how long that went on...Incidentally, while my own show, The Saint, never reached the rank of the classics you deal with, it did run for a few years and had a rather unusually interesting list of stars in the title role at various times: Edgar Barrier, Brian Aherene (the best...) Vincent Price, Harry Sullivan, and Tom Conway.

In the book, I stated that the Holmes radio plays with Basil Rathbone and Nigel Bruce were written by Mr. Charteris and Anthony Boucher under the pseudonyms of Bruce Taylor and Denis Green. I regret the injustice to the late Mr. Green, but in self-defense, it appears that the by-line "Denis Green" did represent a collaboration between Denis Green and Anthony Boucher. I only left out one of three collaborators, the real Mr. Green.

As to The Saint, I attempted to deal with programs original to radio and of which there was virtually no historical trace left. Fortunately, The Saint exists in a large number of published works, any one of which is superior to virtually any radio or mystery program (the only one at all comparable is Carlton E. Morse's I Love a Mystery). The "Robin Hood of Modern Crime" is firmly entrenched in the folklore of Western man; Simon Templar hardly needs my poor efforts to give him a halo.

The Green Hornet and the Lone Ranger: George W. Trendle, 87-year old shaper of American mythology, writes:

> I have just finished reading...your book...particularly referring to The Lone Ranger, Sergeant Preston of the Yukon, and The Green Hornet...I personally created and produced all three of these shows in their radio days and television days until 1952, or thereabouts, when The Lone Ranger was purchased by the Jack Wrather Corporation...In 1957, he also acquired Sergeant Preston...The Green Hornet is still owned by The Green Hornet, Inc., of which I am still President. A series of television shows was produced for us last year by 20th Century-Fox, which were not so successful...

Mr. Trendle, who probably had approximately as much influence on my life as my mother and father, goes on to dispute some items in my book some of which are only misinterpretations of his. I stated that when the Lone Ranger program first began, Mr. Trendle did not like the Masked Man having a high sense of humour, and his staff did not like his formal Eastern-way of speaking, so they compromised. The Lone Ranger lost his sense of humour, and kept his formal Eastern way of speaking." This was intended as mild irony, and I agree with Mr. Trendle: "There was no compromise. I made the decisions.."

I do admit to the error of omission in regard to chief writer, Fran Striker. I wrote that Striker worked "fourteen hours a day six and seven days a week...to...write 156 Lone Ranger scripts, plus 156 scripts for other WXYZ shows, plus 365 daily comic strips." I was aware that in later years, Striker did not do all this alone. I was mistaken in the belief that in the beginning he did do all this alone. Mr. Trendle corrected me:

We had a staff of six writers, of which Fran Striker was the head, and when we had three Lone Ranger shows, two Sergeant Preston and one Green Hornet show each week...each writer was expected to produce one show. Sometimes a writer fell short; sometimes he produced two, in which event his pay was doubled. We had not only Fran Striker, but...Felix Holt, Tom Dougall, Mickey Merrill, and Dan Beattie...I appreciate the many nice things you said about the programs, and cannot expect everybody to look at them from the same viewpoint.

The Lone Ranger was a gunman, if you will, but his silver bullet represented the preciousness of human life. He may have been conceived as a vehicle to make money, but he grew beyond that in the scripts written by Fran Striker and his staff, and overseen and at times rewritten by George W. Trendle. He became a genuine myth, an ideal. It may be naive and child-like, as I am told, to believe in the ideals of the Long Ranger--that it is wrong to kill people and right to help them: that you must yet fight for what you believe and not passively accept fate. I also believe that if the world does not come to accept these ideals embodied in the Lone Ranger, the human race will shortly cease to exist.

Buck Rogers: Oh yes, that sample of an actual Buck Rogers script. Only recently have I been able to acquire any actual recordings of a Rogers radio play. I now have two and a half thirty minute programs from about 1939 (through the joint efforts of Dr. Barry Brooks, Ed Corcoran, Richard Gulla and Rex Miller) which according to internal evidence and the opinion of Redd Boggs are repeats of the 1932 series, two fifteen minute daily scripts repeated in each half-hour weekly instalment. There is one sequence concerning Buck Rogers, Wilma Deering and Dr. Huer exploring beneath the crust of the Earth in a Mechanical Mole. Another sequence concerns trailing Killer Kane and Ardula as they flee with the kidnapped Dr. Huer towards the asteroids.

BUCK: Buck Rogers calling Black Barney...

BARNEY: Helloo, Captain Rogers--how are you? ...Why I haven't heard from you since we got through exploring under the Earth. I understand you're looking for Killer Kane and Ardula.

BUCK: Right. Have you seen any sign of them?

BARNEY: Captain, with them crooks on the loose, the minute I got back here to Mars I got everything all organized and fixed up a fleet of Space Patrols, and just yesterday one of the pilots saw a strange super-rocketship heading towards a little plasteroid-

BUCK: You mean "planetoid."

BARNEY: Yeah, plasteroid, that lays fourteen points west of here in the same orbit as Mars has. With his teleradioscope in sharp focus, the pilot could see it was Killer Kane heading for Saturn.

BUCK: Great. So you sent patrol ships out after it?

BARNEY: Captain--uh--in getting things all organized.. in such a hurry, I forgot to equip my patrol ships with rocketguns or --or anything...

Black Barney in this radio script, probably by Jack Johnstone, appears much more dense than the crafty Black Barney of the Phil Nowland-Dick Calkins newspaper strip. This bit of intended humour is used since it is a passage I have converted to paper from the audio track for my next book for Doubleday, on the comedy performers of radio and the comedy aspects of dramatic and adventure shows on radio, tentatively titled The Great Radio Comedians.

Selected Letters

Dear Leland:

Thank you for RQ--which once again offers a disparate display of delights, not the least of which are the contributions by Messrs. Williamson and Campbell. Any prozine should be proud to present a lineup equal to yours...

Equally provocative to me, this time around, was Jim Harmon's revelatory piece on life in interview-land. I've been there myself a time or two, and as somebody (was it Lord Kelvin?) remarked of helium, "It's a gas." The whole schtick has a sort of ridiculous ALICE-IN-WONDERLAND or, more exactly, THROUGH THE VIEWING-TUBE quality about it. One is usually ushered into the office of a Panel Host who doesn't really know one from Adam (Link) and hasn't a very clear idea about one's field...there is a short exchange of questions during which Mine Host attempts to probe the subject to be discussed...between phone-call interruptions, side-trips to the corridor or surrounding offices, and byplay with assorted members of the production staff, a tentative rapport is established during which the Genial Host generally says, "Okay, I'll play it by ear and let you do the talking."

...suddenly one is out under the lights before the audience and the countdown comes and the show is off and running... whereupon one discovers that the Host is off and running, too. He either turns out to be the Instant Expert on the subject or --should this ploy prove too transparent--he reverses the field and begins a subtle put-down of the guest by firing a series of unexpected queries designed to throw one off-balance by inferential depreciation. But all this is conducted in Good Clean Fun, with the Host calling one by one's first name and misleading the viewer into believing that he has a long standing intimacy with both the subject and the interviewee. Any dialogue or conversation which develops along a fairly natural pattern is, of course, subjected to the artificial interruption of the commercial breaks, and the whole thing is a sort of pact-with-the-Devil; the guest gets a free plug in exchange for helping the Host to earn his $200,000 a year. There are, fortunately for the viewing audiences, many notable exceptions to this pattern, but far too many of these transactions are dull. Harmon is not, nor is RQ.

Blessings--
Robert Bloch

The MC's put-down of his guest may rank as entertainment for the audience, but perhaps it would be more fun to eliminate the formal interview and just televise the host's preliminary by-play with staff and personnel.

Box 16168 Long Beach
California 90806

Dear Mr. Sapiro:

...What Slate and all the other writers on Burroughs seem to have missed (though Sam Moskowitz may not, in the long-promised ERB-dom article) is that the John Carter stories are sequels of a kind to the Iliad, the Odyssey, and the Aeneid. Barsoom, with its dead sea bottoms, is Homer's Mediterranean after ages have passed, Helium (surely pronounced "Hēlium" rather than "Hĕlium," combining "Helen" and "Ilium") is Troy reborn. (The oviparous nature of the Martians is clearly inspired by the myth of Helen's birth: that she was born of an egg conceived by her mother Leda and her father Zeus, who had taken the form of a swan.) The Barsoomian "flyers" are analogs of the vessels of Odysseus and Aeneas. The strange Barsoomian cities that rise island-like from the ancient sea bottoms were surrounded by the living sea in Homer's time. (The Cyclops Polyphemus may be a distant cousin of Tars Tarkas. I wonder what a literal translation of his name means? Or what an imperfect translation by a young boy might suggest?) John Carter's curious ability to project himself across space to the red sands of Mars seems less curious when we consider the gods' ability to project themselves down from Olympus to the bloody plains of Ilium. Like Aeneas, John Carter fought for a losing side, the Confederacy; like Aeneas, he went west in search of his destiny; and like Aeneas, he found a kingdom. And so on and on. The characters are the hot-blooded, impetuous men and women of Homer's tales ("teenagers" wearing adult bodies), and the philosophy is Greek, always.

(Of course, there are other elements in the John Carter stories: there are two King of Kings, of Virgin Birth, whose initials are "J.C." The Egyptian overtones in some Barsoomian place names and in Barsoomian mythology suggest an additional source. I've never read Haggard and Leng's The World's Desire, which I understand brings Odysseus and Helen together in Egypt, and I've often wondered if there is an association there. And there are other sources. But the basic inspiration is Homer's.)

An interesting writer, Burroughs. More interesting than most are willing to admit.

Best,
---------- Richard Kyle

That the "e" of Helium is the one of met, rather than that of meet, is indeed a "subtle intuition"--along with Mr. Kyle's other notes on Troy. Sam's ERB-dom article gives the most likely recent source (Gustavus Pope's A Journey to Mars, 1894) for the Barsoom series, but the initial source is certainly that given by our present correspondent.

---------- Merry Hell Road
Poughkeepsie, N.Y. 12603

Dear Leland,

I found the contents of interest generally, although not uniformly so. Your note on Susan Sontag's essay concerning SF films makes me wonder how she will react to Kubrick and Clarke's 2001: A Space Odyssey. There have been a number of reviews to date, most of them somewhat equivocal. I think the best was that in The New Yorker.

My own reaction to the film is not at all equivocal. It is a masterpiece. Without question...the best SF film ever produced, and certainly a very major motion picture to be regarded in the context of all films. The visuals are magnificent (the use of Cinerama is for once artistically valid and not at all a matter of big-is-good). The film is funny, poignant, satirically pricking and yet subtle. In the later portions when mystic-like symbolism is employed, the symbolic message is clear, touching, beautifully inspiring...

I think Tom Slate raises an interesting and probably valid point when he suggests that condemners of E.R. Burroughs are motivated by a dislike of the whole heroic-epic mode of writing rather than by the unique contents of Burroughs' own works. This point is not identical but is certainly related to one which I make in several connections in my Burroughs book: that Burroughs ought not to be judged by the standards of the modern realistic novel, but against those of the romantic (i.e., heroic) tradition.

When writing, I frankly had in mind romances such as those of H. Rider Haggard and others of the late XIX Century, rather than those of the classical period Slate cites. But I won't quibble over that point--I think Slate is justified in making the comparisons he does--and in the course of so doing, putting Burroughs in the same pot with Haggard at that.

I would, however, take exception to Slate's equating the coincidences in Burroughs (he cites The Son of Tarzan and A Fighting Man of Mars) with the cases in Homer and Virgil. For in Burroughs the rescues cited are accomplished by "mere" coincidence while in the classical cases Slate cites the rescues are accomplished by divine intervention.

Actually, I would take violent exception to the use of divine intervention as a plotting device unless there was plentiful preparation for it in the work. It seems to me to render a story utterly pointless if the characters work their way around to a given climactic situation only to have everything overturned by an intervening god.

But there is still a distinction to be made.

I think also that Burroughs has suffered on a small scale from the slavish adulation of the Burroughs cult just as severely as he has suffered on the large scale from the scorn and condemnation of the more conventional literary authorities. Just as much my purpose in writing a book about him was the deflating of the Burroughs worship of the few, as [well as] the defiance of those who refuse even to consider his works...

Best regards,
Richard Lupoff

Scenically and technically, 2001 was brilliant--but it is marred by the inept computer sequence, which goes clear back to the juvenile pulp fiction of the 30's, where computers say "Bah!" and try to kill humans.// Homer's gods are characters in the story, with the customary human jealousies and passions, so I agree that the results of their actions shouldn't be termed "coincidence."

In fiction we must distinguish between veridical coincidence--where unique characters make unusual events seem inevitable--and contrived coincidence--where the figures are essentially puppets, whose manipulation by the author results in "lucky" events. The ratio of contrived to veridical coincidence enables us quickly to sort out ERB's poorer works, like "City of Gold", from his more successful ones, like the first in this particular series.

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84 Charlton Road
Rochester, N.Y. 14617

Dear Leland,

I enjoyed Tom Slate's "ERB and the Heroic Epic" very much. It's a damned good defense of ERB's heroes and the classic hero in general. His point that the "hero" has no place in society (as far as the upper echelons...are concerned) is very well taken. It is put forward well, although he could have clarified his position on drugs just a bit by stating that aside from medical reasons stimulants have been suppressed while depressants have been promoted and encouraged in our 20th Century society. In other words, what Tom is talking about is the time before scientists knew about the medical dangers...of hallucinatory drugs such as LSD. While I would not read this as a defense of LSD and other hallucinatory drugs, it certainly is a blotch on the records of many reputable professional people throughout...the world who condemned the drugs purely on general principles; i.e., they considered them a threat to the complacent, but secure, society existing today, as Tom points out...

Best Wishes,
Paul Allen

Mr. Slate evidently thought that his citation of Alexander Pope--for whom there were only non-medical reasons--would indicate the motivations of present society. For a peek at Things To Come, however, see John Taylor's "Our Home is in the Rocks," with its (still fictitious) advertisement, WHEN YOU SAY POT, SAY CAMELS (Mandala, Tim Hildebrand, ed., 818 Terry Place, Madison, Wisconsin 53711).

4108 Independence Drive
Indianapolis, Indiana 46227

Dear Leland:

Tom Slate's article, "ERB and the Heroic Epic," struck me as unsatisfactory on several counts. He defends the literary merit of ERB on the grounds that the very qualities scorned by critics are those of the epic. While's he's correct in demonstrating that Burroughs' books shouldn't be judged by the norms of the realistic novel, I maintain that a defense based on genre alone is inadequate and moreover that Burroughs wrote romances not epics.

Membership in an ancient and admired category does not aotomatically prove ERB's value, for not all epics are of equal stature. Some are frankly horrible--like Paradise Regained. Although Mr. Slate admits Burroughs' books aren't masterpieces, he applies neither "inside" nor "outside" criteria for fantastic literature to judge them.

Now what is an epic? My college poetry textbook gives this description: "...the epic poem is constructed on 'the grand scale.' Its mythological hero is set an enormous task or given a tremendously significant moral choice to make...In him are combined the highest social ideals of the world in which his creator lived and thought...Through the hero, who is both a real person with real feelings and a superhuman performer of extraordinary deeds, we come to see the vast scope and moral significance of man's struggle, under the pressures of time and fate..." (Exploring Poetry, M.L. Rosenthal and A.J.M. Smith; New York, 1955, 305).

There are several subtypes of the epic: classical (Iliad), literary (Paradise Lost), folk (Nibelungenlied), and hard-to-categorize examples from the ancient cultures of the Near East, Persia, and India. Mr. Slate makes his ingenious comparisons only with the classical epic and concentrates on external rather than internal characteristics. "Wonders,...monsters, mystery, and divine machinery..." are not absolute indespensibles. They are absent from The Poem of the Cid and The Song of Roland. (Yet the Orlando Furioso, permeated with the supernatural, is a romance, not an epic.)

The qualities of Burroughs' work Mr. Slate parallels with Homer and Virgil--improbable coincidences, violent action, over-idealized characters, stilted dialogue, and superhuman prowess --apply equally to the romance, which Webster defines as "a fictitious tale of wonderful and extraordinary events, characterized by much imagination and idealization."

I simply do not see that ERB's books possess such universal and transcendent significance to qualify as epics or fulfill Mr. Slate's own criteria of gloriousness and sublimity. If John Carter's an epic hero, what's Conan? What's Dick Seaton? Burroughs' writings are more properly romances, which is by no means an insulting classification. Romances can be meaningful, as Parzival and Le Morte D'Arthur.

One final picayune objection: there is an error of fact on p.119 of Mr. Slate's article. Aeneas was never pursued by an enemy fleet. In Book IX of the Aeneid the beached Trojan fleet is transformed into sea-nymphs to spare it from burning by an enemy army...

Cordially,
Sandra L. Miesel

Historically, the term "Heroic" was applied to mediaeval works like Beowulf and "Roland"; but this same type of composition, endowed with later notions from an Age of Chivalry, is also designated as "Romance" (see W.P. Ker, Epic and Romance, 3-4). Thus a work can fit into both classifications simultaneously. Your text's description of the Epic corresponds to Northrop Frye's mode of romance (Anatomy of Criticism, 33), where the hero "moves in a world in which the ordinary laws of nature are slightly suspended: prodigies of courage and endurance, unnatural to us, are natural to him..." Such "prodigies of courage" are performed regularly by Tarzan (and, less often, by Conan, John Carter, and Dick Seaton); how natural laws are "slightly suspended" in this series has not been adequately discussed--although the author's gross suspensions are indicated by Fred Kwiecien, "Supernaturally...ERB," Barsoomian, March 1967 (ed., Paul Allen, address on p.246).

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10 Dunham St.
Ottawa-9, Ontario

Dear Leland,

...I agree 100% with Mr. Campbell's basic premise--that it is ridiculous to claim that our present knowledge can explain everything. I think that the most we can say...is that we... have the potential to explain everything...

Suppose that...a shaman had examined some entrails and denied (Euclid's) fifth postulate; does the truth of his denial make him correct? The method of finding an answer must invariably reflect upon its validity, and the person who accepts insufficient evidence is a fool regardless of what he is accepting.

Unlike Mr. Campbell, I believe absolutely in guilt-by-association. A student faking his lab reports in Chemistry must be deemed unreliable in Physics. But this does not mean that his results are false, simply that they are unacceptable. This is the philosophy that has allowed us to separate Mesmer's rubbish from his actual work and accept the latter. "Alchemist" is a name which now means only the mystic fakery associated with the ancient practitioners; "Chemists" are the people who have taken only the demonstrable facts...of the ancient practitioners. They are not, as Mr. Campbell says, simply different names for the same thing; they are names of two completely different aspects of one large picture.

Mr. Campbell claims that the conclusions of astrology are now being accepted by the "orthodox." Though this may be so... it does not in any way affect the astrologers' mumbo-jumbo... I note that the Marines are using dowsing rods; my paper carried the same story. Now all that remains is a proof that soldiers with them find more tunnels consistently than soldiers under identical conditions without them. You may cry that in Vietnam "identical" conditions are impossible; that is not my problem, it's yours. The acceptance of dowsing by a large body of people means nothing, as Mr. Campbell himself points out, accepted answers to questions (accepted by everyone who knows of the question), such as Euclid's postulate, are often false.

Sincerely,
Gordon Phillips

My first answer to Mr. Phillips was facetious, along these lines:

> I always thought that the manifestations of the Spirit World, whether on Mt. Shasta or Viet Nam, were morally selective--that they helped only the Good Guys. Now I'm told that emanations from the Great I-Know-Not-What are used, through the medium of dowsing rods, to aid troops responsible for burning villages and people, and torturing prisoners. I don't get it.

Since U.S. insanity in Asia is hardly a subject for jokes, I also composed a serious answer:

> The main point here--that results may be unacceptable even if they are true--deserves re-emphasis, since it indicates why the findings of Dr. Rhine and cohorts must be rejected. It's left as an exercise for the reader to show how Mr. Phillips' argument differs from the usual ad hominem argument.

WE ALSO HEARD FROM ····

Jerry Lapidus, who discusses RQ's last polemic on convention sites: "While I...agree...as to the inequity of Los Angeles losing the convention after so much work, I feel you are assuming [the wrong reasons why] Berkeley won." After listing some better reasons--e.g., Berkeley's "exclusive hotel booking" and its "non-Hilton hotel"--Mr. Lapidus explains:

> After a convention at the Statler Hilton, with its non-stop elevators and fourteen other conventions these [reasons] were very important in the voters' minds, along with the fact that they would not have to share the hotel with...Scientologists, etc. The fact that Berkeley's Claremont was not a Hilton hotel and that the L.A. hotel was...was also important, as many fans had... just too much of the Statler Hilton's terrible food and worse service.

Of course, the deciding factor (also cited by Mr. Lapidus) was Los Angeles' unimaginative nomination speech. But my own anxiety--our own anxiety, to use the more impressive editorial language expected in such matters--is not the Berkeley victory as such, but the possibility of a similar injustice being repeated--with the decision being made by "people who are at their first convention...who won't be at the next one, and thus couldn't care less who gets it." To quote Dick Geis, "Unless there are changes made in the rules, science-fiction con sites will be decided by fringe-fans and three buck walk-ins."

Ed Reed, of Stamford, Connecticut, who praises Jack Williamson's article and Harry Warner's column, and then discusses recent violence in the U.S.--epitomised by an incident in Brooklyn where "...a man knifed (and killed) a grocery store owner.. because the store was out of his brand of beer! I'd not only maul for a Marlboro but I'd kill for a Kent...if this goes on."

Interesting in this respect is a recent argument in Guns & Ammo that possession of firearms should not be restricted because out of the thirty million crimes committed in the U.S. during 1965 only fifteen thousand--approximately 1/20th of one percent--involved rifles and shotguns.

This, naturally, just illustrates the truism that anything can be proved via shrewdly chosen statistics. A quick rejoiner to Guns & Ammo--a considered answer hardly being necessary--is that less than one out of thirty million crimes (i.e., 1/300,000th of one percent) involve the assassination of a U.S. president and that this one out of thirty million is precisely the type of crime to be prevented.

RIVERSIDE MISCELLANY

(continued from page 171)

THE BRADBURY CHRONICLES

If the lead player this issue is Jim Blish, writer of one article and subject of another, its antagonist (in the benign sense) is Ray Bradbury, who is discussed by Boardman and Moskowitz and whose name is cited twice elsewhere. However, this author has no causal or family relation to the Bradbury building (of Kris Neville's Jeweled City), an actual structure in Los Angeles and once the subject of violent altercation as to whether it should be torn down. By happy coincidence, the reason given in the story (and in real life) for preserving the Bradbury building (designed, incidentally, by the grandfather of s.f. monster fan, Forrest Ackerman) approximates the version of American Pastoral we usually associate with this writer.

THE FBI STORY

How the FBI visited Astounding has been told many times, so I won't repeat it here. Not generally known is a similar event that already had occurred because of something in another magazine.

> In November, 1942, one of Leslie Ford's...murder stories was running...in the Saturday Evening Post...in the November 21 installment there occurred the following sentence: "In any case, Colonel Primrose's routing out an enemy alien who knew too much about a uranium bomb and the cyclotron at Berkeley had nothing to do with the business on San Joaquin Terrace." I transmitted this information to Professor Lawrence on November 24, and I wish I could have known what the FBI subsequently had to say to Leslie Ford!
>
> (Raymond T. Birge, History of the Physics Department, University of California, Berkeley; vol. 3, ch. 9, p. 17)

Recall that Cleve Cartmill's Deadline, which instigated the Campbell-FBI incident, wasn't printed until March 1944, over a year after Leslie Ford's story.

CLEMENS, KIPLING, & COMPANY

Astounding's tardiness on uranium fission leads to a more general fact--that many s.f. themes were anticipated by writers not ordinarily associated with this field, e.g., Rudyard Kipling's brilliantly framed conjecture ("Wireless") on electromagnetic induction and Mark Twain's sketch[1] of worlds-within-worlds. Of course, these authors didn't know they were writing science fiction, the very name being Hugo Gernsback's invention. Thus, until segregated by Gernsback into its own special ghetto, s.f. was regarded as part of the general literary world. But this physical isolation in Amazing Stories does not imply a literary separation, in the sense that s.f. is to be detached from so-called "mainstream" fiction and judged by different standards.[2] Were such a distinction legitimate, these early writers could not have produced what we now classify as science fiction.

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1) "The Great Dark," Letters from the Earth, Bernard De Voto, ed. (New York, 1963).

2) See Bill Donaho, Habakkuk, February 1967, 40:

> There is nothing wrong with subjecting an s-f story to critical examination. But it seems to me there is something wrong in subjecting it to the same critical examination as given mainstream. Perhaps mainstream standards shouldn't be higher, but...they damn well should be different.