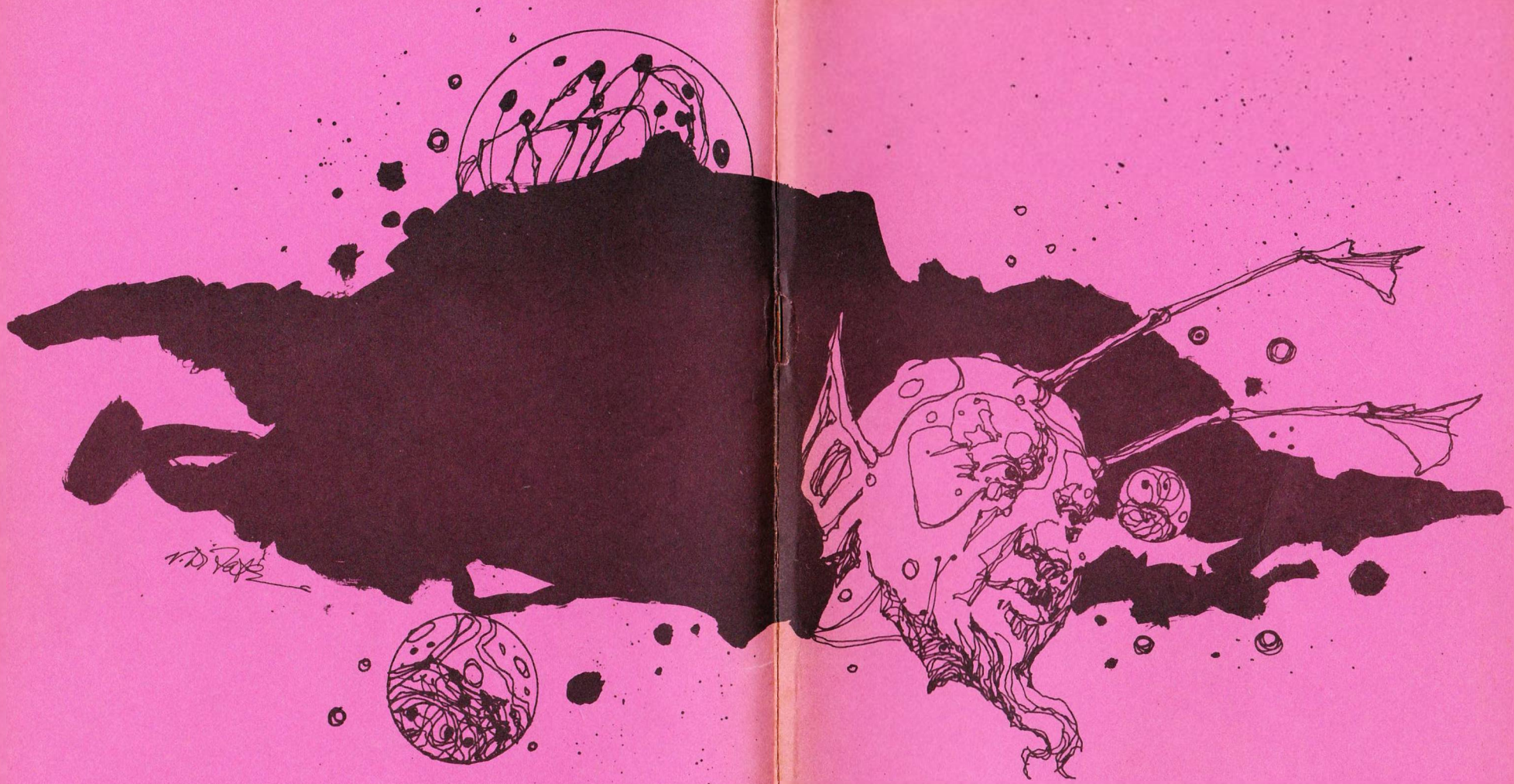

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RQ MISCELLANY

GBS & S-F

I'm obliged to report that The Shaw Review is looking for essays (2,500--5,000 words) for a special "Shaw and Science-Fiction" issue. "Most broadly the topic is Bernard Shaw or the Shavian milieu and some aspect of science-fiction." Tentative deadline is 1 January, 1973, and MSS should be sent to (guest editor) John Pfeiffer (English Dept., Central Michigan University, Mt Pleasant, MI 48858), who continues, "The topic is not a surprising one to Shaw scholars, but most are not up on s-f. We will need to reach specially prepared essayists."

"OH, CANADA..."

On the theory that intelligent life exists north of the Border, we (the well-known idiotorial "we") welcome, this issue, two new Canadian artists, Claudia Dubie and Ralph Alfonso. A new U.S. artist, Gene van Troyer, was to have a back cover, but in the last minute, we--to hide, again, individual idiocy under the first person plural--noticed that Vincent di Fate's front cover also was a back cover, so that a separate instance of the latter was excluded.

Relevant here is a new Canadian scholarly journal, Mechta, editors: Bob Wilson, 210 Markland Dr.#1001, Etobicoke, Ontario, and Philippe Boyer, 46 Saranac Blvd.#5, Station T, Toronto, Ontario . Its main topic this issue, "The Recurrence of Bran Muffin Characters in Albanian S-F," does indeed open new (to us, at least) paths for academic research; and while we can't view a second--"Will Bran Muffinism Destroy Albanian S-F?--with all the horror registered by the critic, we recognize how such alarums stimulate blood circulation and liver.

"AFFICIONADOS OF THE MACABRE" DEPT

Having passed the stage of explaining the absence of a columnist in one particular issue, I just note that Jim Harmon's next "Seasonal Fan" discusses the limited editions press of Roy Squires (1745 Kenneth Rd, Glendale, CA 92301) and comments on the general state of book publishing. But Arkham House fans should anticipate by sending for Roy's catalogue, which includes items like:

Clark Ashton Smith, a leaf from the first draft of "Marooned in Andromeda" (his first contribution to an s-f magazine) plus a copy of a letter from Wonder Stories' editor, accepting and commenting on the story, asking for more, etc.,

"/Robert E. Howard's/ Hyborean Age and a Probable Outline of Conan's Career," by P. Schuyler Miller and John D. Clark, with an introductory letter by H.P. Lovecraft,

Ray Bradbury, "Old Ahab's Friend, and Friend to Noah Speaks His Piece " -- "one long poem, previously unpublished, printed from hand-set Palatino types upon Curtis Rag paper."

(continued on page 255)

SCIENCE FICTION AS WILL AND IDEA:
THE WORLD OF ALFRED BESTER

by

Jeff Riggenbach

#1 SUBJECT

Alfred Bester has written two science-fiction novels and contributed over twenty short stories to the leading science-fiction magazines. In each of his stories he has created a tightly integrated unit in which plot, theme, and image are bound together by a single view of man and existence. Here I shall examine four of Bester's finest performances--The Demolished Man, The Stars My Destination, "The Starcomber," and "Fondly, Fahrenheit" --and try to show how this integration is achieved.[1]

Bester sees Man as a driven being, dominated by preconceptual irrational desires and urges--

> "I'm doing what I have to do. I'm still driven. No man ever escapes from that." (TSMD, 161)

--as a social animal in whose societies progress is made in periodic upheavals of incredible violence, usually centred around one man of almost superhuman power and passion--

> "Some must lead and hope that the rest will follow." "Who leads?" The men who must...driven men, compelled men." (ibid., 192)

--as a universe-shaker, a being whose will, a "timeless reservoir of psychic energy," is a tool of change--

> "...Reich is one of the rare Universe-shakers...a child as yet but about to mature. And all reality...Espers, Normals, Life, the earth, the solar system, the universe itself...all reality hangs precariously on his awakening." (ibid.,145-6)

> "PyrE is a pyrophoric alloy. A pyrophore is a metal which emits sparks when scraped or struck. PyrE emits energy... Its discoverer was of the opinion that he had produced the equivalent of the primordial protomatter which exploded into the Universe." "...How is the energy released?" "As the original energy was generated in the beginning of time," Presteign droned. "Through Will and Idea." "PyrE can only be exploded by psychokinesis. Its energy can only be released by thought. It must be willed to explode and the thought directed at it. (ibid., 163-4)

This world-view is not only explicit in such quotations as those above; it is also implicit in the plot, theme, and imagery of each Bester story. Even the style by means of which these other elements are defined is itself bent to the primary task of expounding the Bester Weltanschauung.

The theme of The Demolished Man, the psychology of the murderer, is developed in terms of Freudian psychology and its emphasis on the unconscious origin of the drives and compulsions that motivate men. Ben Reich, a man of great passionate intensity and invincible killer-instinct, sets the story in motion by unconsciously seeking the death of the father who had deserted him. Psychoanalysis is the frame of reference for understanding Reich's behavior in each situation he encounters from that point forward: his inability to kill Barbara D'Courtney in Chooka Frood's frab joint, his freakish suicide attempts after the failure of his legal prosecution, his recurrent nightmare of the Man with No Face which begins with his decision to murder D'Courtney and becomes intelligible only after his superego had been used to open him up under Mass Cathexis. The Demolished Man is cast as a detective story, one in which the reader is challenged, not to identify the criminal, but rather to reconstruct and make sense of the crime. And true to the ethics of the detective story writer, whose canons insist that the reader be provided with all necessary clues to solve the puzzle himself, Bester has woven Freudian clues into his Freudian mystery. The reader is given the breakdown of the code in which Reich and D'Courtney communicate at the beginning of the novel; there is no combination of letters that means, "Offer refused." Yet Reich so interprets one of the existing combinations, the one that means, "Offer accepted." This tells the reader that Reich must have some other motive for his crime than simple frustration at the refusal. Bester even emphasizes the point in the death scene, by having D'Courtney protest that he had accepted the offer. If all Reich wanted was a merger, here is his opportunity; even if D'Courtney were lying, he could be forced to make a new decision at gun-point. But merger is not all Reich wants. So what is his motive?

> Reich found himself in a spherical room designed as the heart of a giant orchid. The walls were curling orchid petals, the floor was a golden calyx; the chairs, tables and couches were orchid and gold. But the room was old. The petals were faded and peeling; the golden tile floor was ancient and the tessalations were splitting. There was an old man lying on the couch, musty and wilted, like a dried weed.
>
> D'Courtney stepped toward Reich, smiling, his arms outstretched as though welcoming a prodigal son.
>
> (TDM, 45, emphases mine)

When a man enters a spherical room that is designed to resemble, not only a flower (a common and ancient symbol of the female and the female sex organs), but the interior of a flower, it looks very like he is re-entering the womb, especially so when the interior of the flower is old. And if Reich is re-entering the womb to commit murder, thereby linking violence to the desire to escape reality, what of the relationship between murderer and victim? As if this were not enough, D'Courtney greets Reich like a son. And D'Courtney himself is pictured as a weed, the despoiler of flower beds--just as in Freudian theory the father is seen by his son as despoiler of the mother.

Overlaying this network of references, motivations, and scenes is an everpresent emphasis upon fire and heat as key descriptive terms and important symbols, representing the omnipresence of passion and compulsion in the human environment.

In The Stars My Destination, such symbols become the principal device for unity, replacing the interplay of character and incident that unified The Demolished Man. Here, the theme is man's relationship to society, or, more precisely, the psychology of the leader, the driven superman who brings progress in the wake of destruction. Here, as in The Demolished Man, character and incident are driven, compelled, instinctual. But the primary unifying force in The Stars My Destination is image. The epigraph of the novel (and source of the title under which it was published in England) is a quotation from Blake in which the images of the tiger (savagery) and fire (passion) figure prominently. Teleportation is accidentally discovered by a researcher who sets fire to his laboratory bench. The ability to teleport is related to a tigroid substance in nerve cells. Foyle, aboard the Nomad, fights "for survival with the passion of a beast in a trap"(14). Foyle is tatooed to look like a tiger. When he attempts to bomb the Vorga, "...His clothes were flickering like heat lightning"... "He was a lightning bolt"...[he] reached inside his flaming jacket...with the convulsive gesture of an animal." Every other page yields fresh instances. It is appropriate, in this connexion, that PyrE is an explosive, that Foyle's space and time jaunting is inspired by a fire even larger and more convincing than the one which occasioned the discovery of teleportation, that his time-jaunting provides him with a "burning man" who saves his life a number of times, etc.

This intense literary preoccupation with fire, heat, and passion generally is fully realized in "Fondly Fahrenheit." References to fire, furnaces, burning, red, orange, and smoke litter every page of this story, but for a slightly different reason from the ones so far discussed. "Fondly Fahrenheit" is narrated by James Vandaleur, a psychotic who projects his murderous desires onto the personality of his android, creating a "killer android" from whose crimes he must continually flee. His narration is a first person of mixed singulars and plurals that shifts occasionally to a third person. The point of view appears to flutter among Vandaleur, his android, and some empathetic observer. This technique makes a first reading of the story somewhat confusing, but it is a necessary (and brilliant) device, for "Fondly Fahrenheit" is a Doppelgänger story of a highly original kind. Vandaleur is the evil side of the narrator; his android is the good, unable by nature to endanger life or property. Through projection, evil overcomes sanity and morality to set loose murder and destruction.

As in The Demolished Man, there are sufficient clues planted in the story for the reader to figure this out long before Bester tells him in the last paragraph. Why doesn't Vandaleur sell his android? He continually threatens to, but never does. Even if he took a loss on the sale, he could buy a less expensive model and live more modestly, something he is forced to do anyway when he bruises the android's head and hires it out as a common labourer. There is no rational purpose in keeping the android--except that it is Vandaleur's alter-ego, the objective form which the good side of his character has taken. As the story progresses, Vandaleur begins killing people himself (Blenheim, Nan Webb) and even humming the android's song, "All Reet!"--Vandaleur, who had been shocked by the murders that his android had committed and who had no reason for committing murder himself except to protect the android whom he had no reason to protect. Most important of all: at the opening of the story we are told that androids cannot kill; this fact is repeatedly emphasized as the narrative develops, yet we are induced to disbelieve it, to attribute the merging identities to the android's psychotic projection, to pity Vandaleur. Bester works very skilfully to induce all this wrongheadedness in his readers, but he succeeds only if they disregard the evidence before them. Why should we not accept the facts as stated--androids can't kill--and look for an explanation of this android's impossible behavior, instead of accepting the specious explanation that, "...looks like one android was made wrong"(115). If we do this at the outset, every other clue in the story, the theory of psychotic projection, the heat, Vandaleur's irrational desire to keep the android, takes on new meaning and points to the truth: the evil, the impulse to murder and destroy, comes from Vandaleur to his android and not the other way around. On this view, also, the heat, the fire, the astronomical temperatures that seem so to affect the android's behavior, are merely the objective forms taken by Vandaleur's projected passions and compulsions. He not only projects his psychosis onto the android, but he also projects his splintered personality onto the world to create the android. He not only projects his psychosis onto the android, but he also projects it onto the world to create the heat, the fire, the smoke, the burnt orange sky that pursues him wherever he runs. All these things--the android, the furnaces, the heat--are real, that is, have objective existence, but their cause is Vandaleur's insane will.

It is worth noting, at this point, that most Doppelgänger fiction pictures the triumph of good, or at least, as in Jekyll and Hyde, the defeat of evil. Dr. Alfred Appel has pointed this out in regard to Poe's "William Wilson":

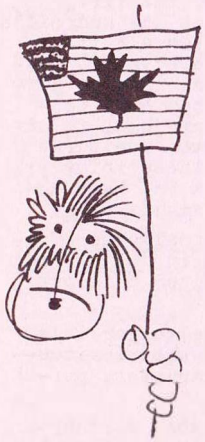
> ...[William Wilson] is unusual among Doppelgänger tales in that it presents a reversal of the conventional situation: the weak and evil self is the main character, pursued by the moral self, whom he kills.[2]

In "Fondly Fahrenheit" this innovation is taken a step farther--not only does the evil self win out, but he does not realize that he is the evil self until the end of the story, and does not allow the reader to realize it either, short of a little detective work.

In "The Starcomber" Bester returns to the essentially Freudian view that characterized The Demolished Man. Here, however, it is not the Freudian view of man in general, but that of man as artist. To Freud, the artist is a neurotic, a person who has never accepted the necessity of displacing the pleasure principle with the reality principle--of ceasing simply to wish and expect gratification, and beginning to change one's environment so as to produce this gratification.[3] He cannot accept the world as it is, so he escapes into the world as it isn't, as it is only in his imagination. Jeffrey Halsyon is an artist trapped in such a world, one composed of the childish fantasies that plague every boy before he becomes a man. The theme of the story, the nature of art, is developed by differentiating between such infantile dreams and the mature dreams that can inspire art for mature men. Thus, Mr. Solon Azuila purges Halsyon's childish fantasies, thereby freeing his useful, sane, adult fantasies. There is irony built into this story from the beginning, much of it imbedded in stylistic devices that will be discussed later, but the central irony of the tale is that Mr. Aquila is himself an artist, dramatizing the childish fixations of his patient, peopling the fantasies with invented characters, all of whom are variations on himself. Though he says,

> "...It was the child in Solon Azuila that destroyed him and led him into the sickness that destroyed his life. Oui. I too suffer from baby fantasies from which I cannot escape." (109)

and also tells Halsyon that only adult dreams can make for useful art, he surely performs a useful service with his own "immature" aesthetic product, perhaps an even more primary function than the one toward which he urges Halsyon, that of making mature art possible by purging the immature.



#2 STYLE

There are at least four major components to Bester's highly distinctive style, each of which is used either to amplify the view of Man as passionate, driven, potential superman, or to suggest the true significance of narrative, thematic and imagerial elements. These components are pace, repetition, name-play, and allusion.

Pace is an important factor in all of Bester's fiction, and especially in his novels. As Damon Knight has written,

> His stories never stand still a moment; they're forever tilting into motion, veering, doubling back, firing off rockets to distract you.[4]

This is true, and perhaps in a more literal sense than Knight intended. Bester never describes a scene in which nothing happens. Action is always present--usually, though not always, violent action. Even the scene (TSMD, 188-92) in which Foyle, Dagenham, Jiz, Y'ang Yeovil and Presteign are seated in the star chamber discussing the future of PyrE--a conference scene--is filled with the crazy action of Presteign's robots, affected by Dagenham's radioactivity. The scene is dominated by a robot who smashes a cocktail glass, delivers an impassioned lecture on Man's relationship to society, and collapses.

Bester's physical descriptions--of characters, scenery, anything--is sandwiched in while the characters are acting. In The Stars My Destination, we learn about the Skoptsy colony on Mars and the lunar bacteria farm while Foyle is flying toward them. Other necessary information is conveyed in dialogue, which creates a stronger, more active impression than simple narration. Bester's sentences are full of verbs and exclamation points. They are sentence-fragments as often as they are sentences. Scenes and times change abruptly, as they do in motion pictures and comic books, media in which action and dialogue are frequently the only methods of narration. It should come as no surprise to a reader of Bester's novels and short stories that the author worked for many years as a continuity writer for comic books and has devoted most of his professional career to radio and television.

Repetition is used for dramatic effect in all of Bester's fiction. In The Demolished Man, we are given the following description of Barbara D'Courtney's race to the aid of her dying father:

> ...yellow hair flying, dark eyes wide in alarm...A lightning flash of wild beauty. (47)

The exact wording is repeated on two later occasions when Lincoln Powell forces the girl to relive the traumatic memory (88, 136). Similarly repeated, especially at moments of tension, are the phrases marking time toward Demolition, the lines from the banal song that Reich uses as a block for probing Espers, and the exact wording of Reich's physical description (8, 92).

In The Stars My Destination the lines of the title poem are repeated a number of times. And in one particularly brilliant scene, when Foyle sees hope of rescue while stranded on the Nomad:

> Foyle realized he was staring at a spaceship, stern rockets flaring as it accelerated on a sunward course that must pass him. "No," he muttered, "No man. No." He was continually suffering from hallucinations. He turned to resume the journey back to his coffin. Then he looked again. It was still a spaceship, stern rockets flaring as it accelerated on a sunward course that must pass him. He discussed the illusion with Eternity. "Six months already," he said in his gutter tongue. "Is it now? You listen a me, lousy gods. I talkin' a deal, is all. I look again, sweet prayer-men. If it's a ship, I'm yours. You own me. But if it's a gaff, man...If it's no ship...I unseal right now and blow my guts. We both ballast level, us. Now reach me the sign, yes or no, is all." He looked for a third time. For the third time he saw a spaceship, stern rockets flaring as it accelerated on a sunward course which must pass him. It was the sign. He believed. He was saved.

In "Fondly Fahrenheit," the repetition of both the title phrase, with variations, and the android's song; in "The Starcomber," the almost endless repetition of the epithets "tall," "gaunt," "sprightly" and "bitter," in company with Mr. Aquila's equally endless reappearances; these are further examples. In every case, this repetition has two effects. One is to induce a sort of deja vu in the reader; the exact repetition of an entire sentence or descriptive phrase produces that creepy feeling that something is happening for a second time, particularly when the phrase is used at forty to eighty page intervals and only in moments of tension. The other effect of Bester's repetition is the creation of a highly dramatic volatile mood. In combination with the fast pace of his narrative, this mood suggests stylistically what his handling of plot, theme, and symbol establish ideologically--the view of human existence in terms of passion, compulsion, and savagery.

The names Bester gives to his characters are often important clues to the relationship each character has to the others, to the theme of the story, to Bester's sense of humour. Thus, in The Demolished Man we have Ben Reich, president of Monarch."Ben" is Hebrew for "son of." "Reich" is German for either "rich" or "kingdom." Think for a moment about the importance of wealth, paternity and power-lust in The Demolished Man, and the names become singularly appropriate. On the lighter side, we have the discoverer of teleportation, Charles Fort Jaunte. Also in The Stars My Destination the Scientific People, who take Foyle from the Nomad, tatoo their faces to resemble Maori masks. They scientifically mate Foyle to a girl called Moira, an anagram for Maori.

Allusion is a time-honoured literary device that has seen infrequent usage in science-fiction, Bester's or anyone else's. When Bester does allude, however, he ties his allusions so integrally to the meaning of the work that this devoce may be considered one of his major stylistic mannerisms. The primary case in point is "The Starcomber."

In the first paragraph we are told,

> Take two parts of Beelzebub, two of Israfel, one of Monte Cristo, one of Cyrano, mix violently, season with mystery, and you have Mr. Solon Aquila. (76)

Beelzebub is one of the chief devils in Paradise Lost. Israfel, in Poe's poem, is the angel/musician whose magnificent songs, Poe declares, could never have been made on Earth, for the highest art requires escape from life. Cyrano de Bergerac, in Rostand's play, is the French musketeer who anonymously wins the love of the girl he secretly adores by writing poems and impassioned letters in the name of another. The Count of Monte Cristo, in Dumas' novel, is convicted of treason falsely and sentenced to prison, from which he escapes to seek revenge on those who had wronged him. There is a common denominator here, and the key to it is the Freudian conception of the artist as a man who is fighting the necessity of displacing the pleasure principle with the reality principle. Monte Cristo is not an artist, but a man of action. He has accepted the reality principle and is changing his environment to provide for his own desires. Cyrano is an artist, one who is afraid to be a lover in reality but who performs the role admirably when hidden behind a nom de plume and when presenting his personality through poems and letters. He is torn between reality and the world of his art. Israfel is an artist in total retreat from life. And Beelzebub may be taken as an oblique reference to the demonic theory of inspiration, especially in light of Mr. Aquila's acting as Halsyon's must. It is noteworthy that Bester mixes two parts each of Israfel and Beelzebub with one part each of Cyrano and Monte Cristo, thus overbalancing toward the artistic side of his quartet, toward the figures who have rejected the world as it is. In essence, the allusions tell the reader that Mr. Aquila is an artist. And confirmation is not far off:

> Mr. Solon Aquila is never disappointed. Presently we shall hear of his first disappointment and see what it led to.(77)

Thus it is frustration of the pleasure principle that motivates Mr. Aquila to create the therapeutic "art" that makes up the bulk of the story. Later, Mr. Aquila's taste in the visual arts is outlined. The Starcomber is said to own paintings, drawings, or lithographs by Frederic Remington, Winslow Homer, William Hogarth, and John Singleton Copley. The common denominator here is realism in both technique and subject-matter.

The art with which Mr. Aquila lives is rooted in reality, unconcerned with escape. On the other hand, Aquila compares Halsyon's work with that of Hieronymous Bosch and Heinrick Kley, both nightmare surrealists in technique and subject-matter. Aquila's purpose in the story is to help Halsyon return to reality, and the reader who is familiar with the work of the six artists just discussed would be able to see the reality-unreality dichotomy that the two men represent long before the artistically less lettered reader. All these artists are mentioned in the story before Mr. Aquila begins his therapy or even reveals his plans. In combination with the allusions to Beelzebub, Cyrano, Monte Cristo, and Israfel, a picture of Aquila is presented, in the opening pages, as an artist who experiences within himself the desire to escape and so is drawn to the surrealist paintings of Jeffrey Halsyon, but who ultimately represents the forces of reality and sanity in opposition to the forces of neurosis and fantasy represented by Halsyon.

As has been pointed out, "The Starcomber" is a story infused with irony: Aquila, an immortal, immature artist, fleeing from reality to the sanctuary of his "baby fantasies," suffers the frustration that inspires him to create, creates dramas based on the infantile desires he shares with Halsyon, thereby releasing the mature creative power within Halsyon, only to declare that immature dreams, the source of his own art, are useless to men and that only mature dreams can inspire mature, meaningful art.

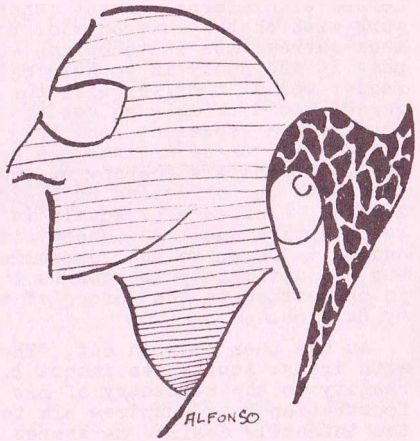
The irony is that of clashing opposites, an irony of contradictions that itself dramatizes Bester's view of man as a being driven by irrational, sometimes contradictory urges and desires. In addition to this major irony, minor ones are worked into each of Aquila's infantile dreams. The most interesting and complex of these is produced by allusion to Act V, Scene 1 of Hamlet. Halsyon and Mr. Aquila are the two clowns who are digging Ophelia's grave and pondering her fitness for "Christian burial." The scene is designed to present life as illusory, pointless, beyond the control of the living. And so is the graveyard scene of Hamlet. The clowns refer to Adam as the first gravemaker. When they find a jawbone, one of them wonders if it is Cain's. Since the beginning of human time, at least, life has been a senseless struggle against inevitable death. Hamlet is said to be mad; then the skull of mad Yorick is found. Are the mighty, with their weighty problems and responsibilities, living lives as trivial as anyone else's? After all their agonizing, will they remain as bones to be discussed by clowns in a graveyard? Halsyon is so upset by this picture of the world that he refuses to pay attention to what is happening around him, screaming that he will not be a character in a play, that he prefers a life of his own. The penultimate irony of the scene is that while he is occupied with this tantrum, Hamlet is calmly expressing similar discontent:

> Imperious Caesar, dead and turned to clay,
> Might stop a hole to keep the wind away:
> Oh, that the earth which kept the world in awe
> Should patch a wall to expel the winter's flaw!

The ultimate irony of the scene is that for expressing dissatisfaction with a pointless life, Halsyon is cast

> .....into the third compartment of the seventh circle of the Inferno in the fourteenth Canto of the Divine Comedy where they who have sinned against art are tormented.
>
> (105)

This compartment of Dante's hell is reserved for those who have sinned against God (blasphemers, etc.), and in the world Halyson is inhabiting, art is God and Hell is taken from a work of art.



#3 CONCLUSION

Alfred Bester's science-fiction, then, dramatizes a single world-view, which in turn is the organizing principle by which he unifies the theme, plot, and imagery of each story. Bester sees man as a social being, driven by pre-conceptual urges from the subconscious, who is led to progress and greatness by passionate, driven leaders, and as a potential god-like being whose Will is a tool of change. He depicts crimes of passion, motivated by subconscious cravings (The Demolished Man); plots of personal revenge that hurl civilization forward amid incredible upheaval (The Stars My Destination); struggles between the good and evil in men, projected through effort of Will onto the external world ("Fondly Fahrenheit"); and conflicts within the makers of art, between the instinctual desire for automatic pleasure and the mature awareness of the need for productive work ("The Starcomber"). His stories abound with images of fire, heat, smoke, and savage animality. His style, via allusion and careful naming of characters, re-enforces these themes--and through irony and rapid narrative pace also re-enforces the compulsive, violent world-view that the themes themselves suggest.

FOOTNOTES

1) The Demolished Man (New York: Signet Books, 1957), The Stars My Destination (New York: Bantam Books, 1970), Starburst (New York: Signet Books, 1958). The Demolished Man is hereinafter referred to as TDM; The Stars My Destination as TSMD; all page numbers cited in the text refer to these editions.

2) Alfred Appel, Jr., "Lolita: The Springboard of Parody," in Nabokov: The Man and His Work, L.S. Dembo, ed. (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1967), p. 132.

3) In Freud's own words:

> The artist is originally a man who turns from reality because he cannot come to terms with the demand for the renunciation of instinctual satisfaction as it is first made, and who then in phantasy-life allows full play to his erotic and ambitious wishes. But he finds a way of return from this world of phantasy back to reality; with his special gifts he moulds his phantasies into a new kind of reality, and men concede them a justification as valuable reflections of actual life. Thus by a certain path he actually becomes the hero, king, creator, favourite he desired to be, without pursuing the circuitous path of creating real alterations in the outer world. But this he can only attain because other men feel the same dissatisfaction as he with the renunciation demanded by reality, and because this dissatisfaction, resulting from the displacement of the pleasure-principle by the reality-principle, is itself a part of reality.
>
> (General Psychological Theory: Papers on Metapsychology (New York: Collier Books, 1963), p. 25-6.)

4) In Search of Wonder (Chicago: Advent, 1967), p. 234.

H. G. WELL'S THE TIME MACHINE:
IT'S NEGLECTED MYTHOS

by

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#1 INTRODUCTION

Even though its mythopoetic nature was recognized by contemporary Victorian reviewers, and has since been affirmed by critics like Eugenil Zamyatin and Juan Luis Borgas, The Time Machine nevertheless has become in recent years the subject of a curious form of monocular criticism.[1] Wells's complex and ironic tale is viewed in an increasingly allegoric fashion, as if it were comprised exclusively of its scientific mythos. Wells's companion mythos--that of socialism--has consequently been neglected.

The so-called New Wellsian Orthodoxy received its principal impetus with the publication of Anthony West's "The Dark World of H.G. Wells" (Harpers, May 1957, 68-72). No longer could Wells be dismissed as the Orwellian caricature blinded by scientific grandeur; he became instead a doubting and questioning individual, forced by a nominalist belief into a denial of Inevitable Progress. Wells's period of literary achievement could now be extended to include his early scientific romances. More than just vulgar entertainments, they could once again be seen as nightmare visions, pessimistic views of both man and his cosmos. This has been the approach of recent critical discussions by Bergonzi,[2] Hillegas, and Williamson.

But the inevitability of progress was only one of two great "popular ideas" that dominated public consciousness at the close of the nineteenth century. The other, of course, was the class revolution of Marxism. Since both are reflected in The Time Machine, it seems absurd that the attention paid to the socialist Wells has been so comparatively small. Almost ignored is the youth who read Plato's Republic--the young man who while at South Kensington also learned of Karl Marx, and who only a few years after wring The Time Machine was to try to wrest control of the Fabian Society from Bernard Shaw; the same socialist Wells who nevertheless fostered an intense dislike for Marx and an equal antipathy for what he described as his "mystical and dangerous idea of reconstituting the world on the basis of mere resentment and destruction."[3]

It is not really a case of failing to recognize the socialist mythos but of failing to appreciate its significance: the Marxist influence is generally acknowledged and then just as commonly disregarded or dismissed as an aspect of "local colouring."

This essay, then, attempts to correct the focus. It is my contention that the socialist mythos is as important an element of The Time Machine as the scientific, that it is not just a part of the late nineteenth century atmosphere. Such an interpretation will be established by considering first The Time Machine in its contemporary literary setting as "a tale of the future" and then the marxist variations of its forerunner, The Chronic Argonauts.

#2 THE TALE OF THE FUTURE

Time travel was a literary fashion at the close of the nineteenth century. The Time Machine, although it represents a unique and innovative breaking from the conventional dream-fantasy, is clearly derived from this contemporary vogue for future scene utopias and adventures. Even the Time Traveller appears fully conscious that his narrative was ostensibly related to a familiar literary pattern:

> In some visions of Utopia and coming times which I have read, there is a vast amount of detail about buildings, and social arrangements, and so forth. But while such details are easy enough to obtain when the whole world is contained in one's imagination, they are altogether inaccessible to a real traveller amid such realities as I found here.[4]

The popularity of the fictional theme of futurity started with the publication in 1888 of Edward Bellamy's Looking Backward. By the end of the century, more than sixty books were written in direct response to Bellamy, more than forty of them utopian forecasts.[5] Of these the one of greatest significance was William Morris's News from Nowhere, first published serially in 1890, during the same period, incidentally, that Wells was initially revising "The Chronic Argonauts."

The point is that both Looking Backward and News from Nowhere were recognized socialist utopias. Bellamy and Morris were both describing their own personal dream of the coming "Golden Age"--of that hoped for time when all man's economic and social problems will have been solved, when in truth he will be living in a perfected socialist world.

Of course, Wells's future world bares no obvious resemblance to Bellamy's technological magalopolis or to its state socialism, although an earlier stopping of the time machine might well have presented something at least superficially similar--"I saw huge buildings rise up faint and fair, and pass like dreams"(25). More apparent is the resemblance between the peaceful and happy communal life that so fascinated Morris's dreamer and the Time Traveller's early descriptions of the Eloi while he still believes them to be members of a "Golden Age":

> Several more brightly-clad people met me in the doorway, and some entered, I, dressed in dingy nineteenth century garments, looking grotesque enough, garlanded with flowers, and surrounded by an eddying mass of bright soft coloured robes and shining white limbs, in a melodious whirl of laughter and laughing speech.
>
> (32)

Still, some immediately pertinent and less speculative observations can be made regarding these socialist utopias and The Time Machine.

"The Chronic Argonauts," written in 1888 before either Looking Backward or News from Nowhere, gives no hint of such a future time of economic and social justice, even though it does contain the notion of an advanced futurity. On the other hand, this socialist concept plays a vital part in Wells's final attempt at his story, where in fact it becomes the initial hypothesis entertained by the Time Traveller. Accordingly, it is reasonable to conjecture that these intervening socialist utopias were at least in part the inspiration for Well's own "Golden Age." In a sense, then, The Time Machine can be viewed as a parody of such socialist tales of the future. Its Golden Age after all is shown to be an hallucination.

Nearly as important is the perfection and consequent stasis so common to utopian writing. Wells's own Kinetic Utopianism was surely a reaction in part against the kind of inertia so evident in both Looking Backward and News from Nowhere. With these contemporary illustrations, in any event, it became more feasible for him to argue that the ultimate product of such a perfected society would be retrogression, the inevitable result of quiescence being stagnation. This is substantially the final explanation that the Time Traveller presents in his attempt to understand the world of 802,701.

> Once, life and property must have reached almost absolute safety. The rich had been assured of his wealth and comfort, the toiler assured of his life and work. No doubt in that perfect world there had been no unemployment problem, no social question left unsolved. And a great quiet had followed. (87)

The fruits of that "great quiet," then, with its abrogation of Necessity is the atrophy--the retrograde evolution--that produces the Eloi and the Morlocks.

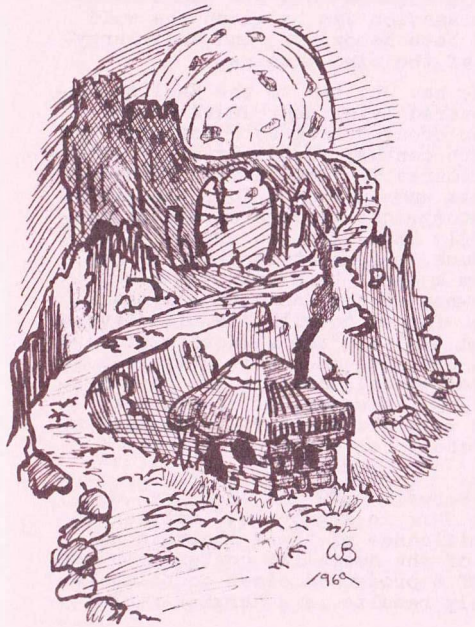
It would be misleading, though, to create the impression that all the late nineteenth century tales of the future were socialist utopias. W.H. Hudson's novel published in 1887, The Crystal Age, opens, for example, with a possibly portentious quoting of Darwin --"No one living species will transmit its unaltered likeness to a distant futurity." And the abstinence from meat in Hudson's tale, while in itself a small point, also assumes a special significance in light of the prominence that both vegetarianism and cannibalism play in the plotting of The Time Machine.

Two earlier works are possibly even more relevant: Bulwer-Lytton's The Coming Race which first appeared in 1871 and Butler's Erewhon, published one year later.[6] In Lord Lytton's story there is an even more extraordinary instance of Darwinian species formation than in Hudson's. The species developed, moreover, is a subterranean race of man--an Overman, whose rate of advancement has been considerably spurred (as Wells too suggests) by the greater efforts required to sustain life underground. No doubt the prime inspiration for the Morlock's caverns were, as indicated by the Time Traveller, contemporary events.[7] Still, Lord Lytton's Vrylians surely played their part, especially in the number of other similarities between the two books, e.g. the subjugation of Nature, the near self-sufficiency of technology, the reduction of sexual differences, even the romantic entanglement between the visitor and a member of the future race.

This last aspect of The Time Machine has often been faulted by modern critics as Victorian mawkishness, but along with its effect of humanizing the Eloi it is also an integral part of the utopian romances of the period: there is the unattainable "Yoletta" in The Crystal Age, and in Erewhon, of course, there is "Arowhena"--who in name at least must be the precursor of Well's own "Weena." And the parallelism can be extended even further, for almost all these female companions accompany their late nineteenth century visitor on a tour of a futuristic museum containing machinery. Nonetheless, an important distinction can also be drawn between Weena and these other utopian women, one of which the Time Traveller himself appears fully aware--"I had no convenient cicerone in the pattern of the Utopian books"(58). Weena is prevented from being a proper guide by her simplicity.

It is important to remember, then, particularly in examining the socialist mythos, that Wells's novel while brilliantly innovative was also firmly rooted in a tradition and a contemporary vogue. This relationship has of course been observed before, but seldom has its significance been considered.

#3 THE CHRONIC ARGONAUTS



That The Time Machine with its deceptive simplicity was the product of a number of extensive rewritings and rethinkings is generally known; less familiar is the fact that Wells's initial attempts at his time travel theme contained no suggestion of a Marxist class struggle.[8] Over the several years of intermittent revisions the prevailing social and economic questions of the day, especially the prophesied class revolution and the coming New Jerusalem, not only gained a place in Wells's narrative but actually threatened to overshadow the original notion of a time travelling mechanism. In fact, at one point there appears to have been a real danger of the tale becoming little more than a transparent socialist tract. Fortunately, however, by the time Wells came to write his final version the near future had been abandoned, its prophetic realism giving way to the perspective and clarity of a fable of remote futurity. Even so, the socialist interest had been implanted and it was to remain a significant element in the novel.

"The Chronic Argonauts" was written in 1888 while Wells was still attending South Kensington. It appeared as a serial in the April, May, and June issues of The Science Schools Journal, a students' magazine devoted first to the questions of science but also intended to serve the interests of both literature and socialism. Wells had been one of the founders of the Journal and at the time was still its editor. The resemblances between this initial version and the final Time Machine are in most respects negligible. As Wells himself later admitted it had been written under the strong influence of Hawthorne and the Gothic Romances (Exp., 309). Nevertheless, it does provide the basis for all the subsequent versions.

Dr. Moses Nebogipfel, a mysterious outsider, arrives in a small Welsh village where he takes up residence in the Manse, an old house that is said to be haunted by its previous owner. Modeled upon Hawthorne's Dr. Heidegger in part, Nebogipfel is the scientist as the modern Merlin. A Doctor Frankenstein figure, he is more the precursor of Wells's crazed vivisectionist in The Island of Doctor Moreau than the somewhat eccentric but nonetheless sane Time Traveller. In any event, after a village hunchback takes fits and dies, an angry and frightened mob marches upon the Manse, blaming the strange newcomer for the death. Reverend Elijah Cook, the local cleagyman, runs on ahead intending to warn the scientist. He bursts in, however, and discovers Nebogipfel sitting on his time travelling apparatus, his clothes in disarray and his hands stained with blood. Then before any explanation can be given the wild mob of Welsh villagers arrives and both Nebogipfel and the clergyman are forced to escape by means of the time machine.

In the next instalment the scene has shifted to the English Fenlands where Reverend Cook is discovered lying near death upon a desolate marshy island. He has been brought back by Nebogipfel and dropped once again in the nineteenth century, but only after enduring a series of extraordinary adventures in time. Having witnessed several crimes, moreover, he insists upon giving a full deposition before he dies. According to his story, the strange scientist considers himself to be a temporal "Ugly Duckling" who properly belongs with the supermen of the future, though at the time of his discovery he had just returned from a short trip into the past where he had startled the former owner of the Manse (the present ghost) and in self defence had been forced to kill him. The Reverend Cook then promises to go on and tell of "the abduction of a ward in the year 4003, and several assaults on public officials in the year 19701," and also "valuable medical, social, and physiographical data from all time"(EHGW, 28). However, it is at this stage that the clergyman dies. And with his death Wells decided to leave his story unfinished, with Nebogipfel wandering somewhere in time.

In the next few years, though, between 1889 and 1892, Wells wrote two further versions of "The Chronic Argonauts," neither of which was ever published. The significance of these abortive accounts lies in their introduction of the socialist content. In both the "social data" takes the form of a projected class conflict: a situation of exploitation ultimately results in a Marxist style popular revolution.

It was of course the close of the eighties that saw the surfacing in England of the more violent forms of socialism. It never went any further than the East End Risings or the London Dock Strike, but even so it appeared to be the beginnings of the same kind of aggressive action that had previously been limited to the Continent. No doubt Wells was aware of the situation. In fact, at one point in The Time Machine he specifically singles out the condition of London's East End--"Does not an East-end worker live in such artificial conditions as practically to be cut off from the natural surface of the earth?" (57)

These Marxist versions exist today only through second-hand accounts; still they are accurate and elaborate enough[9] to suggest the development Wells's narrative was taking. In the first of these attempts, written in 1889, much of the former gothic trappings was simply cut, including the rather heavy-handed Welsh setting. Nebogipfel and Reverend Cook still embark upon a journey into the future, however. Only on this occasion they encounter a world of exaggerated class division:

> The upper and the lower worlds exist, but their inhabitants are not yet two distinct species. A scientific aristocracy still survives in a decadent form as a red-robbed priesthood, and art and literature are cultivated in a very dilettant manner. The Chronic Argonauts stir up these weary idlers, and even make it fashionable to read books. The priests take their visitors to see a vast museum, but themselves grow bored and leave the pair to explore alone, warning them against the passages which lead "down." They go "down," and discover an underworld working to support the upper world. Eventually some compunction is aroused among the aristocracy, and some kindly disposed persons descend to sing and play to the workers. At this the underworld explodes into revolution, kills them, and rushes up in a mob to carry out a general massacre. (EHGW, 38)

In the subsequent panic Nebogipfel and the clergyman make their escape. They overshoot at first and travel back into the paleolithic era, but eventually do return to the nineteenth century where once more Cook is left behind while the scientist vanishes into time.

The second Marxist version demonstrates even more distinctly the prominence the socialist issue was assuming. In fact, it is with this attempt written in 1892 that Wells appears to have been on the verge of writing a straightforward political allegory. The time machine notion itself has seemingly disappeared; Nebogipfel and the Reverend Cook are no longer even a part of the narrative. Instead, Wells presents a direct account of a future ruling caste holding its power through the use of mass hypnosis. Once again, though, a bloody and brutal revolution takes place, this time initiated by a member of the future society itself, a disaffected priest who wishes to "awaken" everyone to the artificial means by which the rulers command society.

Still, The Time Machine itself is not a realistic dystopian prophecy of class enslavement and revolution. Obviously Wells's imaginative thinking changed considerably during the three years that intervened after the last of these Marxist versions. But there was no change in the patent concern with socialist issues. "A Story of Days to Come," for example, and When the Sleeper Wakes, both written later in 1897 and 1899, are manifest outgrowths of these early trial versions, products of the same consistent technique of extrapolation:

> ...essentially an exaggeration of contemporary tendencies: higher buildings, bigger towns, wickeder capitalists and labour more downtrodden than ever and more desperate...
>
> (Exp., 550-1)

Such a view has not been the conventional one, however. Normally the novel's socialist elements are simply dismissed as convenient aspects of the plot or as recognizable background material:

> The idea that these [Eloi and Morlocks] are descended respectively from our own leisured classes and manual worker comes as a mere explanation, a solution to the puzzle; it is not transferred[10]. . . into a warning about some current trend in society.
>
> It is not a warning story since the period in which it is laid is long past the peak of man's future[11] Golden Age. Nor is the slightest attempt made at satire.

Even those recent observers who have otherwise viewed The Time Machine as a critical and satiric work have not seemed willing to extend that approach to the socialist mythos. For instance, Professor Hillegas, despite his concern with Wells as a dystopian, comments only that the Morlock episode is "...social criticism...very much a product of the 1890's, the years of increasing Socialist protest," and then, leaving the analysis on that level, offers no exploration of what Wells might in fact be saying about that "increasing Socialist protest" (op. cit.,31). Admittedly, this is an improvement upon outright dismissal, but it still fails to accord to the socialist mythos the kind of irony and sophistication that is acknowledged through the rest of the book. In "H.G. Wells: A Critic of Progress" Jack Williamson has convincingly demonstrated the ambivalence of the scientific Wells. In my view the socialist Wells is just at ambiguous--just as much a critic.

If Wells were merely presenting some predigested socialist argument on the evils of capitalist tyranny, then the conventional assumption would be perfectly acceptable. Indeed the socialist mythos would be nothing more than a piece of appropriate plotting, some current social criticism without real purpose. But such is not the case.

Consider for a moment the metaphor common to almost all the works discussed: the complex and often inconsistent image of the under and the upper worlds, the enclosed and the open, the darkness and the light. Primarily, it represents the subjugation of the workers by the leisured classes--the hidden unseen power of society, the substratum, and the privileged elite that it supports glittering visibly upon the surface. But it also suggests the antithesis of technology and nature--the constructed and artificial environment, creating its own space with subterranean factories, walled-in towns, and roofed-over cities, and in opposition the natural world, the outside or the upper world, the wild countryside of "A Story of Days to Come," the gentle lotus-land of the Eloi. And there exists still a further level, for as Professor Bergonzi has pointed out in his discussion of the imagery, this basic metaphor also contains a conflict structured upon images of the "demonic" the the "paradisial" (EHGW, 52-3). Wells's workers--the Collectivity that manifests itself as a Mob--his "Underworlders," his "Wearers of the Blue," his subterranean Morlocks, all in varying degrees are devil figures, either pinch faced and deformed or outright monsters. Such then is the fundamental ambiguity of the metaphor. Where are the Red-Shirted Socialist Heroes?

Still further, though, examine a brief outline of When the Sleeper Wakes, a later re-working of the same material as in the Marxist versions of "The Chronic Argonauts." Graham, the hero, is described as "a fanatical Radical--a Socialist--or typical liberal of the advanced school." He wakes after a two hundred year sleep and discovers appropriately enough a Bellamy-like world in which capitalist monopoly has resulted in the Earth being ruled by a mere handful of men. Moreover, Graham himself through the accumulated earnings of certain unearned legacies has become one of them, the unwilling owner of half the world. (Compare the suggestion of the Very Young Man in The Time Machine: "One might invest all one's money,leave it to accumulate an interest, and hurry on ahead"(12).) There exists a revolutionary movement, however, and Graham naturally becomes a supporter. But--and here again is the ambiguity--the leader of that movement, Ostrag, is himself intent upon betraying the people. With prescient Orwellian logic, he argues that the great mass of mankind must always be dominated: revolutions only succeed in producing new castes of rulers.

Wells, as is quite evident from his own utopian writings, held no brief for a totally parasitic and unproductive leisured class. Just as obviously, though, his characterization of the proletarians in The Time Machine and those works associated with it can hardly be thought of as either flattering or typical of Marxist Socialism. He has presented the mass of man as violent, demonic, and servile.

It is possible to offer a plausible and easy explanation, of course. Born a bourgeois and remaining one in spirit, Wells simply disliked and feared the common man. As Remington, his near-persona in The New Machiavelli, comments, "I compared the working man on the poster with any sort of working man I knew." [12] Or, as a well-known Marxist critic has expressed it:

> He might pity the workers, he might want to brighten their lives, but he could never see them as anything but a destructive force which must be led, and controlled and, if necessary. coerced. [13]

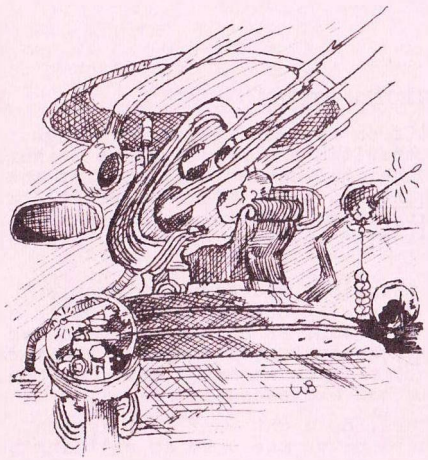
Yet simple disaffection seems too facile and ineffectual an explanation. A distaste for the objects of their concern was not after all such an unusual phenomenon within certain socialist circles. [14]

Nonetheless, there does seem to be something in the suggestion that Wells feared the destructive forces of the masses--but not in the sense intended by the Marxist critic. What appears to have troubled Wells in The Time Machine and its related works was the natural tractability of the common man and even more his growing predilection towards violence and hate.

Socialism, according to Wells, was an intellectual Proteus capable of assuming any number of guises. In the closing years of the nineteenth century, however, socialism appeared to be crystallizing in its popular form as Marxism--and Marxism was a creed to which Wells was utterly opposed. His own peculiar aberration of socialism clearly pre-dated his reading of Das Kapital; before arriving in London, as he says in his Autobiography, he had "scarcely heard the name of Karl Marx." Far more agreeable to Wells was the positive and constructive programme of the Fabians, and even then he sought to re-direct that society along still more practical and yet more ambitious lines. In any event, it seems plain that Wells had little sympathy for Marxism: as he later maintained, there might well have been "creative revolution of a far finer type if Karl Marx had never lived" (Exp., 142-3).

So, it is my contention in looking at The Time Machine that the ambivalence of its socialist mythos is not an expression of Wells's antipathy towards the common man, but rather a criticism of Marxist dialectic and its sterile offspring, violence and hate.

#4 THE TIME MACHINE



Wells's socialist mythos in The Time Machine is manifested in the series of socio-economic hypotheses considered by the Time Traveller, for with a typical late nineteenth century anxiety he initially embraces and is then forced to reject a succession of explanations concerning the nature of society in the year "Eight Hundred and Two Thousand, Seven Hundred and One."

This fundamental pattern of thesis and refutation is of the utmost importance. By suggesting solutions that follow familiar Marxist lines, only to have them revealed subsequently as erroneous, Wells is able to satirize effectively not the reasoning of the Time Traveller but rather the efficacy of the Marxist dialectic. Constantly moving to hasty conclusions, eventually he discovers that his theoretical premises do not in fact explain all the evidence.

The mythos properly begins with the Time Traveller's arrival in the world of the Eloi. Once his initial dread of the unknown has passed and he has observed something of the future world, the explanation which immediately comes to mind is that he has happened upon the "Golden Age," the promised time of peace and equipoise after the Revolut

> Social triumphs...had been effected. I saw mankind housed splendid sheleters, gloriously clothed, and as yet I found them engaged in no toil. There were no signs of struggle, nei social nor economic struggle. The shop, the advertisement, traffic, all that commerce which constitutes the body of ou world, was gone. It was natural on that golden evening th should jump at the idea of a social paradise. (38)

The assumption is said to be "natural." Indeed, it is as old as Isaiah and yet as new as Karl Marx. The Golden Age was the messa of almost all the "Utopias and tales of the future"(48,58); it w the great popular "dream" of the day (37). Just how prevalent is demonstrated perhaps by the rather staid Narrator himself, for wh the idea of travelling into the future is first broached his immediate reaction is to suggest the possibility of encountering ' society erected on a strictly communistic basis" (12).

That the Time Traveller should entertain the same supposition then, does not come as any real surprise. Certainly, the physical pearance of the world of the Eloi would seem to confirm such an explanation:

> Apparently, the single house, and possibly even the house hold, had vanished. Here and there among the greenary wer palace-like buildings, but the house and the cottage, whic form such characteristic features of our own English land· scape, had disappeared.
> "Communism," said I to myself. (35)

Speaking before the word "communism" had acquired its later authoritarian overtones, the Time Traveller is impressed by the seeming aboliton of individual ownership, the spirit of community --"There were no hedges, no signs of proprietary rights" (37).

Nevertheless, all is not as it ought to be, as the Time Traveller soon begins to realize. In fact, it is not too long before he has to amend his original hypothesis. How else can he "explain the condition of ruinous splendour," the ubiquitous decay that besets even the monuments in aluminium and granite? Or even more disturbing, how is he to account for the totally unexpected and overwhelming simple-mindedness of the Eloi?

The dreamed of Golden Age now takes a peculiarly nightmarish twist, for the answer to these questions involves Wells's negation of socialist utopianism. The desired social paradise has been achieved, but only at an unbearable cost:

> For the first time I began to realize an odd consequence of the social effort in which we are at present engaged...The work of ameliorating the conditions of life--the true civilizing process that makes life more or less secure--had gone on to a climax. (37)

It is at this point in the tale, of course, that the major interplay between the scientific and the socialist mythos occurs. The birth and ascent of species has a corollary: through the absence of "Necessity" their decline and death.

But there is also a more purely socialist argument. The perfected society of socialist utopian dreams, which if not actually promised by Karl Marx was certainly believed to be promised, was according to Wells a commitment to extinction. The sterility of socialist forecasts betrays the truth. Once society has become quiescent, it becomes static; and once it has become static, it becomes retrogressive.

The Time Traveller, however, although aware now of the ironic need for Necessity is not as yet prepared to appreciate its full significance. In fact, he attempts to incorporate his new insight into conventional socialist utopianism:

> We are kept keen on the grindstone of pain and necessity, and it seemed to me that here was that hateful grindstone broken at last! (40)

Only later towards the novel's conclusion is he able to accept the full disillusionment and pessimism of his discovery:

> The human intellect...had committed suicide...No doubt in that perfect world there had been no unemployment problem, no social question left unsolved. And a great quiet had followed. (87)

But at this earlier stage in the narrative the Time Traveller has yet to receive the "shock" of the Morlocks. He is still naive in his social analysis.

As more is learnt of the world of 802, 701 less adequate becomes the original supposition of a Golden Age, even a Golden Age that has slipped into decadence. The Time Traveller had assumed at first that the organization and maintenance of the society of the Eloi was somehow "automatic" as in many of the future romances of his day. Even so, he eventually realizes, there ought to be evidence of "machinery" or "workshops" or "appliances of some kind." Yet there is none--neither automatic nor manual.

So, how then are the Eloi able to be "clothed in pleasant fabrics that must need renewal...their sandals fairly complex specimens of metal-work?" As the Time Traveller says, "...somehow such things must be made (49). And what of "the waterless wells and the flickering pillars" (the Underworld's ventilating shafts and chimneys), how are they to be explained? And what of the missing time machine itself? The Eloi had displayed no interest in the mechanism! And then the ape-like ghost creature lurking in the dark and later fleeing down one of those waterless wells! What was to be made of it?

In consequence, the Time Traveller is forced to formulate a new hypothesis, one based this time upon the existence of an underground world and a subject race serving the needs of the Eloi. And once more it is a "natural" explanation, even more specifically the product of Marxist dialectic:

> What so natural, then, as to assume that it was in this artificial Underworld that such work as was necessary to the comfort of the daylight race was done?...from the problems of our own age, it seemed clear as daylight to me that the gradual widening of the present merely temporary and social difference between the Capitalist and the Labourer, was the key to the whole position...Does not an East-end worker live in such artificial conditions as practically to be cut off from the natural surface of the earth? (56-7)

Again, the scientific and the socialist mythos intermingle: the workers and the leisured classes have developed through adaptation to environment and specialization of function into two distinct human species, with the "Have-nots" nevertheless still supporting the "Haves" (57).

The descent into the hell of the Morlocks, the Time Traveller's climb down into the subterranean world, offers apparent confirmation for this newly formed hypothesis:

> Great shapes like big machines rose out of the dimness, and cast grotesque shadows...The air was full of the throb-and-hum of machinery pumping...(61-2)

The evidence is again misleading, however. This supposition too proves incorrect, for like its predecessor it creates as many questions as it resolves.

Why, if the Eloi are the masters, are they so terrified by the dark (58)? Why do they never approach any of the waterless wells (60)? Why does Weena express a special dread of the coming "Dark Nights" (57)? And finally what was the large animal that furnished the joints of meat the Time Traveller has seen butchered by the Morlocks (62)? In the course of answering these objections the Marxist view of reality is effectively destroyed.

What Wells has carefully constructed is a situation that seemingly corresponds perfectly with Marxist dogma. Then he has gone on to demonstrate that such an interpretation of the events would be totally apocryphal:

> I felt pretty sure now that my second hypothesis was all wrong. The upperworld people might once have been the favoured aristocracy, and the Morlocks their mechanical servants; but that had long since passed away. (66)

If a tyranny now existed in the world of 802,701, it was a tyranny not of the aristocrats but of the workers. In effect, the Revolution had happened--and this was its legacy! It was now the Morlocks who walked in power, their very presence instilling fear. It was they who fed upon the rest of mankind.

#5 CONCLUSION

Compared with that paid to the Progressive, the attention given the Marxist Fallacy has been curiously shallow and often downright perfunctory and unseeing. Of all the recent critics the one who has taken the most serious notice of the socialist aspects of The Time Machine has been Bernard Bergonzi, and even he has failed to appreciate the irony of its Marxism:

> Wells had come across Marx at South Kensington, and though in later years he was to become extremely anti-Marxist, it appears in his immediate post-student days he was prepared to uphold Marxian Socialism as a new thing based on Darwinism. [15]

It is my argument that Wells's disaffection or at least his questioning of Karl Marx and his doctrines had already set in by the beginning of the 1890's, in fact by the time he wrote the Marxist versions of "The Chronic Argonauts."

Admittedly, upon a straightforward reading the socialist mythos ostensibly reveals Wells as an intellectual adherent. My contention, however, is that, like its counterpart, this mythos too is satiric. The substance may indeed be Marxist, but the substance is seen to be discredited. The inevitable class conflict with its panacea of Revolution and the coming Golden Age is clearly portrayed as an illusion. All that remains intact is the symbolized power of the masses--the Morlocks with their inhuman and collective terror, like the mobs and worker riots of "The Chronic Argonauts," the great mass of mankind indoctrinated into systematized violence and hate.

The significance of The Time Machine's socialist mythos lies, then, in posing (and I believe, for the first time) the question of what happens after the Revolution. What would be the legacy of such a violent class revolution? Could such deeply implanted hatreds and fears be expected just to disappear? Would they somehow be conjured away and replaced by an era of everlasting brotherhood? And what would become of the actual object of the struggle--power itself? Could it too be expected, like the State, simply to wither away? Or would it remain with the proletariat and there somehow wonderously incorruptible?

One final point: Marxian Socialism at the time of Wells's writing was in truth violent more in theory than in practise. In almost all its manifestations, particularly in England, it was actually pacifistic and permeating, rather than revolutionary. Marx himself, for instance, was not really in very much sympathy with the Paris Commune as a political experiment, though he was naturally sorry for the defeated adherents. It was Lenin, coming from a scene of continuing violence in Russia, who insisted upon the inevitability of revolutionary violence. Yet Marxian Socialism seems to have institutionalized its theory of revolutionary violence into societies that have continued in stability long after the revolution that initiated them. The violence of a revolution is not unexpected, but the continued violence and repressive machinery of Russia, fifty years later, has to be ascribed at least in part to the theories of Marx. It would seem that Wells was right.

FOOTNOTES

1) An anonymous Victorian reviewer: "And we welcome Science--Mr. Wells's brand of Science--with acclamation. Fairy tales are a prime necessity of the world..." Quoted by Ingvald Raknem in H.G. Wells and His Critics (Oslo, 1962), 17. E. Zamyatin: "Wells writes fairy tales that are ultimately about social problems," Herbert Wells (Leningrad, 1924), 107. J.L. Borgas: "The Time Machine (and the other early science fiction) will be incorporated, like the fables of Theseus or Ahasuerus, into the general memory of the species and even transcend the fame of their creator or the extinction of the language in which they were written," "The First Wells," Other Inquisitions (New York, 1937), 88.

2) Bernard Bergonzi, The Early H.G. Wells (Manchester, 1961). Mark R. Hillegas, The Future as Nightmare: H.G. Wells and the Anti-Utopians (New York, 1967), Jack Williamson,"H.G. Wells Critic of Progress," RQ, Vol.3 No.1--Vol.4 No.1 (August 1967--August 1969).

3) H.G. Wells, Experiment in Autobiography (New York, 1934), 142.

4) H.G. Wells, The Time Machine (London: Pan Paperback, 1965),48. Subsequent references are to this edition. Collation with the original text as reprinted in The Centenary Edition of the Complete Short Stories of H.G.Wells (London, 1966) revealed some differences in chapter divisions, but otherwise the Pan text seems reliable.

5) Erich Fromm, "Foreword," Signet Edition of Looking Backward (New York, 1960), v. See also W.H.G. Armytage, Yesterdays Tomorrows: A Historical Survey of Future Societies (London, 1968), 76.

6) See Ingvald Raknem (op.cit.,391-4) on the originality of The Time Machine and Richard Gerber, Utopian Fantasy (London, 1955), 18-24 for a discussion of Lytton and the pioneering nature of his book.

7) "There is a tendency to utilize underground space for the less ornamental purposes of civilization; there is the Metropolitan Railway in London, for instance, there are new electric railways, there are subways, there are underground workrooms and restaurants, and they increase and multiply. Evidently, I thought, this tendency had increased till Industry had lost its birthright in the sky," The Time Machine, 56-7.

8) See Bernard Bergonzi's discussion of The Chronic Argonauts in EHGW, 25-61 (where he also reprints the text) and his article in Review of English Studies, New Series, xi (1960).

9) The accounts given by A. Morely Davies, a close friend of Wells, appeared initially in Geoffrey West's H.G. Wells (London, 1926). They are also reprinted in full in Bergonzi, EHGW, 38-40.

10) Kingsley Amis, New Maps of Hell (New York, 1960), 39-40.

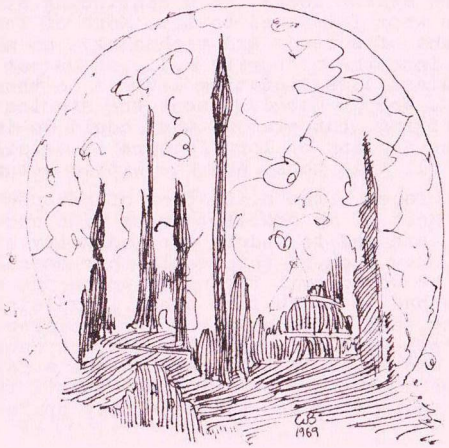
11) Sam Moskowitz, Explorers of the Infinite (New York,1963), 134.

12) H.G. Wells, The New Machiavelli (London: Penguin,1970),94-5.

13) A.L. Morton, The English Utopias (London, 1952), quoted by Bergonzi, EHGW, 151.

14) Lovat Dickson, H.G. Wells: His Turbulent Life and Times (Toronto, 1969) contains an intriguing chapter on Wells and the Fabians. In it Mr. Dickson comments: "The particular Fabian appeal was its inherent gentility; it offered all the sense of adventuring into the future thoughtfully, positively and constructively, in the right company, in one's own class" (116).

15) EHGW, 56. This later anti-Marxism of Wells is at its most vituperative in Shape of Things to Come where under the guise of Raven he talks, for example, of Marx's "vain insistence that he had produced a final doctrine to put beside Darwinism" (35), as well as Marx's "addiction to a queer 'dialectic' devised by the pseudo-philosopher Hegel"(49).



CLICHÉS IN THE OLD SUPER-SCIENCE STORY

by

Leland Sapiro

(part three)

#6 TRIAL AND ERROR

Of course, not everything in Bates's magazine was juvenile fantasy.[20] Besides the editor's own Hawk Carse series there was Murray Leinster's "Tanks" in the very first issue (Jan.'30), Lilith Lorraine's "Jovian Jest" commentary (May '30) on the academic mentality, and R.H. Wilson's "Out Around Rigel" (Dec.'31), perhaps the best Relativity story to the present date. These, however, were isolated singularities: overall, the Clayton Astounding Stories was not just the worst science-fiction magazine ever published, but conceivably the worst of any variety. So the question is, why?

One reason was William Clayton himself, who not only read and approved each story purchased, but occasionally took (and bought) unread manuscripts from the editor's office.[21] Since Clayton published over a dozen other magazines, it's easy to understand the editor's statement (ibid., xv) that his publisher had become a "Super-Science buff"--and just as easy to imagine the effect of this enthusiasm on the quality of the magazine. A publication that survives the mistakes of one editor cannot necessarily afford those of two.

But while such interference could account for an occasional "dud," it could not explain "Astounding's" uniformly low quality. Other explanations, likewise offered by the editor, were the necessity of accepting inferior work and the limitations imposed by the science-fiction field itself:

> My biggest difficulty...was the obtaining of suitable stories. Clayton and I agreed that...action and adventure were necessary for Astounding's survival...We could think of fewer than half a dozen fair-to-good pulp writers who had ever written stories of the kind we wanted, but we never doubted that some of my adventure writers could produce them. However, I at once found myself locked in a continuing struggle with nearly every one whom I induced to try. Most of them were almost wholly ignorant of science and technology, so much of what eventually got into their stories had...to be put there by myself. I spent endless time dictating letters to them...I did very much rewriting. When I dared, I sent the stories back to the writers for the fixing, but even if they could do it, and did, this required the sending of long letters of detailed instructions... The time all this took! And the little return!
>
> I daily faced...the alienation of prospective suppliers of stories. Most of my draftees wrote with uncertainty and...reluctance, and had to endure the indignity of reworking their stories...How much of this would they stand? Each had a point at which he would quit trying to write the science stuff. I therefore had to watch like a hen...explaining, encouraging, mollifying, and helping--alert for incipient defections...It could happen--and did--that a rejection caused me the loss of a writer who might in time have become a fair source of supply. Where else might they sell a story that I turned down? These were not young fans and amateurs, but professionals.

> They had to make a living. Not infrequently I bought unwanted stories only in the hope of getting better ones later, or just to have something to print on pages which without them would have gone blank. Did you ever buy a...magazine containing empty pages and an editor's apology that he could not find enough good stories to fill them? ...more often than you might think, editors knowingly fill out their issues with indifferent or inferior stories. (ibid., xiii-xiv)

But deadlines have to be met by any commercial publication; like editorial interference, they account only for the occasional bad story. However Bates's other explanation--the lack of trained writers--cannot be dismissed so quickly.

Observe, first, that Bates's contributors included a string of writers from Hugo Gernsback's earlier Amazing Stories--one such being Francis Flagg. In several respects his first effort for Astounding, "The Heads of Apex" (Oct.'31), was no better than the rest of the magazine; its interest stems from the author's preoccupation with machines and class-exploitation.

The protagonist, soldier-of-fortune Justin Miles, answers a want-ad placed by a "Mr. Solino," described as "...evidently a cripple... in a strange wheelchair...his body...muffled to the throat in a voluminous cloak..." Endorsed by a friend, Harry Ward, already employed by Solino, Miles is accepted. These two, plus other like-minded adventurers, later are picked up at a "lonely spot on the Long Island coast" by a submarine; its pilot resembles their employer except that he

> ...wore no cloak, his body from the neck down being enclosed in a tubular metal container...The container...terminated on the seat of the peculiar wheel chair to which it seemed firmly attached...
>
> "Well, this is a rum affair and no mistake about it," said one of them.
>
> "A freak--a bloomin' freak," remarked another whose cockney accent proclaimed the Englishman.
>
> "Yuh're shore right," said a lean Texan. "That hombre out there had no legs."
>
> "Nor hands either."

Right after learning that the real trip starts "at the bottom of the ocean," our travellers are knocked out when their craft hits an obstruction. On reviving, Miles and Ward, the accident's only survivors, find themselves in a big air-lock (whose gate had caused the fatal bump). Leaving the submarine, they meet an angry green giant, which is stopped by Ward's revolver, and then flee a horde of others, attracted by the shot. Gaining refuge in a laboratory-type building, they meet Solino's companions. Their leader explains that they are now in another continuum:

> "My name is Zoro and I am Chief of the Heads of Apex. Many years ago we Heads lived on a continent of your Earth now known...as Atlantis...
>
> "I am not a cripple in a wheelchair. This tubular container holds no fleshly body. Inside of it is a mechanical heart which pumps...blood through my head. [In Atlantis] our experiments opened up another realm of existence manifesting itself at a vibratory rate above that of earth. To this new realm we brought workers who built the city of Apex...

"../For/ countless ages...the workers...worshipped us as gods...But, of late they have made common cause with the original inhabitants of this place, the green men--

"So we...sent two of our number to Earth after men and weapons..."

Returning to the submarine to collect the weapons cached there, the adventurers are captured by the green men and brought before Spiro, former Head and now leader of the insurgents, who explains:

"Since the dawn of our history...the Heads have maintained their lives by draining blood from...thousand of Apexans yearly!...the...blood pumped by mechanical hearts through the brains of the Heads...is manufactured from human blood... And /for/ that blood every Apexan must yield his quota in the temple."

Tied and left to meditate, pending their execution, the two are approached by Ah-eda, Spiro's former sweetheart. "If I...set you free," she asks, "you would go back to your own world and not fight my people any more?" Answered yes, she frees and accompanies them to the Palace of the Heads, where they confront a repentant Zoro:

"..the Heads are dying. You need not tell me that you have failed. In the end force always fails. No longer will the veins of the people yield their blood to us...Soon three hundred years of intelligence will be no more."

Using the instructions given in Zoro's last breaths, the three enter the transmitting chamber and return to Earth.

This story is almost unique (for Astounding) in that the hero's attackers turn out to be the oppressed instead of the oppressors[22]--and so it[23] shares the Marxist implications in the bulk of Flagg's other work. Heads is in one sense the converse of his Machine Man of Ardathia (Amz.Nov'27), since the machines, instead of being integrated with society, serve a parasitic leisure class. But Machine Man didn't follow the conventional pulp formula, its action consisting entirely in the confrontation of a twentieth-century human by a man-machine synthesis and his resulting insanity--while certain aspects of Heads seemed contrived just to fit into Clayton's action-thriller requirement (or to eliminate inconveniences that resulted from it): the killing of all travellers (except the two focal characters) almost at the start; the expiration of the chief Head just after the rescue; and the appearance of the inevitable Gorgeous Female, who liberates the explorers, but is unaccompanied by a Head to operate the submarine once she and her new friends rematerialize on Earth's ocean floor.

That Heads was written not from conviction but necessity--that of embedding the author's socialist views in an adventure story--is confirmed by Flagg's next (and last) Astounding opus, which tried no "message" at all, but described the activities of "inhuman" Toc-Toc birds, inhabitants of a "sub-atomic[24] world," who, enlarged a trillionfold, "set out to conquer earth."

Now this particular author, one might say, was inhibited by[25] Clayton's requirement of "much physical action and excitement" from doing his best, and so confirms Bates's own argument about the scarcity of writers who could do "stories of the kind we wanted." But no such excuse was available to writers like R.F. Starzl, F.V.W. Mason, and Victor Rousseau, all regular contributors to the adventure-story magazine, Argosy. Specimens from each of these authors were examined previously, e.g., Starzl's Earthman's Burden, Mason's "Phalanxes of Atlans"--with its human sacrifice[26] by "dog-conceived sons of Semites" -- and Victor Rousseau's story with its description of the Invisible Emperor's air attack on Washington:

Two small boys, carrying a huge banner with 'No Surrender' across it, were walking off the ghastly field. Twelve or fourteen years old at most, they disdained to run. They were singing...though their voices were inaudible through the turmoil.

Rat-tat! Rat-tat-a-tat! The fiends above loosed a storm of lead upon them. Both fell. One rose, still clutching the banner in his hand and waved it aloft. In a sudden silence his childish treble could be heard:

My country, 'tis of thee
Sweet land of lib-er-ty--

The guns rattled again. Clutching the blood-stained banner, he dropped across the body of his companion.

This patriotic gore was that of an experienced professional, writing in a familiar medium. Since"Argosy's"payments were unusually high, one might conjecture that Rousseau and company felt themselves to be relatively ill-paid writers who were not obliged to do their best.

However even this explanation(it is hardly an excuse) would be inadequate, since only five of Bates's writers had previous sales to Argosy--and Astounding's payments still were at least four times higher than those of its purely science-fictional competitors.[27] On this basis we might expect, naively, that Hugo Gernsback's old contributors--Edmond Hamilton, Harl Vincent, S.P. Meek, etc.--would write at least twice as well for Astounding. But then we remember Edmond Hamilton's "Monsters of Mars" (discussed in RQ V, 103-5), concerning which one critic observed:

This story is essentially the same as his...'The Other Side of the Moon' (Amz. Q, Fall '29), only the villains are crocodile men rather than turtle men... Both have a single gateway to Earth, that the Earthmen need only destroy to prevent them from invading; both had previously dispossessed another great race--a worm race, in both cases...The difference is that where 'The Other Side of the Moon' attempted not only to present some original ideas, but also was written in an interesting and readable style, this latter is not; the evidences of comparative boredom on the part of the author are plainly visible.

(Arthur Cox, personal letter, 1950)

So Edmond Hamilton wrote conscientiously for Amazing at half a cent per word and neglectfully for Astounding at two cents a word.

Another contributor, Harl Vincent, did similar work for both magazines, his Microcosmic Buccaneers (Amz., Nov.'29), e.g., on tyranny and revolt in the atomic domain, being a typical Clayton-type story, right down to the yearly abduction of three hundred from the slave race's "fairest maidens." Again, S.P. Meek's "The Black Lamp" (Astounding, Feb.'31), on theft by Soviet agents of plans for the American "Breslau gun," was just a variation of his Red Peril in the September 1929 Amazing.

That professionals realized the true situation is verified in S.P. Meek's own listing of current plot clichés:

> The first...in...popularity is the inter-planetary yarn... Using a space ship...the hero and his comrades, among whom must be an erudite scientist, unless the hero himself is one, visit Mars, Venus, Mercury...or any other planet to which the author's fancy directs them...The inhabitants of Mars or Venus need not resemble humans...Turtles, bettles, ants, butterflies, cats and lizards are some of the more common forms..Of course, all the monsters are...super-intelligent with strange..powerful weapons.
>
> A girl is usually found in the new planet, preferably a member of a race of men fighting a losing battle against the... monsters...The race of humans with the timely help of the hero and his companions defeat the monsters...and restore the humans to the control of the planet, or else the monsters triumph and the hero with his girl escapes to prosaic old earth..
>
> A common variant...is to have the earth invaded by the monsters from space. With deadly rays and other forms of destruction they menace the planet which is saved...by the young scientist, engineer, shoe clerk, or whatever the hero is...In this case the girl is usually an earth girl...
>
> The next most popular type is the story where the hero penetrates into some unknown portion of the earth and there finds a strange advanced race of scientists, a race of pygmies, giants, super-intelligent animals, strange and horrible forms of life...The monsters usually plan a conquest of the earth and the hero nips the dastardly plot in the bud, saving humanity from untold horrors and incidentally rescuing the girl...
>
> A third type...is the super-scientific detective. Here the villain perfects a device by means of which he accomplishes a seemingly impossible crime...The detective analyzes the crime...and...perfects a device which neutralizes the one used by the criminal and in the end brings the villain to justice. A deviation from this is...where the villain endeavors to enslave mankind by the use of his device.
>
> (ibid.,37-8)

The author specifies that "These...typical stories cover the bulk of...yarns...published today..." -- a statement not applicable to the general market but strictly true for the highest paying science fiction magazine, Astounding Stories.

(Meek's scheme differs from that of the present article in that his main categories are the interplanetary and terrestrial Exploration, with the Invasion being a "variant" of each. Since "Monsters of Mars" and C.W. Diffin's "Dark Moon" are the only stories I recall where one results from the other, I took these as separate categories. The author's third classification often fits into the other two, as when his super-scientific detective stops Russian plans for world conquest.)

Captain Meek also mentions "the new story," of which he says,"I wish I could tell you what it is..." However he had sold several such to Amazing, e.g., "The Murgatroyd Experiment" (Amz Q., Winter '29), on a plan to conserve Earth's food supply by changing humans to plants that can abstract nourishment directly from the atmosphere. Another, "Futility" (July '29), anticipated Robert Heinlein's "Life-Line" by ten years in its description of an invention capable of predicting one's time (and place) of death--with the unsuccessful attempt by one inventor to avoid Fate and the other's resignation to it.

So this author was acquainted with the "new story," but relative to "Astounding" had no motivation to write it.

To summarize--Astounding's failure was not the inability of its writers to adopt, which they did with (literally) no effort. Several veterans, R.F. Starzl, F.V.W. Mason, and Victor Rousseau, wrote adult adventure for Argosy and juvenile adventure for Astounding--with two others, Ray Cummings and Murray Leinster, sometimes writing grown-up stories for the latter--while Amazing writers like Edmond Hamilton and S.P. Meek simply retold their earlier tales at four times the original rates. Paul Ernst and Arthur Zagat (see RQ V, p. 108, f.n. 11,13), experienced writers without Argosy or Amazing credentials, furnished to Bates's readers sex in its only commercially acceptable form--sadism--and on Astounding's temporary demise graduated to the sex-torture magazines of the middle Thirties.

#7 DEATH AND REBIRTH

Details of the Clayton "Astounding's" demise are not available[28]--so I can only note that it was through no monetary failure of this publication--whose circulation had increased steadily until its last (March '33) issue--but that of the bankrupt William Clayton, who lost his entire chain of magazines.

Later that year, Astounding started again, with Orlin Tremaine as editor, under another publisher. The difference between these two Astoundings was noticed by the young Frank Kelly (first published in the June '31 Wonder Stories), whose experience with the old editor is recounted in a letter to the new:

> I've noted the clean break with the past which has characterized the reborn Astounding Stories. It was this evident shift which led me to submit Crater 17 to you. Some time ago, before the old magazine passed out, I submitted a manuscript to Mr. Bates, which he returned after a month or so... with the statement that the story, though fresh and original, seemed to be a trifle too startling for his taste. That convinced me Mr. Bates had a certain preconceived formula of excellence by which he judged all manuscripts...I never submitted another story to the old Astounding, since I'd rather not write according to formula.
>
> ("Brass Tacks," July 1934)

Another top writer rejected by the old Astounding was John Campbell. His "Twilight" (Nov.'34) was introduced by the new editor as "a story that will set you dreaming of purple distances..." a phrase perhaps derived from the famous prophecy of Tennyson, who

> ...dipt into the future, far as human eye could see
> Saw the vision of the world, and all the wonder that would be,
>
> Saw the heavens fill with commerce, argosies of magic sails,
> Pilots of the purple twilight, dropping down with costly bales.

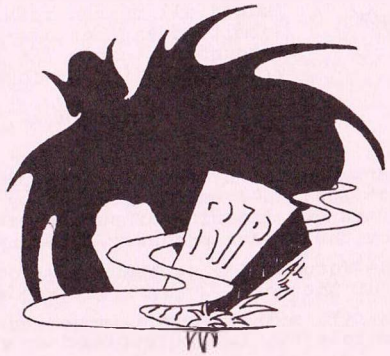
"Purple," then, designates the colour of the sky just before nightfall--and hence the opacity of the twilight atmosphere, through which something is seen dimly, as from afar--in this case, "...a world wherein a race is dying seven million years away." In such a way Tremaine conveyed the isolation--personal and temporal--to be expressed by what followed. "Mood," of course, was a thing alien to Clayton's sex-adventure policy, so in a sense Bates was correct in rejecting Campbell's story, which could not have been appreciated by those sufficiently depraved to enjoy writers like Paul Ernst and Arthur Zagat.

#8 CONCLUDING REMARKS

Naturally, William Clayton--like any commercial publisher--issued his magazine for profit. But unlike the Street & Smith Astounding, which made money by publishing writers like John Campbell and Frank Kelly, the Clayton Astounding did so by articulating the racial and sexual fantasies of its audience. By contrast to Gernsback's Amazing Stories, which tried to "educate" the reader, Bates's magazine served a more personal need: it enabled the reader to magnify his self-importance, either by imagining himself as representative of a superior race--contrasting sharply with maldeveloped terrestrial and extra-terrestrial species--or by identifying himself with a superior individual, who performed according to the undisciplined daydreams of the author.

One more observation: in a normal market the lower paying magazines are sent stories turned down by the richer (just as science-fiction magazines of the Fifties received (and printed) Astounding's "psi" rejects). Yet relative to Clayton's magazine the opposite was true. To re-quote the editor (op. cit. xiii), "Where else might [authors] sell a story that I turned down?" The implication is, nowhere--despite the existence of two lower-paying competitors. This, of course, just confirms results obtained by directly examining the Clayton magazine--that what sufficed for it generally was unsellable anyplace else.

Our data included the rejection of original writers who did not fit the Clayton action-adventure formula and the acceptance of third grade work from Amazing and Argosy veterans who did. So blame can be attached only to a closure of imagination and to a laxity of standards that permitted Clayton's Astounding to print the unprintable.



FOOTNOTES

20) Written in collaboration with D.W. Hall, the series included "Hawk Carse" (Nov.'30), "The Affair of the Brains"(March'32),"Bluff of the Hawk"(May '32), and "The Passing of Ku Sui" (Nov.'32).

21) Harry Bates, "Editorial Number One," in Alva Rogers, A Requiem for Astounding (Chicago: Advent, 1964), xv.

22) For another turnabout see Edwin Sloat's "Loot of the Void" (Sept.'32), where the girl fails to welcome her rescuer from Titan spider-monsters because she thinks he is their agent.

23) See Flagg's article in The Time Traveller, April-May '32, p.9, where he justifies his trip to the year 2161: "Here, in the future, there is planned economy for service and not private profit. Everyone...profits collectively from the benefits of the machine...Every man can say he is as wealthy as the International Republic to which he belongs." Also see Science Fiction Digest, Nov.'33, where Flagg writes that most of his stories are intended "...to reflect one facet of a central theme. Man achieves mastery of his environment by incorporating himself and the machine as one. To develop it independently of himself is to court disaster. The triumph is shown in 'The Machine Man of Ardathia'; the disaster is shown in 'The Mentanicals' [printed in Amazing Stories, April '34]."

24) "The Seed of the Toc-Toc Birds," Jan. '31.

25) Harry Bates, Writer's Digest, April '31, p. 56.

26) "The Invisible Death," Oct. '30, cited in RQ V, p. 106. Compare "The Wall of Death" by this same author, quoted in RQ V, p.5. For citations from R.F. Starzl and F.V.W. Mason, see RQ V, pp. 8-9 and p. 102, respectively.

27) Captain S.P. Meek, "The Pseudo-Scientific Story," Writer's Digest, May '31, p.39. Payments listed are: Astounding, "two cents a word...on acceptance"; Amazing, "about one-half cent a word on publication"; and "the Gernsback publications"[Wonder Stories], "from one-quarter a cent up...after publication."

28) Harry Bates (Requiem, xvi) merely says, "I shall not tell the circumstances except to say they were not what you would think."

29) See Sam Moskowitz,"The Face of Facts," Skyhook#14 (Summer,'52), p.7: "In 1930 Tremaine obtained a position with Clayton Magazines as editorial director of their entire pulp chain. Harry Bates worked under him, and there was disagreement between the two men over the editorial policy of Astounding Stories. Tremaine disapproved of the emphasis on action-adventure and wanted to slant the magazine toward a more mature audience. When the Clayton chain succumbed to the depression and Street & Smith bought out many of their titles, F. Orlin Tremaine went along with that purchase, but simply as another editor." In the Winter '52-'53 issue Moskowitz added, in a letter, that Tremaine, after his appointment as editorial director, was also "...made president of Clayton Publications before its collapse."

For details on Tremaine's Astounding see "The Mystic Renaissance," RQ II, 75-88, 156-170, 270-283.

THE TOP OF MY SON

Sitting in the kitchen in my skivvies,
A little bit drunk on the linoleum floor,
Having a post prandial, pre Morphean tin
--Feeling thoroughly mortal and full of sin--
I root through the children's Christmas toys
And find the top of my son, a modern
Scientific one: "A Whizzer," the box says,
"Of infinite gyroscopic possibilities."

It's a round plastic ball from the bottom
Of which a metal tip protrudes. I weigh
The cool pink shape and thrust, rolling the tip,
Leaning hard and harder, making low grade
Gray marks on the newly scrubbed floor.
Velocity increases in proportion
To pressure in accordance with the law.
It warms and hums and quickens in my hand.

With great expectation, I gingerly
Set the top down. After one sharp skip it
Finds the ground point and then sings a music
Sweet to the inner ear, a music of
Balance, explicability and sense.
Blur-swollen, penultimate and sure,
Its precise song and dance is heard and seen
Only by me-- Now rapt in a cosmic trance.

My folded leg cramps and the reflex jerk
Touches the top. It starts and begins to
Wobble and shudder on a now erratic
Tip. Its last spasms are gross till it finally
Flops, skittering out of my reach.
My eyes sting and I swallow very hard.
Sitting in the kitchen in my skivvies,
A little bit drunk on the linoleum floor.

-- William R. Stott, Jr.

"CAVEMEN LIVED 18 YEARS ON THE AVERAGE"

A quick slouch or so from the prom
To the old folks' home. Just Goodnight Sweetheart
Dancing the last dance when coalbound
Bouquets collapse and wrinkles start
Their gathering and getting her
Alone behind an oldtime rock
Panting and suddenly senility
Shows up wondering what
Your hands are doing in there. And
Elevated to a flat stone
Showing off Wisdom of the Ages
To silly sophomores who share,
Alas, your acne. And death; just
As things were starting to work out
Goingsteadywise with Mary Lou.

Times are long and cold on the Average;
Rough winds blow off its banks and make
Things fast. At times to sit as ancient
Men and stare in unimportant
Tides wondering where some too bright
Day has gone whose echoes have already
Shot a shadow's part of mind wearing
Empty scars of images. And almost
Old enough to shave. Tombstones grow
Along the Average like wild
Frozen flowers.

-- Ralph Roberts Hunt --

SLEEPING BEAUTY AND DARKO SUVIN

by

Richard M. Hodgens

Nebula Award Stories Five, edited by James Blish (Garden City, 1970), includes an essay on "The S-F Novel in 1969" by Professor Darko Suvin, "a specialist in science-fiction history and criticism, seen from the point of view of the main currents of Western philosophy," according to Blish. "We have come a long way to have gained such a friend," Blish adds; "perhaps someday we shall be able to say that we have earned him." The suggestion is disquieting.

Professor Suvin begins by attempting a definition,"a critical Credo about this genre." I am used to reading English, and I have consulted standard dictionaries to check Suvin's terms, but I can not make much sense of his definition--much less of his judgments, which follow--or rather, come afterwards. "All the bleached bones of foolhardy explorers trying to arrive at a definition of S-F," Suvin jokes, "cannot obviate the necessity of trying to cut through this /'genealogical'/ jungle /in which s-f is buried/ in order to arrive within sight of the Sleeping Beauty of S-F."

Then he simply announces that "S-F is the literature of cognitive estrangement." That does not sound like fiction, but he does go on to suggest that s-f is fiction about unknown places. He asserts,

> The approach to the imaginary locality practiced by the genre of S-F is a supposedly factual one: taking off from a fictional ("literary") hypothesis, S-F develops it with cognitive ("scientific") rigor.

The statement before the first stop might imply that s-f pretends not to be fiction--as sometimes might be so, but, if so, would not distinguish s-f from other fiction. After the colon, Suvin adds little more, and again no distinction: "...cognitive ('scientific') rigor" is claimed for other fiction, too--though usually it is just called consistency. He goes on:

> The factual reporting of fictions confronts a set normative system, a closed world picture, with a point of view implying a new set of norms.

I can not see that this necessarily has anything to do with s-f, where norms may change or may not. Then Suvin says that this is "estrangement," "in literary theory," estranging me still more:

> This concept was first developed by the Russian Formalists (Viktor Shklovsky), and then most successfully underpinned by an anthropological and historical approach in the work of Bertolt Brecht.

The Russian Formalists (Viktor Shklovsky) are (is) rather obscure, and Suvin does not explain what Shklovsky's Formalism had to do with Brecht's Verfremdungeffekt or what either concept had to do with s-f. I assume that Suvin brought up Shklovsky and Brecht only because they interest him. He does go on to quote the latter, but this is no help, because the playwright's simple explanation of "estrangement" does not resemble Suvin's, above:

> "A representation which estranges is one which allows us to recognize its subject, but at the same time makes it seem unfamiliar." For somebody to see all "normal" happenings in a dubious light, "he would need to develop that detached eye with which the great Galileo observed a swinging chandelier. He was amazed by that pendulum motion as if he had not expected it and could not understand its occurring, and this enabled him to come at the rules by which it is governed."

But he timed it. He counted. He was not simply amazed. To see everything in a dubious light one need only fast or drink. This is not the scientific method. Galileo's ignoring properties he considered accidental was not "estrangement"--though it is possible to guess why Brecht might have thought so, since Brecht considered Marxism a science. He might have forgotten that Galileo did not invent the swinging chandelier and his pulse, while the playwright was inventing his material--especially, perhaps, in his slanderous play about Galileo. Indeed, Brecht not only invented fictions, but also imposed upon them "a set normatibe system, a closed world picture..."

However, Brecht so impresses Suvin that he then asks us,"Why should not art also contribute to the great social task of furthering Life?" Yes, why should it not? But why ask? And as for simple "estrangement"--which might further life and might not--what does it have to do with s-f as distinguished from other art?

Suvin supposes that "In S-F, the attitude of estrangement has become the formal framework of the genre." Without explaining how an attitude can be a formal framework, he says, moreover:

> ...S-F should therefore be defined as a literary genre whose necessary and sufficient conditions are the presence and interaction of estrangement and cognition, and whose main formal device is an imaginative framework alternative to the author's empirical environment.

If this definition means anything, there must be a great deal of non-s-f to which it applies. But Suvin thinks it

> ...entails some rather clear consequences. If the approach of estrangement differentiates S-F from the "realistic" literary mainstream...

(A big if...)

> ...its nucleus of cognition differentiates it with equal decisiveness from myth, the fairy tale and the horror fantasy.

But you might find estrangement anywhere, and you might expect to find it in myths, fairy tales and horrors--fantastic or not. Besides, other kinds of fiction--including fantasies--also have "nuclei" of cognition. It appears that to Suvin some kinds of cognition are not cognition--but it also appears that he has changed his notion of cognition in s-f anyway. At first, it seemed to have to do with the development of the "fictional ('literary') hypothesis," i.e., the subject (?); but here it seems to be the "nucleus," i.e., the subject (?), itself.

Having defined s-f to his own satisfaction, Suvin says,

> If S-F is a genre with a field of possibilities of its own, the criterion of excellence in it is--beside the one of basic literary competence--how close any work comes to using its specific possibilities.

How can basic competence be a criterion of excellence? The rest is also nonsense. Suvin means, the criterion of excellence as s-f: apparently it will not do if a novel is excellent in every respect but just happens to be s-f; it must closely (how closely? as closely as possible? but how are we to tell?) use the specific (unique?) possibilities of s-f--whatever they are.

Suvin at least gives us some idea of what they are not, in his opinion: he proceeds to denounce as "not S-F" some s-f that does not satisfy him:

> If we discard metaphors like "S-F is the mythology of a technical age"..., mythical estrangement is a ritual and religious approach diametrically opposed to S-F. Where S-F sees the norms of any age...as unique, imperfect, changeable, and subject to a cognitive glance, myth conceives men's relationships to other men and to nature as fixed and supernaturally--i.e., non-cognitively--determined. Where myth claims to explain once and for all the essence of phenomena, S-F posits them first as problems and then explores where they lead to; it sees the mythological static identity as an illusion, and usually as a fraud.

Suvin must have his very own definition of myth, and the philosophical confusion of this passage is formidable. I can only guess that he might be thinking of myth as if it were revealed religion, and of s-f as if it were the scientific method. Even if they were, of course, they would not be opposed as he thinks. Beliefs can be opposed by other beliefs; and cognitive methods, by other cognitive methods; but it would make no sense to say that knowledge is diametrically opposed to acquiring knowledge (or, learning in one sense to learning in the other).

As for how "S-F sees," it sees differently from Professor Suvin, as a cognitive glance will show. Plenty of s-f is "mythic," and some of it keeps turning up in polls of the best s-f. And Suvin implies that real s-f stories are necessarily didactic--teaching us that all norms change, at least. But in fact they are all stories, and imply that not all norms do. Needless to say, s-f is right about norms and Suvin is wrong about them: to say that "the norms of any age" are "unique" is cognitively preposterous, and to say that they are "imperfect" implies some standard of perfection that is not "changeable" but fixed...Where this leaves Professor Suvin's peculiar S-F, I am not sure. Nowhere, I think--but it might be a branch--or twig--of general fantasy.

If Suvin's credo is baffling and tedious, his particular judgments are even more so. He finds almost everything unsatisfactory, as one would expect. He does not apply his stated "presuppositions" consistently, of course. The only reason he approves of anything is that he has some presuppositions he does not bother to "explain," here. He is apparently ready to dismiss everything in s-f except

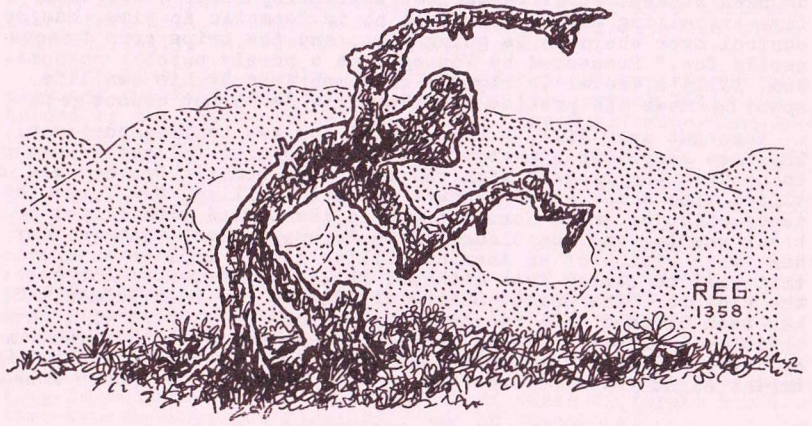
> The exciting action...with a group of writers emerging in these last years whom I would like to dub the "New Left" of S-F...The common denominator of this rather disparate group is that they question the Individualist ideology, i.e., whether a stable system can be built upon a sum of individual, Robinson-Crusoe greeds as the measure of all values.

I am not sure I understand the question as Suvin puts it; it raises too many questions; but perhaps the only important one is why--if the norms of any age are unique, imperfect and changeable--one would think of building "a stable system." Without giving us his solution, Suvin does give the impression that if "New Left" s-f leaves anything to be desired, it is in not giving us his solution...He says,

> But the "New Left," though unique in its desperate realization that human politics are everybody's destiny, as a rule still groping for clear ways out from the political mess it is battling. A writer sharing its sensibility to shop around for some improvised, as often as not mystical, way out.

Even so, he is hopeful. "Never say die," he says--except, evidently, to whatever we do not happen to like--and he does not happen to like anything that he can not call New Leftist.

If s-f were Sleeping Beauty and if Darko Suvin got to her, she would wake up screaming.



Editor's note: Darko Suvin's "Cognition and Estrangement" is reprinted in S-F Commentary 26, Bruce Gillespie, editor, GPO box 5195AA, Melbourne, Vic. 3001, Australia ($3 / 9 issues).

THE FUNCTION OF TIME TRAVEL
IN VONNEGUT'S SLAUGHTERHOUSE FIVE

by

Gerard W. O'Connor

(Lowell Technological Institute)

In God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater, Eliot Rosewater criticizes science fiction writers because "they can't write for sour apples." Vonnegut himself seems to enjoy making the same criticism: "Most of it isn't well-written. Characterizations are shallow. Prose is bad." Apparently, Vonnegut wants us to believe that he was only boiling a futuristic pot back in the 50's so that he could explode a philosophical bomb in the 60's. A critical look at Slaughterhouse-Five (1969) reveals, however, that Vonnegut is still relying heavily on the rhetoric of science fiction. Specifically, in Slaughterhouse-Five Vonnegut uses one of the most familiar of the techniques of science fiction--time travel--not only to structure the book but also to dramatize its central themes: war is hell, religion is ridiculous, America is rotten, and the human condition is absurd.

Billy Pilgrim, the allegorical hero, "has come unstuck in time" while wandering incoherent and dazed through the forests of Luxemburg after the Battle of the Bulge. Billy's mind flashes back to pre-birth trauma and ahead to the death of his mother in 1965, back to the YMCA pool of his childhood, ahead to his one drunken attempt at extra-marital sex. Billy never loses this time-travelling ability; in fact he is "spastic in time, has no control over where he is going next, and the trips aren't necessarily fun." Presented by Vonnegut as a purely psychic phenomenon, Billy's travel is rigidly circumscribed by his own life span; he knows the precise details of his death but cannot go past it.

Vonnegut uses Billy's time-travel for two satiric purposes. The free association pattern that Billy's mind follows allows him to condemn the present with the past: the ruins of Dresden are identified with a new urban renewal project in Ilium, New York; the destruction of small German towns is identified with a riot in a black ghetto; and the slaughter in Europe becomes that in Viet Nam. This vision of an America killing itself implies an America that will be buried from without. Billy's time-travel completes the picture: "The United States of America has been Balkanized, has been divided into twenty petty nations so that it will never again be a threat to world peace. Chicago has been hydrogen bombed by angry Chinamen." Life in America in 1976 is just what one might expect eight years before 1984 and ten years after Lyndon Johnson.

The old story-within-a-story convention provides a second kind of time travel in Slaughterhouse-Five. The somewhat offbeat and unappreciated science fiction of Kilgore Trout is described by Billy and his friend Eliot Rosewater, the only Trout reader on Earth. One of Trout's unread tales is the story of the man who travelled back to see what Jesus was doing at age twelve: "Two Roman soldiers came into the shop with a mechanical drawing on papyrus of a device they wanted built by sunrise the next morning. It was a cross to be used in the execution of a rabble-rouser. Jesus and his father built it. They were glad to have the work. And the rabble-rouser was executed on it. So it goes." Still unconvinced, the traveller goes back to the Crucifixion: "The time-traveller was the first one up the ladder, dressed in clothes of the period, and he leaned close to Jesus so people couldn't see him use the stethoscope, and he listened. There wasn't a sound inside the emaciated chest cavity. The Son of God was dead as a doornail. So it goes. The time-traveller, whose name was Lance Corwin, also got to measure the length of Jesus, but not to weigh him. Jesus was five feet and three and a half inches long."

The fictional travel of Kilgore Trout is used by Vonnegut to reduce Christ to a glad-to-have-the-work 5'3" tool of the fascist Establishment. With bathetic savagery, "The Son of God is as dead as a doornail," Vonnegut dismisses Christianity as a cliché, a fraud, a failure. In addition, Kilgore Trout's use of the Archetypal Cliché, "dead as a doornail," is Vonnegut's overkill evidence for his opinion that in most science fiction,"prose is bad."

The third and most significant kind of time-travel in Slaughterhouse-Five is that of the Tralfamadorians. As they explain to Billy on his visit to their planet in 1967, they can look at all the moments of time the way we look at the Rocky Mountains, for "...all moments, past, present, and future, always have existed, always will exist." To the Tralfamadorians death is a childish fear; free will, a fatuous delusion; man's aspiration to intelligence, folly; his claim to dignity, nonsense.

Using time warp freely, the Tralfamadorians complete the chronological spectrum created in the book by the unstuck Billy and extended by the fiction of Kilgore Trout. The Tralfamadorians know that the universe is going to end when one of their own test pilots presses the wrong button while experimenting with new fuels and blows it all up. But they also know: "All time is all time. It does not change. It does not lend itself to warnings or explanations. It simply is. Take it moment by moment, and you will find that we are all, as I've said before, bugs in amber."

Comparing the human condition to that of a bug in amber is a metaphor that may not be particularly original, but it is close to the essence of Vonnegut. The point I want to emphasize here though is that to objectify this philosophy, to make it dramatic, concrete, in a word art, Vonnegut employs the rhetoric of science fiction. For the thematic and structural unity of Slaughterhouse Five is achieved by the interweaving of three different kinds of time-travel--psychic, fictional, and philosophical.

SCIENCE-FICTION AND THE LITERARY COMMUNITY

by

William Rupp

The last several years have seen a definite increase in the literary community's awareness of science-fiction. This is especially true in the many colleges that now offer courses devoted to speculative literature, such as Stanford University, California State at Fullerton, Illinois Institute of Technology, and San Diego State Extension (where I conducted an s-f course).

Important questions remain, however. Does science-fiction really have a chance of being accepted as a legitimate branch of modern literature? How familiar are members of the literary community with this genre?

These and other questions inspired the original survey, the basis of this article, to ascertain what literary experts know and think about science-fiction. At the outset, it should be understood that this paper is not exhaustive, although it may suggest possible methods for future studies.

Before dealing with the questions we ought to explain that the term "literary community" is used here to designate those groups capable of influencing the reading habits and attitudes of their society. Specifically, writers, critics, and teachers would be included.

What does the literary community think of science-fiction? It soon became evident that this question would require some original research. Regarding science-fiction there is very little published material not written by someone directly connected with the field (such as critics who are also writers, e.g., Damon Knight). Needed was the reaction of literary people from outside the world of speculative fiction.

While published material in this area is scarce, two items proved revealing. The first was an article by Granville Hicks in the Saturday Review for August 20th, 1966. In response to a request by Damon Knight to pay more attention to science-fiction Mr. Hicks admitted that he had read no science-fiction newer than the works of Verne and Wells. He concludes (p.23) by saying, "...science fiction has no more interest for me than westerns or mysteries."

Colin Wilson represents a different point of view. Wilson is a well-read, perceptive young British critic who devotes an entire chapter to science-fiction in Strength to Dream, a book that deals with some of the most important literary issues.

Further, his knowledge of the field is not confined to the traditional names (Wells, Verne, Huxley, etc.). He discusses such contemporary authors as Heinlein, Bradbury, Blish, and van Vogt. Wilson believes that science fiction "...often shows a vitality and inventiveness that have been absent from literature since the nineteenth century romantics"(123).

Concerning the literary community we can ask: Is increased familiarity generally accompanied by a more favourable opinion of the genre? Granville Hicks admits ignorance of modern science-fiction and sees no great value in it, whereas Colin Wilson is well acquainted with the field and praises it highly.

The questionnaire was intended to determine whether or not these two attitudes are common. It was answered by 31 literature instructors at a state college and a junior college in California and a university in Canada.

Specifically, the survey was intended to determine first, what literary people think of science-fiction and second, whether their attitudes are based on a knowledge or ignorance of it. The first five questions concerned attitudes and the last three concerned knowledge.

In preparing the questionnaire, I had to decide what would be considered basic literary values. As a result, the first five questions inevitably reflect my own bias. So too, in lesser measure, do the final three. One important lesson learned from this project is the difficulty of wording questions in such a way as to offer all respondents an acceptable option.

Question one was designed to elicit a quick, candid response, without too much prior thinking:

> In general, my impression of s-f is that it is (A) juvenile, (B) escapist, (C) entertaining, but "just for fun," (D) a significant branch of modern literature, (E) no opinion.

Fifty seven percent of the respondents chose either A, B, or C. Only 29% chose D. While many who chose A, B, or C later indicated that they thought highly of certain individual works, this figure would seem to indicate that science-fiction is not generally thought of as "serious literature."

Question two attempted to determine reactions to the many incredible devices and abilities that abound in science-fiction:

> The use of highly improbable devices, such as time-travel, in science fiction stories (A) prevents such stories from being taken seriously, (B) obscures development of more important literary subjects such as character, symbolism, and imagery, (C) can be effective, depending on the author's purpose, (D) no opinion.

As in question one, the choices can be broken into two sections, A and B, which are unfavourable, and C, favourable. In reality, answer C is so broad that it would be hard not to choose it. Nevertheless, 29% actually did choose A or B. This would seem to indicate that such gimmicks as faster-than-light drives, telepathy, and matter transfer machines are thought to be incompatible with "serious literature." One respondent, who selected B, remarked that science-fiction's main shortcoming is its "inadequate psychology." Sixty-five per cent selected C.

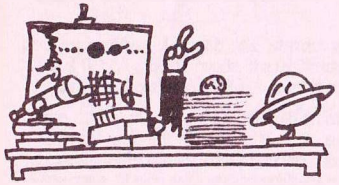
The proper subject of "serious" literature is often said to be the real world, by which contemporary society is implied. Science fiction often deals with radically different settings, and question three tried to ascertain whether or not this characteristic was considered a liability:

> Science fiction's emphasis on the future (A) is an indication of its basically escapist philosophy, (B) prevents it from dealing with reality, no matter how well written the individual story may be, (C) is one of its strongest points, (D) no opinion.

Science fiction came out fairly well on this question, with nearly half (42%) selecting C. Eighteen per cent selected A or B, indicating that some academicians still consider a future setting to be inappropriate for a "serious" story.

Question four dealt with the human element in fiction. We are constantly told that great literature says something special and important about people, their feelings and problems. If this is true, then science-fiction must also be judged against this criterion. Unlike the others in the first section, this question offered three basic choices:

> Science fiction, as a means of portraying the basic human predicaments and conflicts, is (A) too concerned with sensational, exotic situations to allow much development of these themes, (B) about as adequate as most popular forms of fiction, (C) is more effective than mainstream fiction, (D) no opinion.



Only one person felt that science fiction is better suited to the portrayal of character, and even he qualified his answer. Thirty-three per cent selected A, 45% selected B, and 18% had no opinion or gave other answers. In characterization the literary community finds s-f particularly deficient, since fully a third of the respondents consider it inferior in this regard, while nearly half rank it no better than other types of entertainment fiction. This is hardly a positive endorsement.

The question of gadgets versus character is crucial. Granville Hicks (op. cit.,23) expresses a widely held view on this issue, saying,

> A few writers / represented in several current s-f anthologies sent to him by Damon Knight / pay attention to make-believe gadgetry...but most of the stories get along without this kind of hocus pocus.

Question five concerned the belief (supported especially by John Campbell) that good science-fiction can help society prepare for the future by considering the outcome of current trends in science and sociology.

> Science fiction can be defined as a type of story that (A) deals with certain stock situations / space travel, aliens, etc. /, (B) is devoid of the basic literary qualities / imagery, character development, etc. /, (C) tries to anticipate the impact of future technological developments on society, (D) no opinion.

Twenty-three percent of the subjects chose A or B, while 48% chose C. That nearly half the respondents chose C seems to be a favourable sign. One answer might cause this optimism to be tempered, however; "A and C are both partly correct, and both irrelevant to 'serious' literature, which never really deals with stock situations or technological predictions."

Question five actually mentioned the impact of such discoveries, not merely the discoveries themselves. Nevertheless, there seems to be an uneasiness about s-f's use of such developments as important story elements. Perhaps this points out the basically non-technological orientation of literature teachers and other liberal arts types.

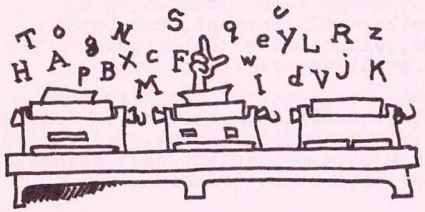
To summarize the first portion of the questionnaire, literary experts do not grant science-fiction the same respect that they regularly give to contemporary non-science fiction. Furthermore, many of s-f's most typical characteristics seem to cause doubt in the minds of these people. On the other hand, there was no evidence of a uniformly hostile attitude. Several respondents registered approval on more than one question, in fact. But do these opinions, whether favourable or unfavourable, stem from adequate knowledge or are they based on a careless appraisal of a few examples of science fiction at its worst?

It was anticipated that those with the greatest knowledge of science-fiction would hold the highest opinion of it. While the survey did not prove this conclusively, it was clear that those who had read a greater amount of s-f either think more highly of it or were able to make more intelligent criticisms. Also, those who knew more of s-f were willing to make extra comments. Those who hadn't read a post H.G. Wells story were content to make check marks on the questionnaires and no more.

Here are the questions from section two. Question six asked how often the subject reads science-fiction. Only 19% answered that they had read four or more stories or novels in the previous year. Forty-five percent indicated they had read several stories in the previous five years, but 36% had read one or none in the previous five to ten years. This means that a third of the subjects read virtually no s-f, while nearly half read s-f infrequently at best.

Question seven named eight science-fiction magazines, both current and defunct, and asked the respondents to mark A if they had never heard of the title, B if they had heard of it but had never read a story from that magazine, and C if they had read at least one story from that particular magazine.

The most frequently recognized title was Galaxy, concerning which 33% marked B and an equal percentage marked C. The next highest rate of recognition was scored by Amazing and Astounding. Both received about 30% B responses and about 25% C responses. (Analog was listed separately, and got 19% for both B and C categories.) Fantastic, Startling Stories, Thrilling Wonder Stories, and Fantasy and Science Fiction all scored very poorly; only 13% marked C for Fantastic and F&SF (which is interesting, since F&SF supposedly has the highest literary pretensions of all s-f publications).



Question eight measured the respondents' knowledge of various science-fiction authors. As was to be expected, almost all of them had read something by Verne and Wells (93% and 97%). Next came Bradbury (80%), then Asimov (67%), Heinlein (63%), and Clarke (47%). A response of C doesn't mean that the subject is thoroughly familiar with that author's work, of course. It only means that he had read at least one story by the author in question.

Other well known authors did much less well. A.E. van Vogt received 37% C responses, Poul Anderson and Murray Leinster 27% each, Olaf Stapledon 20%, James Blish 17%, Alfred Bester 13%, John Campbell 10%, and Walter Miller, Jr., 3%.

To put it negatively, 30% claim never to have heard of Robert Heinlein, 43% of Arthur Clarke, 53% of Poul Anderson, 70% of James Blish, 80% of Alfred Bester, and a gigantic 90% of Walter Miller, Jr., who has written one of the most important of all science fiction novels, A Canticle for Leibowitz.

Slightly over half the respondents were asked to make similar comments regarding an additional list of authors, most of whom have come to prominence in recent years. Only one author, Kurt Vonnegut, received more than 50% C responses. The next highest were Fred Hoyle, Fred Pohl, and Theodore Sturgeon, all with 31%. Virtually unknown to the respondents were contemporary authors such as J.G. Ballard, John Brunner, Philip Dick, Brian Aldiss, and Harlan Ellison.

At this point it might prove interesting to include some of the comments made by the subjects:

> I personally feel that science fiction is an area of literature that is not being explored as much as it could be.
>
> I do not read much science fiction. However, what I have read (or stuck with) I have found to be good, stimulating material--not because it helps me escape but because it helps me to look at situations from a unique viewpoint.
>
> Science fiction's emphasis on the future..."often is a symptomatic expression of a technological pathology."
>
> Probably the best argument for the "seriousness" of s-f is its influence on a few avant garde writers (Ken Kesey, William Burroughs, Kingsley Amis, etc.) though probably some of this influence derives from such brilliant utopian satires as Zamiatin's We and other sources, as in John Barth's Gile's Goat Boy.

> Jules Verne and H.G. Wells outclass Arthur C. Clarke. Verne and Wells have suspense, create a reality (with willing suspension, etc.), are well written. Clarke uses flat characters, employs stock responses while pretending to make mighty philosophical statements. Asimov and Bradbury have received much recognition because they write interestingly. But they do not begin to rank with Cyril Connelly, Aldous Huxley, Orwell or Zamiatin, all of whom have projected science fiction that terrifies but does not seek sensationalism.
>
> S-F ranges all the way from trash to genius.
>
> Science fiction is a type of fiction that deals with a "logical" extension of science to exagerated /sic/ situations of the future. The author makes the rules and tells the story within those rules. If you are a science fiction reader, you accept the rules as long as they stem logically from a sound premise. From that point on, it is a story of human beings in a strange but natural environment.

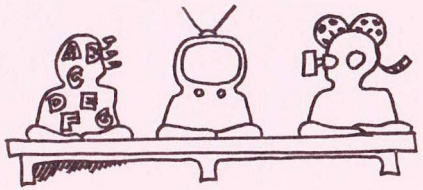
What can be learned from this project? I learned, among other things, that it is very difficult to formulate a short questionnaire that adequately covers such a broad field. I also learned that some academicians do not feel they belong to any single unified "literary community" that can be analyzed as easily as taking a patient's temperature.

It is now evident that some of the questions would have to be changed for a more accurate survey of contemporary attitudes. Such titles as Startling Stories and Thrilling Wonder Stories, which belong in s-f's early history, should be replaced by Orbit and New Worlds, etc. Likewise, authors such as Campbell and Leinster should give way to Ellison, Herbert and other more contemporary names.

I will commit myself a bit, however. If the survey has shown anything, it has shown that s-f's incursion into the Literary Establishment is at best fragmentary. If the questionnaire had mentioned Faulkner, Hemingway, Joyce, or Sartre, the recognition rate would have been a hundred percent. Many respondents spoke with a fair degree of authority about s-f, of course, but few showed anything approaching a comprehensive knowledge of the field. These men and women are supposed to be literary experts, let us not forget.

Either they are very careless about keeping up with s-f, or else the genre is of so little importance that they can safely ignore it.

Someday, someone may do a really large scale survey to determine how many critics and academicians really consider science fiction to be a significant branch of modern fiction. Perhaps by that time such a project will be unnecessary.



"A HOLLOW BELLOWS IN THE EAR"

A hollow bellows in the ear
just short of apprehension,
as if the reader over the shoulder
were deciding in his lungs,
or volumes in another voice,
or is it the radio?

Could be that scholar's scholar,
experience, saying, "I
have been where you
intend to go."
Might be an ode to Helen.
Maybe mice.

What resonant echoes
toll in the tendrils
of the cochlea, clear as sound.
What resemblances pass
just short of intention
in the symmetry of simile.

A snail makes a path
through air, all ear,
at a pace adjusted by experience
as a still bell is potentially
unsure.

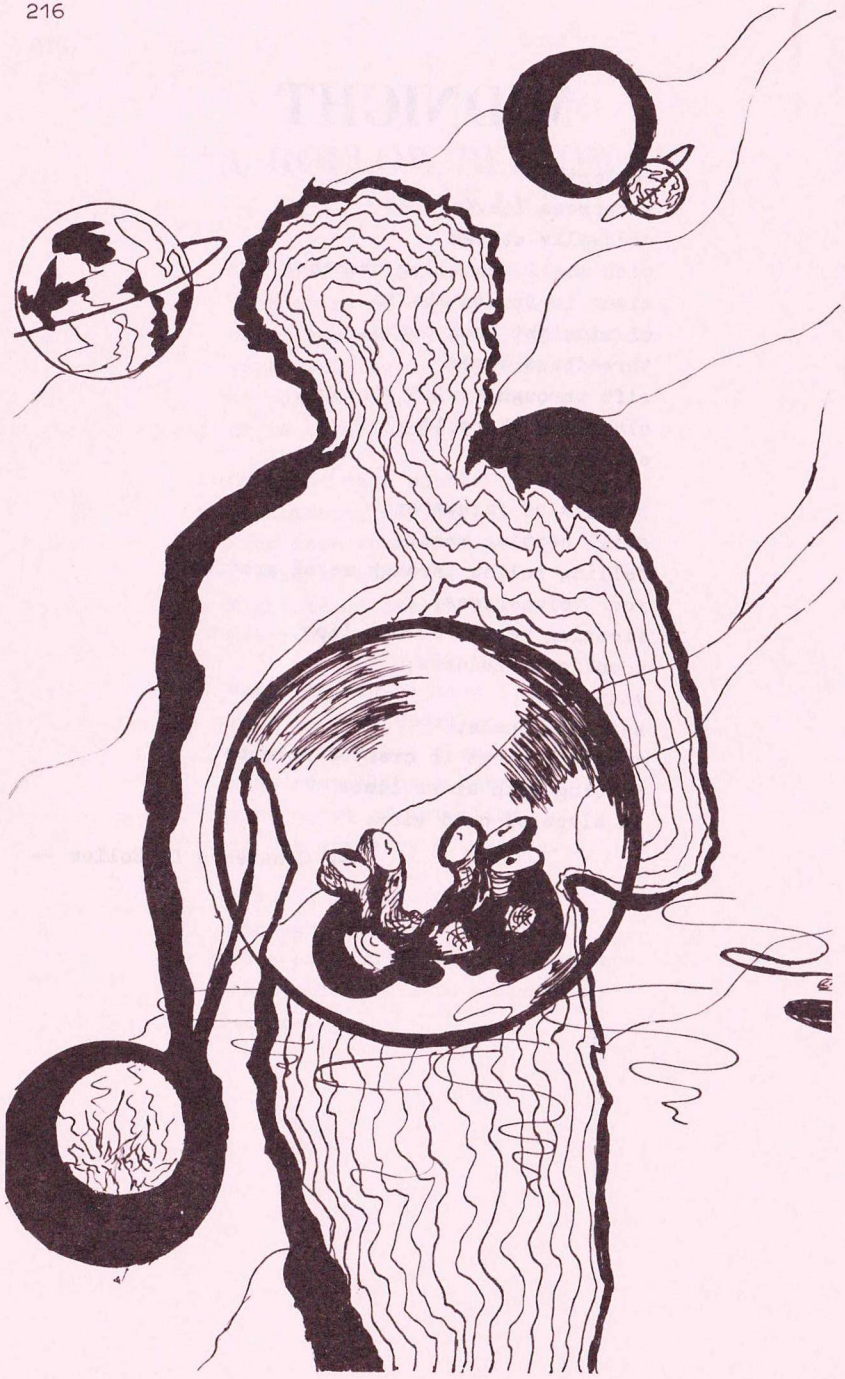
-- John Gage --

MIDNIGHT

footprints
wet-press leaves.
sidewalks webbed
with small scuttling branches
slant in frozen shafts
of midnight lamp posts.
threadbare words
sift through burled fingers,
clutching the cold cleft
at the neck.

strands of rainwater
drill sopping weeds;
falling hollow through metal gratings.
your voice rises,
fleeting warmth across lips.
moonlight shudders;
your face
set like shale.
thoughts hinge in cramped silence
flaring with alder limbs
in slaps of cold wind.

-- Constance L. Bollen --



THE ANGLE OF FIRE WAS CALLED AREL

by

Dianne Luty

It was the first night of the Festival of the Stars. It was the first night to watch for the rebirth of the universe. Or to acknowledge its death.

Those who were of the Old Order, especially Arel, the one who was called the Angel of Fire, had predicted that on this rebirth the Messiah would come and so there would be no sign.

To what degree the people believed him was hard to say. They were very impressionable, even though the Advisors presided over the people's emotions carefully. Whenever their fears seemed out of hand, they were reminded that Arel was nothing more than an eccentric, an amusing man, a magician whose tricks should not be taken too seriously. His talk of messiahs, his predictions, surely they were no more than quaint superstition. Arel had predicted the death of the universe and the coming of a messiah before each Festival. Yet the sign had always come.

Among the Advisors there were plans to eradicate Arel and what was left of the Order. Occasionally Arel had been useful in handling the people or as a scapegoat for the Advisors, but now there was no excuse for the group. Now they were succeeding in upsetting the people. After this "rebirth" came as the Advisors had predicted, the Order would be made example of and then promptly exterminated.

Inside each house everyone was preparing for the event. Each person was getting ready, putting on his special garment, his costume. Already people were gathering on the hill...

The woman was putting on her headress, pausing over the water mirror, admiring her reflection in the dim light of the pool, admiring the long feathers, glistening and flowing from her face like hair.

Then she stood up and went to the window where a man stood. It was dark and hard to see now, everywhere the heavy liquid air of the night. They both stared out the window.

A fire had been built at the bottom of the hill. There stood a man, perhaps Arel, perhaps some other member of the Order. His chest was bare, his head and shoulders covered with the mask of some grotesque animal. As though it were some archaic symbol, he nailed something small and white to his door. His hands were gloved to the wrist in blood.

From his window the Twelfth Advisor was looking out towards the purple hills, the velvet black of the night sky.

He was marvelling over conditions that once, every cycle, created the rebirth in the minds of the people. He was marvelling over the mass hypnosis that could cause people's minds collectively to produce something that spectacular. The rebirth with its fireworks of stars spraying out across the sky and swallowing up one's eyes until the actual horizon, the crowd of people, were obliterated.

He was thinking that imagination was really miraculous. He was thinking the very idea was ingenious...he drew his brows together, annoyed. Then he was puzzled. The persistent signal.

The small red light was paging him. Somewhere, something had gone wrong.

On the hill, a hundred people were huddled together against the wind, their eyes searching the sky for some sign. No one spoke. This time they weren't so sure there would be a sign.

At the foot of the hill, a fire had appeared. Thrown up against the flame was the silhouette of something with a man's body and the head of an animal. It was dancing, intertwining with the flames.

One by one, as if moved by some slow wave, every head had turned to watch the display.

There had been a mistake in calculation, the screen admitted. The influence of the Order should have been eliminated sooner.

If the people thought they had the ability to evoke the rebirth, there was no reason for them not to imagine that they could evoke the apocalypse as well.

They would have to be called away from the hill, brought back to their homes.

Inside each house was the glow from the small box, turning the room a strange blue in its light. It had lured some of the people back, but they paced to the window and back, vaguely uneasy. The screen had failed to ensnare them.

The Twelfth Advisor admitted that there seemed to be no alternative. Many people had not returned to their homes. The influence that Arel suddenly commanded had to be removed quickly.

And in the night, the first illumination was not the spit and flash of stars come to announce the rebirth, but the burst of flame.

An inextinguishable shot of bright orange directed at the bottom of the hill where one man danced for the crowd.

Now two fires mingled.

Here and there, at a window, was a white face turned down toward the street, struggling with the dream sleep of the screen, trying to grasp at what was happening.

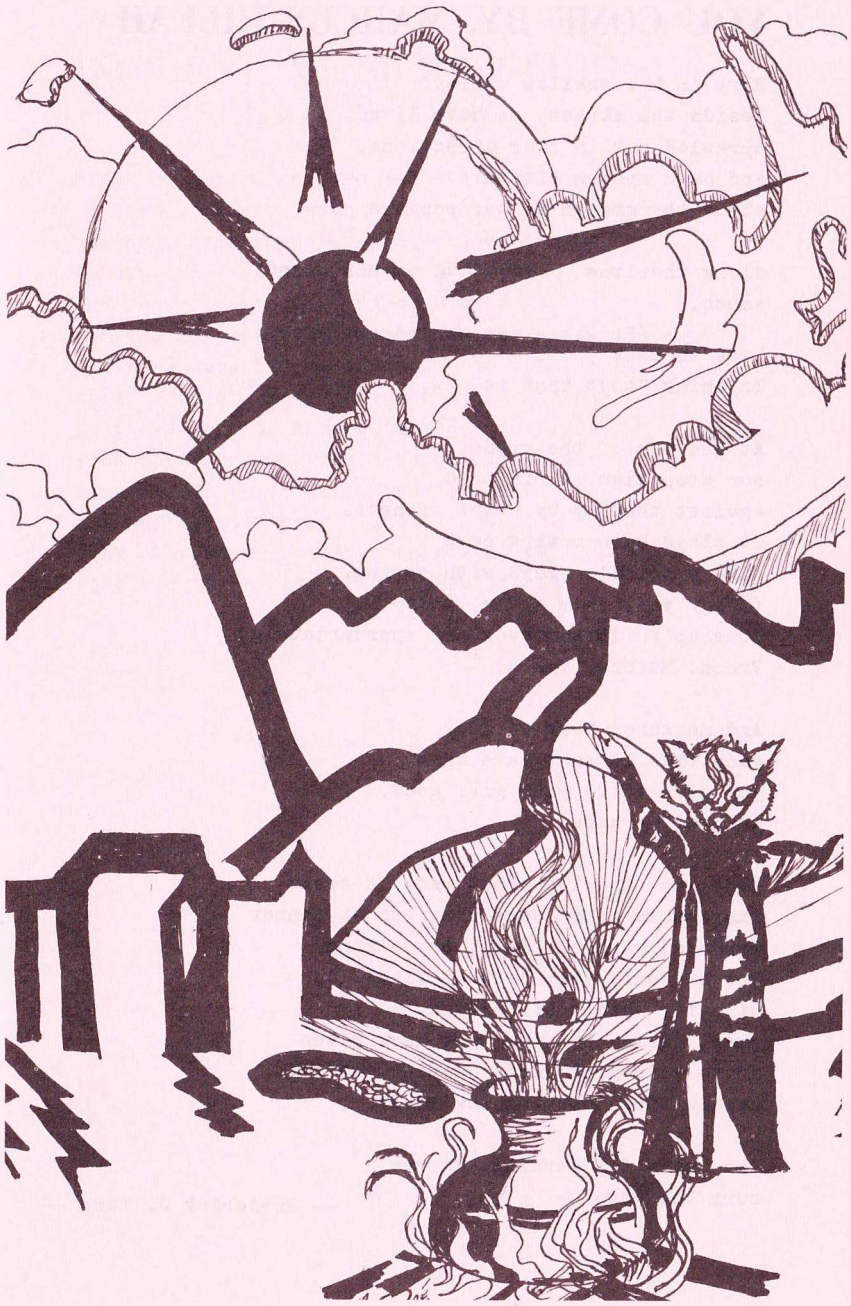
There was some dance of fire beneath their windows. People streaming from each doorway, beckoning their neighbours to come down into the street where the Messiah danced.

The screen was flooded with requests for explanations. The Twelfth Advisor admitted that there seemed to be no reprieve. Below him in the street, a thousand people were running, arms outstretched, to meet the flame.

He was sickened and suddenly dizzy. He reeled, his eyes bathed in red.

Outside, blood poured down the gutter.

From the mob come to bathe in that holy river, one man emerged from the blood and fire of the crowd. And as he left it and fled, he was illuminated in a sudden shot of flames. A man, his arms streaming golden sparks, his head streaming a crown of fire.



YOU COME BY, MARCUS HILEAH

Here in the shallow valley
beside the street, we have lived,
sprawled out in four directions,
and have spoken often
about the growth of our poplars

along the line running north and
south.
(It was a way to measure years
back to back)
To think about that is new.

At the top of the grade,
our stop sign is pinioned
against the sky by waves of heat.
It plays with moving cars
like a spindle plays with string.
(I saw you, once again, today
come up to it and back off appropriately)
Vroom, Marcus, vroom.

And measured back to back
each time it must have meant
you gave it to your girl good,
as now, perhaps?

(and, not knowing about you, it seems
improbable to measure progress at dinner
manners, keeping clean, or talking)
One has only your defunct fleet
of cars: wheels of fortune,
when, coming by, you must have given
it to your girl good: jasmine, saffron,
candle flesh opening new roads.

The roads for burning, Marcus,
burn the town --

-- Frederick J. Tarr --

INCIDENT AT SIERRA CHICA, JULY 2, 1968

Oscar H. Iriart saw two men (things?)
of normal height, with short white hair and red
clothes, semi-transparent legs, motioning
to him. He was only fifteen, so said
the report, datelined Sierra Chica
(that's in Argentina), and when the men
(things) gave him an envelope, he took a
quick look at their 3-legged globe and then
galloped off for home followed by his dog
(the horse and dog had been paralyzed for
several minutes!) in a frenzied fog.
The boy arrived home "like a madman," Señor,
like a berserk postman with urgent mail
that had to be delivered without fail.

-- Walter H. Kerr --

THAT OLD (YAWN) BLACK MAGIC

by

Peter Bernhardt

Mary Stewart, The Crystal Cave, William & Morrow, Inc., 1970, $1.25.

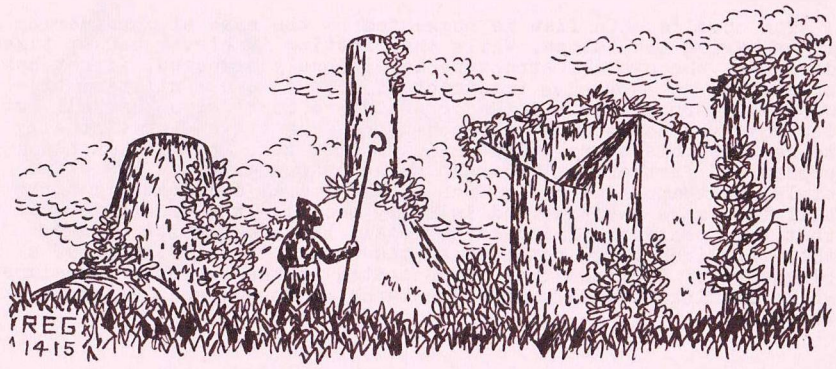
Of all the characters common to fantastic literature Merlin remains the most original and fascinating. Placed among the other supernatural folk, Merlin stands out for his independence and aloofness. He is one of the few magical supermen who never asks for anything in return. Demons demand payment in human souls, witches collect debts in blood; and according to Ovid patronization from the gods is at best a mixed blessing. Merlin, however, is the only cosmic character whose benevolent powers are matched only by his charity. Many authors have explored the Arthurian legend, but while symbolism and theme vary, Merlin usually remains an enigma both in character and performance. Why does the wizard give aid, comfort, education, and protection to young Arthur yet refuse to take his share once his ward/ pupil is crowned? T.H. White's are probably the most prudent and touching accounts of the Arthur-Merlin relationship, yet they fail to give any reason for the magician's self-sacrifice. Merlin is always a symbol, never a complete personality. I believe the only story I ever read in which Merlin was given physical needs and human characteristics was Mark Twain's A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court, where he is pictured as an old faker, greedy for power. Generally, however, Merlin's ethics and morals have been kept spotless by other authors until he becomes just a magic tool to help satiate the knight's or king's desires. Sin and virtue are, after all, for mortals, so Merlin is denied both. If Merlin derives any pleasure or profit through Arthur's coronation we can only guess.

In an attempt to separate the man from the myth Mary Stewart has given us The Crystal Cave, an account of the pre-Arthur days of Merlin. But because the author drains him of any aesthetic or symbolic quality, Merlin has been emasculated. Mary Stewart's Merlin is neither sage, professor, businessman, or symbol of divine compassion. In fact he is extremely dull. He has all the attributes of an early Heinlein hero: several cuts above the normal man, sound of wind and limb, basically ambitious yet a loner with well-developed ESP powers. He is so mundane that Miss Stewart seems to say, "Eat your vegetables, study hard, be polite, practise clairvoyance, and you too can become a prince of England." However the greatest mistake is to keep him celibate. She later explains in the author's note that there is such a strong connexion in legend between virginity and power that she was forced to keep him chaste. But when Merlin finally gets a girl (a sensuous ex-nun) his refusal of her advances sounds more like, "Not tonight dear, I've a splitting headache," than a pious godling resisting the temptations of the flesh. I can't understand why Mary Stewart is so ready to break with tradition on so many points and yet neglect to include any of the natural sexual drives of her protagonist. Merlin becomes an object of pity instead of a symbol of untemptable faith.

The plot is a hybrid of Charles Dickens and Oliver Optic. It is youth against the System of the Middle Ages, but Merlin grows up in a family straight out of David Copperfield. All the stock characters are there, including a domineering nanny, a humourous servant, a gentle mummy, a crabby but good natured grandpa, and an unforgiveably evil uncle named Camlach who tries to do in the young wizard with a poisoned apricot. True to his loner individuality Merlin runs away from home and after surmounting one difficulty after another, makes good. When Merlin is called upon to perform a miracle he usually finds some perfectly logical way to do it. The effect is rather like Jesus wearing pontoons or sending out to Chicken Delight when he is confronted with feeding the masses. The only reason why Merlin succeeds is that the book is peopled with typical Dark Ages stereotypes--and after all, everyone knows that they are afraid of their own shadows. They're always crossing themselves with one hand and warding off the evil eye with the other. At times they are nearly indistinguishable from the movie negroes of the 1930's except they don't scream, "Feets don' fail me now!"

I am not taking revenge on Mary Stewart because she did not keep Merlin as a cute little old man with a flowing white beard, star spangled dunce cap, and owl on his shoulder. This would be like castigating every fantasy writer for reinterpreting a legend or myth. The old characters will change every time an author strikes upon a new way of portraying them. I do object to a book like this that had such a large range and came up so terribly short.

In its concern with atmosphere The Crystal Cave is excellent. The mysterious old English woods, the unsettled and nervous semi-Christianized towns, and the ribald inns are brought to life with much care and perseverance. But a work of this magnitude must be more than displaced nostalgia. All that can be said is that The Crystal Cave is a fantasy without magic and an adventure story without adventure.



" . . . WHOSE GAME WAS EMPIRES"

by

Wayne Connelly

Gordon R. Dickson, Tactics of Mistake, New York: Doubleday, 1971

In fencing the idea is not to strike directly at your opponent with each brief exchange, but rather through a series of such encounters to draw him into a false position, leaving him unwittingly exposed to your final assault. It's a technique described as the "tactics of mistake," and it forms the basis for Gordon Dickson's latest novel.

A brilliant young scholar-tactician, Cletus Grahame, resigns his academic post in the Alliance Military Academy and journeys to one of the Outer-worlds. On Kultis as on many other minor planets the two Earth powers, the Western Alliance and the Eastern Coalition, are continuing their rivalry through the support of opposite sides in a limited war. (The elements of allegory are present clearly, but I doubt whether Mr. Dickson is indulging in anything more than wishful thinking.) By combining the theory of "tactics of mistake" with his own personal field heroics, necessary to the practical execution of that theory, Cletus is soon successful in ending the local conflict.

The war on Lultis, however, is only the first stage--the first exchange--in an even larger, more elaborate, and perhaps megalomanic design. Particularly in the second half of Tactics, it's another games-analogy that inevitably presents itself, the more familiar one so often associated with military minds. For Cletus becomes very much the cold, calculating, unemotional grandmaster, moving people and planets as if they were no more than pawns and castles.

The novel's main flaw is suggested by the ease of considering it as having two halves. While the plotting is clever and at times dazzling, the overall structure is seriously hampered, if not hamstrung, by an excessive treatment of Cletus' early military triumphs. The result is a false or premature conclusion that all but destroys the momentum of the novel, causing the author virtually to re-start his story in the middle. Moreover, Mr. Dickson has emphasized further the apparent break by changing his narrative style and tempo, switching from a quick-paced and dramatic first half to a more sweeping and leisurly second. It's true of course that the "tactics of mistake" stresses the preparation rather than the final move, but even so the effect is almost that of a biography of Napoleon that concentrated on the Egyptian campaigns while dealing summarily with the march on Moscow and defeat at Waterloo.

Still, Tactics does have its strong point: Cletus. All the other characters are merely extensions of this central figure, pawns or less skilled opponents to be manoeuvered and manipulated. Cletus is the superman-surrogate of our mid-twentieth century: the insignificant individual who nonetheless is able to seize destiny and shape it, to re-mould the Old Order into a New. Yet as with all the supermen of the past, there is also something mysterious and even sinister about him. Humanitarian concern and personal bravery are matched with an intense rationalism and cold-heartedness. Cletus can risk his life to ensure fewer casualties among the forces of both sides, yet he can also force a woman to marry him simply to keep her father under his control. The emergence of the sinister side of Cletus from the introductory scene where it is incidental to the final stages where it seems to verge on the monstrous is one of the highlights of the novel.

In summary, Tactics of Mistake doesn't quite realize its possibilities. Its structural weaknesses are too great a burden, even for Cletus. All the same, Mr. Dickson's novel remains several cuts above most space-operas.

WARLOCKS AND WARRIORS

reviewed by

Darrell Schweitzer

Warlocks and Warriors; L. Sprague deCamp, editor; New York: Putnam, 1971, $4.95.

Next to the Western, the heroic fantasy, as written today, is perhaps the most stagnated form of fiction in existence. Plots are severely limited, and few authors have broken free of the stifling traditions that allow for only three or four stereotyped characters, one common setting, etc. In other words, the fiction that is supposed to specialize in unbridled fantasy and world-spinnings has its frame of reference totally set beforehand. It would be possible to start a story like this:

> Once, many centuries ago, long before the sinking of Atlantis, lived a typical Sword & Sorcery Hero, who dwelt in a typical Sword & Sorcery country, and who went on a typical Sword & Sorcery quest so that he might save his typical Sword & Sorcery girl friend from the typical Sword & Sorcery evil wizard, who imprisoned her in his typical Sword & Sorcery citadel, guarded by the usual monsters.

Now anyone who has read more than one or two S&S stories knows what all these things are. Owing to the overall sameness of the stories, the reader can fill images into one from several others.

The hero, of course, is _____ the Barbarian, a mercenary soldier and general adventure-seeking type, who came from the wastes of _____, that desolate, barren land just the other side of the far northern kingdom of _____. These lands, of course, are roughly bronze age in development, and every town is exactly the same, so the author doesn't have to bother to describe any of them. Each one has a tavern wherein brawnily-thewed warriors, the most brawnily-thewed of which is Our Hero, gather to swap stories of their derring and their do. There is a uniform dress code. Every hero and every other character of importance must wear a loincloth or something reasonably similar, and a long flowing cape. Shirts and chain-mail are optional, but however attired, the hero must show off his impressive muscles and look like something from a Frazetta cover. They dress like this all the time, even in winter, even if they go to the Arctic (see the Brak story in the first issue of Worlds of Fantasy and the cover to Conan of Cimmeria) and how they avoid pneumonia is what makes them heroes, I guess. Needless to say, everyone carries a sword all of the time. The Quest, which forms the central part of something like fifty percent of all S&S stories, involves our hero's travels, either alone or with a small group (why heroes must go by themselves against mighty empires I'll never know), in the course of which he becomes separated from them, captured, and fights half a dozen irrelevant Bad Guys and monsters before resuming the story proper.

The Evil Wizard is a scholar of the black arts,and a worshipper of the dreaded Elder Gods or some equivalent macrocosmic nasty, who is obsessed with power and who has raised up a great army that is now ravaging the fair land of _____. He usually conjures up a bewildering array of demons in the process. In the end he is slain by the hero, of course, The hero's companion is optional, and he is a lesser wizard, whose spells serve to get the hero out of a few tight spots, but who must rely on the hero's valour at the very end.

Juggle these elements around a bit and you have a new story of Kothar the Barbarian by Gardiner F. Jakes. The author doesn't have to be at all imaginative or creative, because the formula neatly provides him with everything. And unfortunately, most authors in the field today fall into this trap, because it takes a truly superior writer to do anything original in such a genre.

In assembling Warlocks and Warriors, the very first S&S hardcover anthology ever, editor deCamp faced a formidable task of finding enough worthwhile stories by different authors to fill a single volume. If he could have had five Dunsanys, three Howards, and six Leibers he might have made it, but he couldn't. To add to the difficulties, he had to include only stories that weren't in his previous paperbacks.

Consequently there is much cliché and imitation, not to mention pastiche. Ray Capella's "Turutal" is a rather confused narrative, structurally a disaster, set in the world of Robert E. Howard's Conan, and it imitates the master point for point, copying each superficial detail and almost completely omitting the colour and drive of the originals. Howard may look simple, but he's quite hard to imitate well. The problem with most of his followers is that they imitate his faults and not his single virtue: his incredible narrative power. To top that off, Capella adds faults of his own, things which Howard would have found unthinkable. The hero of the story appears briefly at the beginning, then is off stage for most of the development, and pops up again to pull off the climax. This hardly makes for empathy.

Henry Kuttner is present with an entertaining but trite Conan imitation (written shortly after the master had died and the readers clamoured for more) called "Thunder in the Dawn," which follows the Previous S&S outline rather closely, with the slight exception that they're rescuing the hero's brother, not his girl friend, and the heroine accompanies the hero on his adventures. It also contains elements of H.P. Lovecraft and a scene lifted bodily from C.L. Moore's "The Scarlet Dream"; nowhere is anything original to be found.

Of the two stories just discussed--both included undoubtedly on the premise that since there are so many such tales going around, you might as well read a couple of them--the Kuttner is by far the better, in that it actually does possess some faint traces of epic qualities.

In an attempt to present a little variety, deCamp also includes a story that owes everything to Dunsany. Lin Carter's "The Gods of Niom Parma" shouldn't be damned as "imitation," since it is admittedly pastiche. Don't misunderstand, it is a fine story, but this beautifully polished parable shows only snatches of any originality. With all the real Dunsany material around, I must decide to put aside the pastiche till later.

For Carter this is an unbeliebably good story, but I suppose the reason for its success is that it imitates such a superior writer, and has to come out better than his godawful Howard/Burroughs imitations. Still, I want to seem him write a Lin Carter story and not somebody else's.

Besides the traditional imitations, deCamp has wisely included a healthy selection of the Real Thing. Although they are superficially the same as rehashes, there is a certain freshness about them that makes them immeasurably superior to things like the Capella piece. At best, that is. Originality does not guarantee quality, and like the imitations, the originals run the full range from brilliant to hopeless. In the former category is Lord Dunsany's "Chu-Bu and Sheemish," one of the innumerable Edge of the World fables. I don't know how this will stand up to a reader unfamiliar with Dunsany, since the tales really need numbers with which to build a mood (do not read Dunsany in anthologies, read him in collections), but I found it positively delightful. It really isn't Sword & Sorcery by the common definition, but I suppose it is in here by merit of its setting in a totally imaginary universe. (Perhaps we should dispense with the term Sword & Sorcery and call it all Secondary Universe fiction. This way the name wouldn't imply the clichés and writers might be able to accomplish something.)

A rather unfortunate member of the disaster category is Robert E. Howard's "Hills of the Dead," a pathetically weak Solomon Kane story (set in Africa) that is obviously very early Howard. The plot is minimal, character motivation is ludicrous, and it is hopelessly over-written, badly executed, and the "hero" just dwadles around while a witch-doctor resolves the conflict. It also contains tired rehashings of the standard Lost Race story that was gasping its last in Howard's day, and other Howard clichés. (The heroine makes her entrance chased by a lion--this has occurred with other beasts in countless other Howard yarns; "The Goddess of Bal-Sarnoth (Weird Tales, Nov. 1931) comes to mind immediately.) It is a shame that one of the great masters of the heroic fantasy is represented by such an uncharacteristically bad story.

The real highlight of the book is Fritz Leiber's "Thieves House," a Grey Mouser tale of the early variety (1943) and not at all like the tired things of recent vintage. Zestful, touched with charmingly light humour, it proves why Leiber is the only important S&S writer still alive and writing.

As noted earlier, most S&S stories suffer from either a weakness of plot or lack thereof. All of the remaining stories in the book are that way. C.L. Moore's "Black God's Kiss" is technically an excellent story, marked by vivid imagery and honest characterization, and it might be very exciting to an uninitiated reader, but I was rather irritated when I found it had exactly the same plot (with slightly different trappings) as "The Scarlet Dream," "The Black Thirst," "The Tree of Life," "The Quest of the Star Stone," and probably other C.L. Moore stories from Weird Tales I haven't read. In each of these yarns, Northwest Smith, Jirel of Joiry, or both (as in the case of "Star Stone") travel into another dimension or some equally eerie lair of the unearthly and fight a battle with formless evil things, who are destroyed after a certain amount of (admittedly impressive) verbal magic, rather than a logical story progression. "Black God's Kiss" is one of the very best of these, and you might as well read one, so this is a good choice.

Clark Ashton Smith's "Master of the Crabs" is supposedly a minor work, but Mr. deCamp's usage of it in such an important anthology is highly questionable. Were I to be generous I'd call the story mediocre. It is hopelessly verbose, the sentences being huge and cumbersome, and such things as economy and rhythm are completely absent. In addition, there is no characterisation beyond names and occupations. The nominal hero and villain can't even be called cardboard: they're complete blanks. Almost everything that can be wrong with a story is wrong with this travesty--clumsy and undisciplined use of language, puppets instead of characters, and general dullness.

In "The Valley of the Spiders" by H.G. Wells, three unnamed persuers go into a mysterious valley after unnamed persons for hinted at reasons, and encounter a bunch of spiders who glide about on huge cobwebs, ensnaring and devouring their victims whenever there is a sufficient wind. Admittedly it is effective, especially if you have the common phobia of spiders, Hardly first rate Wells, it is still better than most S&S.

The book is concluded on a modern but depressing note, with an example of a new emerging variety of S&S, the Tolkien imitation. Roger Zelazny's "The Bells of Shoredan" is his version of the "Paths of the Dead" sequence in Lord of the Rings. I personally consider that to be one of the weakest parts in Tolkien's epic, but Zelazny's imitation isn't even a shallow echo.

It is a double shame, really, because the first two Dilvish stories, "Road to Dilfar" and "Thelinde's Song," showed some traces of vigour and originality, and it looked like we were about to get a genuine S&S writer. They were beautifully done, but obviously fragments of a larger epic. "Shoredan" totally lacks the polish and poetry of the earlier two, and unlike them it is written in a crude pseudo-archaic style, complete with Thee and Thou dialogue and sentences like, "Then did he lay upon the three bells of Shoredan a weird," and it degenerates into a pitiful imitation of LoTR, both stylistically and plotwise. It's even far beneath the fourth Dilvish story, "A Knight of Merytha," which appeared only in a fanzine.

Is this all the Sword and Sorcery field has to offer? I'm afraid so, in short fiction anyway.

Perhaps an essential weakness in the idea of a Sword and Sorcery anthology is that this type of writing almost always requires great lengths to build up any epic-sense, and in the short story it is almost always going to appear shallow and weak. Obviously it would have been impossible to develop the cumulative power of Lord of the Rings in twenty thousand words or so. And the Conan stories only become effective when read in large lots, so that they build on each other in mood and atmosphere.

Modern Sword and Sorcery is indeed in a sorry state, since most of the masters, with the exception of Leiber, are either dead or not writing, and there is no new generation to replace them. These men who churn out novel after novel for the paperback markets would undoubtedly be writing Westerns if they could sell them better. So we are stuck with stale ideas being rehashed by third-rate writers, or the good writer (Zelazny) not trying. The field of Sword and Sorcery is in a state of total stagnation. (However, I am glad to see that quality reprints of the old classics are firmly established and not about to leave us.)

This anthology may make money, but I don't think a second one would be feasible. Warlocks and Warriors is a good place to start in this type of writing, and since if you've read one Howard imitation you've read them all, it's a good place to finish. If Mr. deCamp had included an Elric story, perhaps one of his own, and a better and more representative Howard, he might have been able to produce a complete library of the Sword and Sorcery short story in a single volume.

WHAT IT'S NOT ALL ABOUT

by

Jeffrey Anderson

Sam J. Lundwall, Science Fiction: What It's All About, New York, Ace, 1971, 95¢.

Sam J. Lundwall is a young (under thirty) broadcasting executive and folk musician with a life's interest in science-fiction. He published the Swedish fanzine Science Fiction Nytt and his first professional publication came in 1964 with his Swedish language bibliography of science fiction and fantasy. Science Fiction: What It's All About was originally published in Sweden in 1969 but at the urging of Donald Wollheim, Lundwall translated and revised the volume into an English language edition. In an introduction, Wollheim praises Lundwall for his language skills and even sees this as offering an "enlightening perspective" on the English-dominated field of science-fiction. He sees Lundwall's approach to English as being that of one who has to "study in order better to appreciate the ideas contained therein." In short, he endows Lundwall with objectivity that is finally, I am afraid, not there.

The book begins with a chapter on the old problem of defining the genre. Most efforts made so far in this direction have been self-defeating, and Lundwall contributes relatively little to our enlightenment. He acknowledges the difficulty (as all have) but somehow, before carting out his definition, he digresses into an amusing description of the subdivisions of the genre and then into an account of the early Gernsback Modern Electrics days and the origin of the label "science-fiction." Here, as elsewhere, Lundwall makes a brief case for Swedish firsts, which is understandable and excusable. But when Lundwall at last gets to the defining, he continues in the old dualism of "straight" science-fiction and its slightly crazy little brother, fantasy. Science-fiction is then seen as proceeding "from...known facts, developed in a credible way...whereas the author of a fantasy story starts with an idea and builds a world around it" (22). That definition is neither new nor finally useful, but it serves to inform Lundwall's book in giving it at least some orientation. Lundwall accounts for s-f's former unpopularity and current increased status to its fundamental acceptance of change, which is no new point either, but worth noting again.

The second chapter summarizes briefly the early days of s-f, and Lundwall is properly critical of dragging in every imaginative writer since Homer in order to vindicate s-f. In the next two chapters, he examines Utopias and anti-Utopias, rightly discerning the intolerance inherent in both. Plato comes in for a hard time; surely The Republic does not offer the most appealing of societies, but calling him "the old Nazi" (45) isn't particularly instructive. And it is at this point that Lundwall's promising study begins to deteriorate, shifting away from sound literary criticism and into sociological rhetoric.

Anti-Utopian fiction is introduced via a discussion of the pessimism in so much s-f. The assumption that "man is obviously a killer by instinct" (67) certainly figures large. Lundwall fails, however, to connect this assumption of inherent evil to the satiric in s-f. Satire in order to exist must assume man's depravity, but also his improvability. Instead, Lundwall launches off on an emotionally-charged sermon about the modern hunger for violence. Robert Heinlein especially and his Starship Troopers come in for Lundwall's wrath. To say that Heinlein describes his militaristic society "with obvious enthusiasm" (67), that this is Heinlein's Utopia, where "what few dissenters there are in the story all see the light before the story ends" and where "even the despised father of the hero, a rotten, cowardly pacifist, grabs a gun and earns his citizenship the hard way," is assuredly a simplistic distortion of a complex novel. For Lundwall the book's only redeeming factor is Heinlein's "seductive" logic. Here is no evaluation of the validity of his logic, but rather an exceedingly illogical attack on its truth-value; Heinlein's reasoning is seductive because it leads us away from Lundwall's capital-T-Truth. The charge of elitism has often been made against Heinlein, and certainly there is ample justification. But this is not so hideous as Lundwall seems to think. While Heinlein is expressing some of his socio-political ideals in Starship Troopers, he is also careful to recognize the difficulties of his system. Heinlein is no idealist; he sees the improbability, indeed, the human unworkability, of his meritocratic system, and the irony and satire of Starship Troopers (as of so much else in Heinlein) comes in the tension between this realization and the belief that only in such a meritocratic, elitist society can human progress be assured. Lundwall's insistence on taking Heinlein in the worst possible way is both puzzling and disturbing.

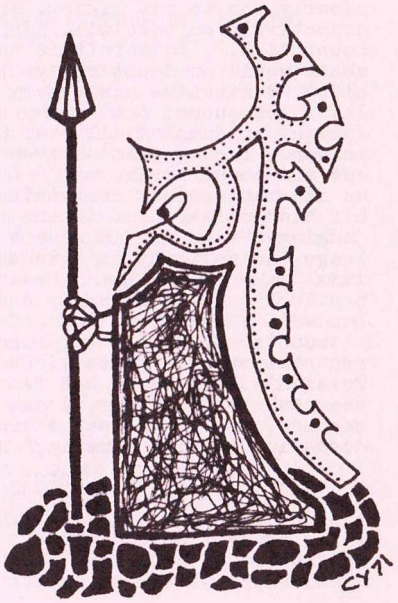
The next two chapters deal with fantasy and then with the speculative in s-f, but I shall consider the seventh chapter, "Women, Robots and Other Peculiarities," before these because logically it should follow the discussion of Utopias.

This chapter shows Lundwall's persona losing its individuality almost completely as he mouths the rhetoric of the modern liberal outrage and vigorously takes s-f to task for the sorry role it has relegated to women characters. Admittedly, women haven't progressed far beyond the dependent-housewife image in s-f. But I think Lundwall comes down on s-f a bit harshly here. One must consider the culture from which it came; it is no worse than anything else written between 1920 (say) and 1970. Defensible it is not, but it is certainly understandable. It avails nothing to stand and yell about it. But Women's Lib isn't the only subject in this chapter; the other is sex (and how ironic, says the Liberationist, that Lundwall should link women with sex while trying to be liberal about it all). In general, Lundwall feels that there isn't enough sex in s-f, and whatever sex exists there is juvenile. Heroic fantasy particularly comes to the block, not only for its violence but also for its "immature, infantile sex where the copulation is the sword-fight and the orgasm is the death of the opponent" (159), whereupon Lundwall launches off into a lot of Freudian nonsense about de Sade and Leopold von Sacher-Masoch and "sword-penises." But it isn't only Conan and gang that come in for it.

Lundwall quotes from Anne McCaffrey's "A Womanly Talent" the passage where Lajos and Ruth perform a rather mechanical coitus, with needles and graphs registering the completeness of ecstasy.

"That was incredible. The most prodigious performance I have ever witnessed," one of the white-smocked voyeurs gasps when the meter dance has subsided. I agree with him, but for quite different reasons: I think it's sickening. Anne McCaffrey is in every respect a thinking woman and an intelligent writer who surely can do much better than this, and I am inclined to regard this example as what I would like to call the s-f contamination, for this way of reducing the sex act to a mechanical, emotionless, electronic copulation is an attitude found everywhere in the genre.

(154)



One could almost guffaw at this point. Like so many would-be activists these days, Lundwall is totally without a sense of humour and therefore is unable to discern the satire the author obviously intended. A more charitable reason for Lundwall's obtuseness would be the language problem. His knowledge of English may be extensive, but it must not be sufficient to enable him to discern those subtleties of tone that we see as satiric.

In the same chapter he throws in a handful of pejoratives (like "White Anglo-Saxon Protestant," "racist"), the likes of which he carries over into chapter eight, which deals with mass-media s-f like Buck Rogers, Barbarella, and Star Trek. He also repeats his misreadings of novels by saying that in Bradbury's Martian Chronicles, "the Martians are depicted as some kind of degenerate creatures, unable to keep their civilization going when the Terran immigrants come" (178). On the contrary, Bradbury seems at times to lament the fate of the Martians--he treats them with tender understanding, not malicious judgment.

Returning to chapters five and six, omitted earlier, I wonder why Lundwall placed them where he did. According to subject matter, these should come after chapter eight. But there is discernible, I suppose, some vague, half-realized concern for the socio-political progression that almost forms the book's real subject.

Chapter five, "The Magic Unreality," contains an inadequate discussion of the history and nature of fantasy, but this is excusable in a general-readership work of this sort. What is not so excusable is Lundwall's ever-present intolerance. Fantasy is clearly not to his liking, and while he tries to examine it as objectively as possible, his antipathy shows through. His account of H.P. Lovecraft is not too bad, though some of his judgments would no doubt enrage true believers. Cabell receives some bland, derivative commentary that is vaguely appreciative and at least innocuous. But heresy of heresies, Lundwall takes special delight in jumping all over Tolkien. He quotes William Ready's infamous (and unjust) statement that Tolkien is "a most intolerant and conservative man." LotR, to Lundwall, "is the protest of an old man against everything new, and the fairy tale brings all his hidden fears out in the open." I'd question the integrity of judging the author in such a fashion, and I'd particularly challenge the validity of this sort of criticism, all too common in this politicized age. Ready's study is controversial, ergo popular, but it certainly doesn't rate as literary criticism. Lundwall's apparent liking for that study is nonetheless understandable. In true form, Lundwall expresses alarm over the current interest in fantasy. He attributes this interest largely to Tolkien's influence, but "looking at the state of the world--the real world--today, I can well believe there are some deeper reasons, too. There was a similar interest in heroes and mighty deeds in Hitler's Germany," et cetera ad absurdum.

Lundwall's sixth chapter, "Out in the Unknown," considers the speculative element in s-f and the history of the conceptual expansion of space and time. Except for a few more pages of diatribe against Heinlein and some narrow views of Bradbury and the aesthetics of s-f, this chapter is so far one of the better discussions of the speculative in s-f.

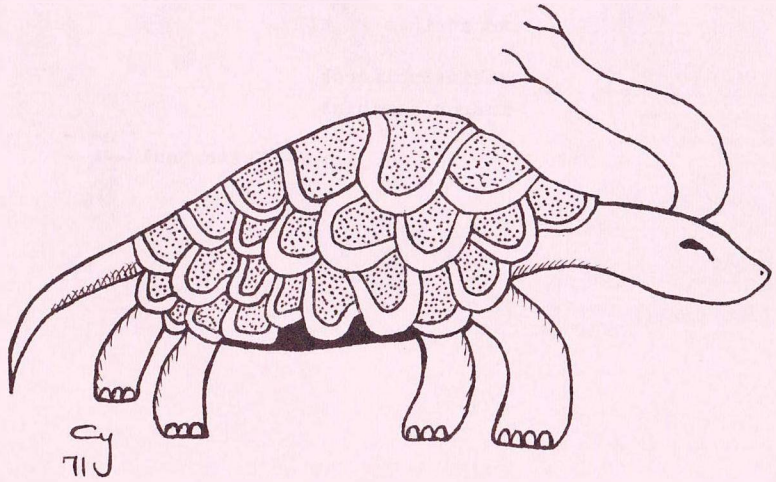
Bradbury, however, also is "very reactionary" to Lundwall, and while he praises Bradbury's prose style and his influence in making s-f more "literarily acceptable," he criticizes Bradbury's "weak plots and ideas" and finds a certain "fear of the future" in his works. What really bothers Lundwall, though, is that

> Bradbury is one of the few science fiction writers who have been accepted in literary circles...It is, of course, nice having the literati on one's side, although /in/ putting the emphasis--as in Bradbury's case--on qualities springing not from science fiction's own unique merits but on literary merits present in any best-selling slick fiction, I think they are doing the genre a great disservice. (122)

Lundwall regards the effort to make s-f more respectable as undesirable, for this, he feels, would cause s-f to lose its distinctive qualities. I'm in partial agreement with him here, but I think it is possible for s-f to improve beyond "slick fiction" standards without losing its ingeniously speculative and entertaining nature. Lundwall quotes a long passage from Amis and Conquest's introduction to Spectrum 2 which expresses weariness with aestheticism but enthusiasm for entertaining literature. But there's cosmic oversimplification in all that. I'm not suggestion that s-f become "arty," but its need for richer, aesthetically finer language and structure, and for deeper character portrayals, is very great. As Lundwall himself notes later (157) in discussing Theodore Sturgeon's concern with characters rather than gadgets, "I have an uneasy feeling that this is what makes Sturgeon great..."

In the last three chapters, Lundwall gives a brief history of the s-f magazines and of fandom, and concludes with a discussion of the future of s-f. This discussion is well-informed and generally good--certainly more cautious than the rest of the book. While we may bristle at his criticism of the New Wave, he nonetheless makes some critically valid points.

Sociocultural criticism tends to run off in ideological passion all too often, revealing more of the critic's personal beliefs than the relationships of the art in question to society. It is hard to do this sort of analysis well, i.e., in balanced, proper perspective, especially when dealing with contemporary social phenomena. But it is still a valid field of critical effort. What I object to in Lundwall's book is his proposal to tell us "all about" s-f, after which he gives us only one approach--and a seriously flawed one. The soundness of Lundwall's criticism is questionable largely because of his failure to perceive the apparently obvious satire in certain works, but also because of the trite expressions of social concern to which he gives voice. His book will no doubt gratify certain activist segments of the reading public searching for "relevance," and his controversial qualities will probably engender much discussion (and increased sales). S-F fans of every possible mold will find something here to enrage them, but only a few things to stimulate them. This is most certainly not a book for an s-f fan to use in his personal evangelism program, though; it will only make sceptics more sceptical, detractors more confirmed in detraction. If popularization and exegesis were Lundwall's intentions in writing this book, he has most decidely failed, and it perhaps this particular failure that is the most regrettable.



TATOO

You decided to have my name in your skin,
one day when you were travelling.
It was the east biting into your arm.
It was Niagara with its waters sharpened
deciding to fall on you.

-- Linda Wikene Johnson --

SPRING

Strings attached

eleven boys
fly orange kites

no strings at all

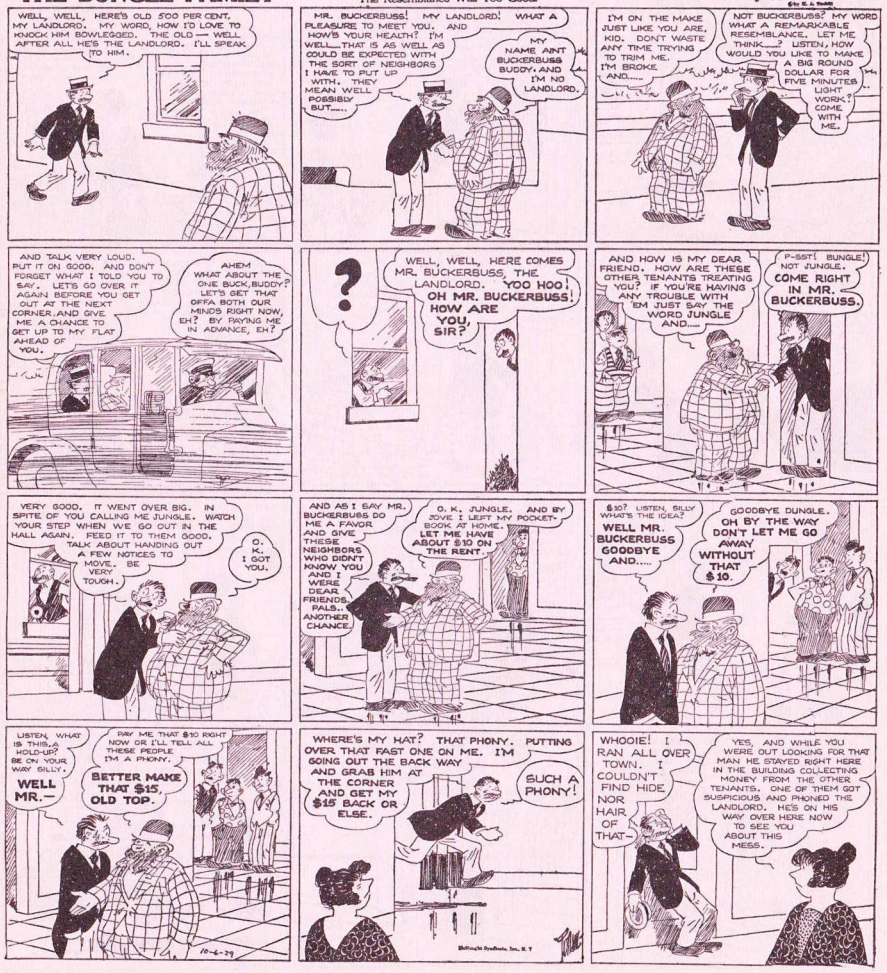
robinsrobinsrob
insrobinsrobins

-- Keith Moul --

THE BUNGLE FAMILY

The Resemblance Was Too Good.

By H. J. TUTHILL



THE BUNGLE FAMILY

An Evening with the Law.

By H. J. TUTHILL

FROM A CORNER TABLE AT ROUGH HOUSE'S BY BILL BLACKBEARD

Note: This is the second in a series of chapter outlines excerpted from a work in progress on the history of the comic strip.

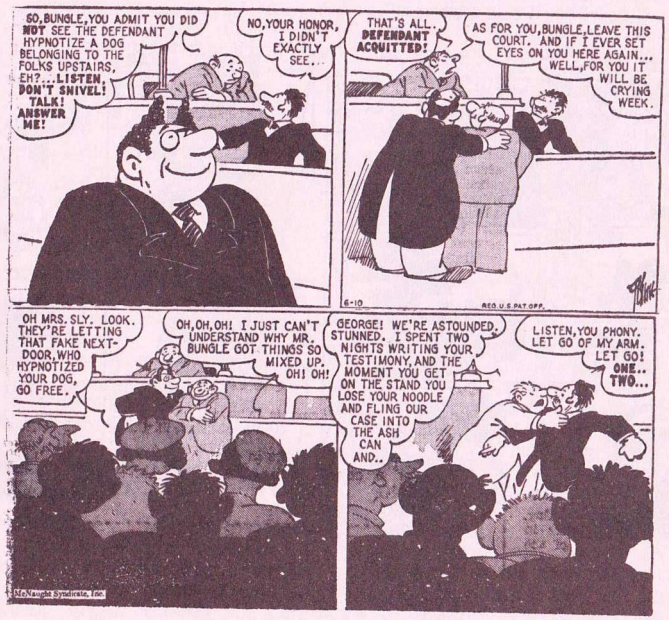
The theme of domestic bickering which was introduced into the comic strip in the 1910s via such variegated works as George McManus' Bringing Up Father, Clare Briggs's Mr. and Mrs., and Sidney Smith's The Gumps, struck a responsive chord in the family-centred public reached by the newspaper comics, and soon the new feature syndicates were initiating and promoting as many squabbling couples as the market could absorb. Billy De Beck started his career with such a strip and George Herriman pushed the bicker button frequently in The Dingbat Family. But by the early 1920s, the need for such works seemed surfeited; working-girl strips were popular and being pushed (Winnie Winkle, Somebody's Stenog, and Tillie the Toiler were typical); and the belated appearance of yet one more comic about a quarreling duo--from a small, new syndicate as well--must have struck most newspaper feature editors as very ho-hum stuff indeed. Yet something about the coarse, vulgar reality of this new strip, H.J. Tuthill's acerbic Home, Sweet Home, held the attention of a proof-scanning editor here and there, and enough papers took the strip on trial to make it viable at the outset. By the mid-1920s, the strip--renamed The Bungle Family-- was in hundreds of newspapers, most readers apparently enjoying Tuthill's blackly mordant wit, hilariously grisly domestic dialogues, and brutally funny pratfalls and fistfights, as simply so many more amusing variations on the routine family ruckus pattern.

But for a coldly harsh, sardonically realistic portrayal of the American middle-class marriage at its Janus-faced, bullying, opportunistically amoral worst, little in the literature or drama of the time (except for Lardner and Strindberg) can surpass Tuthill's strip. This gritty, claustrophobic epic of a middle-aged office hack named George B. Bungle and his acid-tongued spouse, Josie (with an occasional sour sideglance in the daily strip at their post-teen daughter) was commonly acted out in the arena of the radiator-heated, fourth-floor apartment they called home (as did millions of Americans of the time), but the scene not infrequently shifted into the dreary nearby streets and the equally drab homes of neighbors and friends. It was a joyless world Kafka or the Dickens of Bleak House would have recognized with a shudder, and its lowering unwholesomeness was reflected in the gray, scratchy style with which Tuthill limned these dismal activities--a style which even the bright hues of the Sunday pages could not reconcile to light and colour.

Yet, oddly, as the years passed, Tuthill would more and more frequently introduce prolonged elements of wistful fantasy into the strip--ghosts, black magicians, cannibals, talking animals, enchanted artifacts--without ever losing touch with the grim reality of George Bungle's acid-etched world, or even the crisp, cynical dialogue endemic to it. Toward the end of the strip, in the 1940s, Tuthill moved ever more strongly toward fantasy, as if the surreal were the only way out of the grim round of daily existence ("Come away, O human child..."), but this increasingly marked alteration of content alarmed some editors, who demanded a return to the formalized family sparring they preferred, and Tuthill--who owned his strip--quit the field (not once, but twice!) and retired in disgust.

Today, the vigorously bitter, yet touchingly fey Bungle Family strip is generally forgotten, the victim of stereotyped audience response to the presumed content of the stereotyped strip form in which Tuthill worked. Yet the conceptual integrity, character realization, and imagination evidenced in The Bungle Family from beginning to end is of so high a quality that the Sunday pages and daily episodes of the strip seem as fresh and forceful today as the day they were drawn. Perhaps, in our jaundiced times, we understand them even better than did the readers of Tuthill's day.

THE BUNGLES - - - - - - - - By TUTHILL



THE BUNGLES - - - - - - - - By TUTHILL

These later daily episodes (6/10/39 on preceding page, 6/12 and 2/2/39 here) indicate the swing between domestic bitterness and outré, slapstick fantasy of this closing period of the strip.

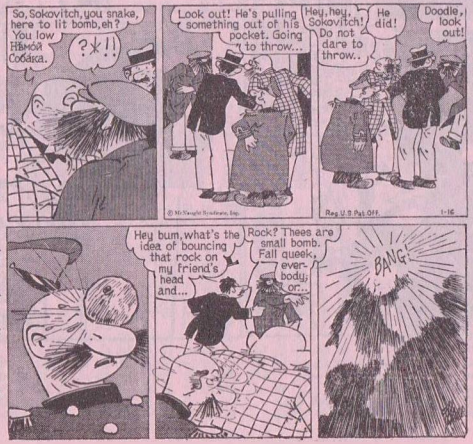
(Note the black eyes on the passing husband in the first panel, top episode.)

BUNGLES By H. J. TUTHILL

The dread squitch is invoked (2/6/39).

BUNGLES By H. J. TUTHILL

Zooie is a magical African dwarf who is a pal of George's Uncle Gumbo; Zooie's "squitch" curse is a highly variable spell usually cast in rancour -- see following page for an example.



THE BUNGLES

Violence and suspense, too: little wonder feature editors who wanted a "family" strip were baffled (1/16/37).

OPERE CITATO

BY HARRY WARNER JR.

We don't hear much about beautiful people anymore. But the beautiful fanzine is definitely with us, and the jury is still out on whether its beauty could cause it to be guilty of bad effects on the entire fanzine field.

The defense has strong arguments. This is the age when people are picture-oriented. Most professional science-fiction magazines and some books are afflicted by such poor artwork that fanzines must fill the artistic vacuum. Fanzines have built up a past reputation for amateurishness partly because they usually have looked crummy, and more attractive fanzines could lure readers even to the publications that make little effort to attend to their graphics.

But a public prosecutor could bring some evidence into the case, too. It takes considerable money for vast quantities of photo-offset or electrostenciled illustrations and much time to prepare careful dummies of the text. Persons without ample stocks of either commodity may find it difficult to win favour with a new fanzine. The best-looking fanzines are often the least frequently published titles, because of time lapses consumed by postal negotiations for artwork. There can be few of the do-it-yourself fanzines in the future, if strong artwork is an essential, increasing the odds against the emergence of modern equivalents of past one-fan publications like Quandry and The Acolyte.

I don't feel strongly for either side in the debate. But let's look at a random sampling of the fanzines that are in the middle, intentionally or by accident, of the current pitched battle involving graphics.

Bill Bowers' Outworlds may be the most methodical, fully thought-out of all the fanzines that place stress on visual impact. Bowers has been adopting a controlled experiment in his editing, testing a long series of formats and picture-text relationship, even binding separately or sending along as loose separate sheets any written material that doesn't fit nicely into the balance he has sustained in his issue. Issues 3.2 and 3.3 came in the same envelope, and you'll have to wait for a long winter night to hear someone explain Outworlds' numbering system. They typify the virtues that have made Bowers' fanzines famous: a barrage of characteristic Grant Canfield full-pagers in blue ink on the covers, sandwiching more Canfield art on the black-ink-on-blue-paper interior pages, for one issue. The other issue puts similar emphasis on Steve Fabian, unified through a folio based on Alfred Bester's stories and ideas, with half-size front and back covers to cope with the tall, thin shape two of the illustrations take. Riding in the same envelope are Outworlds 8.75 and a separate unnumbered publication, which provide respectively letters of comment and poll results.

Granfalloon's evolution might typify the change that has come over the best fanzines since the recent emphasis on the best available artwork and innovative page layouts. It started like an older breed of fanzine, and has evolved to one of the most visually attractive in existence. The fifteenth issue has some special virtues. Rotsler sketches are reproduced bigger and blacker than you normally see them in fanzines. The electrostenciled illustrations by some other artists provide solid black patches which no fan would have dreamed of evoking from a mimeograph even a few years ago. Most of the written things in the issue are started off with a bang in the form of titles embedded in apropos illustrations, some of them hilarious. Linda Bushyager, the editor, sticks pretty close to one size and colour of paper and gets considerably more wordage into her issues than most fanzines of this ilk, by eschewing the enormous margins some publishers prefer and by using elite typeface.

Energumen seems to have mislaid some of the artists whom it introduced to fandom. But its twelfth issue continues to do the spectacular graphic things that those debuting artists helped to inspire. There's one special section for the art of Jim McLeod, one of the few people in fandom who knows the importance of the lines that are left out of an illustration, and pages consecrated mostly to text include small but incredibly detailed drawings by Terry Austin to accompany an article on the libido of Marvel comics characters. One heading combines a halftone reproduction with a mimeographed sketch for atmosphere. Yet another neat trick is in the covers: both are collaborations between Ken Fletcher and Jim Shull. They seem to have progressed most of the way to attainment of one of those symbiotic states that you used to find described in Ted Sturgeon's science-fiction.

Those are all basically mimeographed fanzines, with some photo-offset additions here and there. Algol, however, is photo-offset throughout. Andy Porter makes less effort to integrate text with pictures, preferring forthright one-column format for text with pictures filling out the bottom or beginning the top of the pages. But the eighteenth issue may be a pathfinder in another respect. It doesn't limit its art sources to artists, as most fanzines do. It uses white text on black background to show some matters connected with an article by Bester, together with a constellation map that is also printed in reverse, and it uses photographs both to illustrate a Bob Silverberg article and to put on display the faces of Algol contributors.

What's a nice ditto fanzine like MRU doing among all these expensive, luxury-type publications? Well, it offers something that no English-language fanzine has ever monkeyed around with very much: deliberately and inventively posed photographs which are then montaged and juxtaposed to create the merriest covers you'll find anywhere in fandom. This is the one hundred twenty second issue. Dieter Sachse manned the camera. The front cover displays an assemblage of fans who are chained, handcuffed, and otherwise immobilized in every position dear to the hearts of horror movie directors, inside and outside a castle-like building. Some of the same fans star on the back page, where a collection of photographs taken at a Vienna convention are dressed up with balloons and captions: "And a half pound of pepper now," one member of a trio bent over a saucepan suggests, and someone surrounded by old pulps scoffs at Playboy: "I know where there's better pictures." Urgent warning: the text is all in German, even the Jim Blish Eastercon speech.

Outworlds: Bill Bowers, P.O. Box 87, Barberton, Ohio 44203; 60¢ per copy or four for $2.

Granfalloon: Linda Bushyager, 111 MacDade Blvd., Apt B211, Sutton Arms Apts., Folsom, Pennsylvania 19033; 75¢ per copy or three for $2.

Energumen: Mike and Susan Glicksohn, 32 Maynard Ave., #205, Toronto, Ontario; 75¢ per copy or three for $2.

Algol: Andrew Porter, P.O. Box 4175, New York, New York 10017; no single issue price listed, four for $3.

MRU (Munich Round Up): Waldemar Kumming, 8 München 2, Herzog-spitalstrasse 5, Postscheckkonto München 14 78 14; one deutsche mark per copy plus postage or ten for ten DM, postfree (the easiest procedure is an international money order for several dollars and watch the label for expiration notice).

Most fanzines are also available without cost for certain reasons, such as trades, published material, or letters of comment, but editors should be queried for individual policy in these respects.

SYMBIOSIS WITH A HAMSTER

Uncage a hamster, miss his whereabouts,
substantiality melts into surmise:
a rustling from the pantry props the door
ajar, the faintest stir or crackle
unhinges cabinets, canisters flip their lids
drawers gape, we dare not light the oven
for fear of genocide. The outside door
lets in an inch of night, refuge from tomcats
that haunt our guilty predatory dreams.

Once let the inside out, the outside in
a strangeness burgeons at the edge of sense:
faint phosphorescent trails along the bathtub
pale splotches migrant up the panelling
the clack and whirr of something beetlelike
behind the baseboard, in the pulsing dark
a flicker from the closet, fauna seeping
into the ducts and drains and flues and faucets
into the nooks and crannies of the mind.

Something is nesting in my loveletters
a fungus flowers on my colour slides
something reads my books, distills their wisdom
into a thimbleful of dust. Ah Darwin
the meek inherit still. In glad succession
creatures unnamed by Adam pullulate.
The mod is broken, love--let us lie down
and clap our legs together like cicadas
to sing the coming of an alien spring.

-- Ann Deagon --

Selected Letters

Flat 1, 26 Eaton Terrace
London, SW 1, UK

To The Editors:

I am most impressed with Pamela Sargent's review-essay of Mailer's Of a Fire on the Moon, in your February 1972 issue. This is a sensitive and perceptive analysis of Mailer's book but seems in many ways to go beyond Mailer; brilliant as he is, he represents for me a voice of the past, an isolated "I" setting himself apart from and basically unrelated to his "subject." He does not sense how he is as much a part of the space exploration program as the men more immediately involved in it--how his consciousness interprets and adds to the totality of that adventure.

I don't believe, however, as Miss Sargent does, that the technological faith is "a Kierkegaardian faith." Kierkegaard--one of my favorite philosophers for many years, during my prolonged adolescence--had an important function in history, but the existential doubt, the existential distrust of reason (and science) are finished now; we are easing into a unity of visions --philosophical, scientific, poetic--that assure us of a future far more energized and calculated than the past.

Your readers are probably familiar with the extraordinary speculative-philosophical works of Colin Wilson (The Philosopher's Stone especially is brilliant); one of his persistent themes is that man is a creature of life and daylight, synthesizing all fields of thought, and "his destiny lies in total objectivity."

My own writing is quite antithetical, superficially, to Wilson's, and to science fiction and "speculative fiction." I have been trying in book after book to bridge the gap between the utterly believable naturalistic, historical world and the "speculative" world, which sees the universe as external mental matter. It is extremely difficult, but challenging, and in a way delightful--for my readers to realize, someday, that they have been reading speculative fiction all along, without knowing it.

Sincerely,
Joyce Carol Oates

I'm glad Dr. Oates confirms my own earlier preaching--on the incorporation of science into the new aesthetics and on speculative fiction as relating the naturalistic and inner worlds.// It seems to me that Mailer is isolated in the sense that astronauts, "like real Americans," talk in code or computerese, saying (p.41),"That's not a prerogative we have available to us" (instead of, "We can't do it") or referring to "peripheral secondary objectives" (instead of "other choices"). For,a writer like Mailer uses words to convey emotion , not (p.29) "like pills...to suppress /it/."

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237 South Rose St.
Bensenville, IL 60106

Dear Mr. Sapiro,

The Feb. '72 issue was not bad overall, though I of course have my usual share of complaints. At Lunacon, Clarke, del Rey, Bova, et al. took the position that NASA has not been giving sufficient emphasis to the economic benefits of the space program. I am not sure what proportion of these benefits are due to the manned space program: perhaps critics could reasonably adopt a position favorable to near-Earth space applications but against deep-space exploration and manned flights, rather as do the bad guys in Anderson's (rather poor) story "Nothing Succeeds Like Failure." But if this is not the case, or if proponents of continued space exploration can blur the issue, such a dollars-and-cents strategy might seem more productive than the "leap-of-faith" approach that Pamela Sargent advocates. At least it would be my guess that the American public is still smarting under the memory of the "leap of faith" they made for Johnson and its consequences, and that they are not presently willing to repeat the experiment.

In a way it's a pity I had to wait a year to read Ursula LeGuin's Vancouver speech, but on the other hand, a year ago I hadn't read Tolstoy's What Is Art?, and so I could not have recognized the superiority of Mrs. LeGuin's own answer...

David Engel tries to be informative and adulatory at the same time, and in my opinion he fails...

Not that it particularly matters, but have you any idea why Blish only now is commenting on Moskowitz on Kuttner, six years after the fact?

One comment on the letter column: I cannot at the moment concoct any reason why I should have prior claim to anything to do with The Einstein Intersection. However, I hereby assert that if any such claim does exist, I refuse to Sandra Miesel the right to the title "Another Orpheus Sings Again." Some people have to be protected from themselves: Mrs. Miesel's remarkable verbal facility is maintained within human levels by the fact that she has a tendency toward academic dryness exceeded only by that of Riverside Quarterly's senior editor.

Sincerely,
Patrick McGuire

I don't see how unmanned space flights (except for TV's artificial satellites) can economically benefit anybody--though their scientific importance, as in the discovery of neutron stars, is immense.// Nobody who read your editor's account of his brewery inspection tour in Milwaukee would accuse him of dryness--academic or otherwise.

1227 Laurel Street
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

Dear Leland,

The two related lead articles in #18 are undoubtedly among the most useful and/or important pieces I've seen in RQ...their subject matter, the "purpose" of science, art and s-f, is something I have been pursuing for quite some time, and I believe this is also...of prime interest to s-f people and s-f itself.

Norman Mailer, as well as his "friends" Gore Vidal and Truman Capote..., has always seemed rather annoying to me, his "angry man" syndrome coming on a little too strong to be taken seriously; his self-pity seems to be a self-maintained act, and I become tired of his type easily. However when he decides to look outside of himself, as he does in Of a Fire on the Moon, he can create a vivid, perceptive and intelligent portrait of his subject. Of course he doesn't leave himself out of his narrative, but in the case of the Apollo book the setting is enough to shunt his personal agonies into the near background, where they provide a good counterpoint to the unfolding of this great evolutionary step in man's history. The flight of Apollo 11 cannot be separated from its contemporary world, and sometimes I think it was rather a shame that such an incredible feat came at such a distracting time. Our focus right now is set on the earth and the endless problems we face upon it, and most of us barely have time to realize what is in fact out in space...Mailer has helped to point out that there is indeed a universe outside of man, and whether or not it is aware of us, its exploration may serve as a tool for use in the contemplation of ourselves. He may not have meant it consciously, but I believe he is saying, despite his own doubts, that if we do not leave earth (with our spirit if not with all our bodies), we may never have the chance to do away with the sicknesses we find here...

Ursula LeGuin is doing beautiful things with s-f, and she knows what it's for. Her speech is wonderful in its simplicity of form: her meanderings all have a common ground, and her theme is worked out clearly and concluded well...

Man is slowly realizing that he is a product of a self-created environment, that his world is drastically different from that of his ancestors. We are living in a science fiction world...Future shock is the knowledge that our destiny is in our hands, and a great many of us are afraid. Only through exploration of the forms of science and art can we learn to control and banish our fear, to see the beautiful order that is the universe, and to ultimately acknowledge to ourselves that through these forms and the understanding of that order, we can change our world...

Yours,
Mark Mumper

Trouble is, Apollo 11 was itself a distraction--from U.S. atrocities in Mai Lai and elsewhere.// Fortunately, the ultimate benefits from space-flight are independent of its first motivation, which is not insight but vanity, i.e., national prestige.// The perception of underlying order won't solve all our problems. As Ben Franklin once said (in a letter to the French Academy), it's hard to think about planetary harmonies when one is distracted by a rumbling in the bowels.

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17 Riverside Crescent
Toronto 21, Ontario

Dear Leland,

RQ 18: all said and done, not too much to say. Interesting, but not very provocative...Sargent and LeGuin, when they finally get to their conclusions, seem to be working alomg complementary lines. Unfortunately, though, I found that both these articles suffered seriously from nibbling at the edges of s-f for too long. (I am glad though, that you published the LeGuin, if only to have her verbal "inspirations" captured in print.)

David Engel on Vonnegut was welcome, but I had difficulty finding a central focus. The quote by Vonnegut from Esquire: "Hell, I never gave you any religion at all and everybody's got to have some. Especially now" seems to me precisely the point of his work, but it is brought in so late by Engel, and then as a sort of "See, what did I tell you?" De gustibus non est etc... Also, I always find it hard to reconcile a discussion of God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater lumped in with the rest of the canon. This novel is simply not s-f--unless the idea of a wealthy man suddenly giving away his money is construed as the height of fantasy--and too often gets read as such. Yrs,

Reid Powell

As to nibbling at the edges, Apollo 11 surely was a science-fictional project--while LeGuin considered s-f in a wider context that included everything from a paramecium to a Tolstoy.

8744 N. Pennsylvania St.
Indianapolis, IN 46240

Dear Leland,

So the RQ still lives? Here we'd been thinking you'd been fragged by a disgruntled student or succumbed to the rigor of the Northern Winter.

I did notice and appreciate your exemption of my work from criticism directed at Tolkien freaks (but surely the offensive ones were undiscriminating mundanes?). The expanded version of my articles for you are still scheduled for Mythlore...Orchrist has been academized, so I just sent them a long study of The Broken Sword in terms of Norse myth and literature. Nice thing about s-f criticism is that it's an on-going education. I am continually learning new things in order to study s-f as the good writers must in order to create it.

Your researches into Ye Olde S-F Tale must be tedious, rather like rummaging through piles of potsherds in order to construct a dating sequence. Necessary, but better thee than me.

The distribution of comments on the previous issue once more demonstrates the perennial power of Heinlein's name to arouse controversy. They're waving the bloody shirt at me in vain, though. My interest in RAH is nil and ever shall remain so.

This issue hangs together unusually well with the three main articles connected by examination of the purposes/goals of man and his deeds. For my part I find kindly Mrs. LeGuin's views infinitely preferrable to Vonnegut's. But let us reflect for a moment on the latter individual, the Hoosier Boy Made Good. Indianapolis still follows the career of her departed son with morbid fascination, duly recording all his slurs. He himself wouldn't be too welcome here after sprinkling his novels with cruel (and supposedly false) portraits of family and boyhood friends. Moreover, according to report he would be less than welcome in Troy, New York for similar reasons. So we may as well ignore his sneers at s-f (for example in the NET show Five Tomorrows) as falling into this pattern. Alas, by mocking s-f and denying ties with the field to which he belongs by any reasonable literary criterion, he's won the mainstream fame and fortune barred to finer talents--fill in your own names. (Never a hardback Cordwainer Smith to date!)

Aside from genuinely wanting to comment, I feel I ought to loc RQ to keep your ads honest.

Cordially,

Sandra Miesel

But if undiscriminating mundanes become Tolkien freaks, the difference between these categories is hard to find.// As Gerard O'Connor notes this issue, Vonnegut, while repudiating s-f, relies upon s-f rhetoric. Since there are so many legitimate s-f writers compared to whom Vonnegut "can't write for sour apples," his defection needn't concern us.

Felsenstrasse 20
2762 Ortmann, Austria

Dear Leland:

I have a question for Mr. Blish: What is the exact difference between him and Sam Moskowitz in some of their statements? Specifically:

"It also exhibits one of his major critical weaknesses, the overclaim, as when he characterizes...a 1936 Kuttner story as 'undoubtedly one of the half-dozen truly horrifying short stories in the entire gamut of literature, all of literature.' In order to arrive at this judgement Moskowitz would have been obliged to read the entire literary output of the human race, in some six thousand languages" (RQ, V, p. 140).

And James Blish again, in Black Easter, p.7: "There have been many novels, poems and plays about magic and witchcraft. All of them that I have read--which I think includes the vast majority--/my emphasis/...classify without exception as either romantic or playful." Now there probably don't exist novels, poems and plays about magic and witchcraft in six thousand languages--but surely in some dozens if not hundreds of languages and dialects. Now I am aware that Mr. Moskowitz pretended to criticism, whereas Mr. Blish wrote an Author's Note, and just wanted to praise himself (a liberty on my part? a piece of mind-reading?)--nevertheless I want to salute Mr. Blish as a master linguist!

I also fail to see that it may be morally reprehensible to write your own dust-jacket copy, as is implied in Mr. Blish's concluding sentence: that would depend upon the actual contents of the dust-jacket copy, it appears to me; and what is more reprehensible: writing your own dust-jacket copy, or including blurbs for William Atheling, Jr. in your books or reviewing your own books under the pretense of being somebody else? I think his morally high attitude ill becomes a writer of Mr. Blish's practice.

Although most of his criticism of Sam Moskowitz is highly justified, some of his comments strike me as suicidal;/ as /when he says (in "S-F: The Critical Literature," S-F Horizons, 2, p. 43) that "...a critic with an ear would have recognized that my story /"There Shall Be Not Darkness"/ is a schoolboy pastich of Dracula." Yet the story is included in The Best S-F Stories of James Blish; and if I told Mr. Blish what I think of a writer who counts "schoolboy pastiches" among his "best" stories, he would be fully justified in calling it a libel, pure and simple.

What both Blish and Moskowitz have in common is regrettably their utter lack of a sense of humour and their disturbed relationship with simple logic.

Truly yours, Franz Rottensteiner

Mr. Blish's allusion to the "vast majority" rather than "all" saves him from the sin of Overclaim. With this critic we can still accentuate the negative--Mr. Moskowitz' lack of proofreading and his dubious examples of literary causation--without eliminating the positive: that he did the research and made the errors, while the rest of us avoided the latter simply by not doing the former.

RR #2, Winona
MN 55987

To the Editors:

With regard to David Engel's useful thematic study of Vonnegut's novels in your February issue: Canary in a Cathouse is not another Vonnegut novel, as Dave said, but is a collection of Vonnegut's short fiction originally published between 1950-1958. This collection was a Goldmedal original, circa 1961. However, Vonnegut followers need not search for it, because the recent (1970) Dell reprint, Welcome to the Monkey House, recollects all but one of the stories in the earlier collection. The uncollected story, "Hal Erwin's Magic Lamp," is a parable against materialism that suggests that faith in the right sorts of things (a pear tree, a life of service to humanity) will be rewarded, while the reverse of faith, greed, will be foiled.

Sincerely,
Orval A. Lund, Jr.

A greedy person also needs faith--in his ability to acquire money. If Vonnegut says a rich man (i.e., a successfully greedy person) is unhappy, I'd answer that that kind of unhappiness is preferable to any other.

2387 Overlook Road
Cleveland, OH 44106

Dear Leland,

As soon as I began to read the many letters you published about my article "Omnipotent Cannibals" and to get ready for my defense, I realized that you have answered the more important points and that you have done so more ably, with more punch, and certainly in fewer words than I could have done it.

Perhaps it's easier to be forthright in somebody else's behalf. Had I to speak for myself, I would be too bashful not to hedge a little. I would plead not guilty to the charge of "sophisticated psychometric prudery," but I might concede that I ought to know Heinlein's other works better than I do, and that I should have differentiated between "character" and "superego." Here of course, I could plead that great excuse, lack of space.

May I take a few lines, though, to add an interesting fact that has recently come to my attention? A group of tribes in the interior of New Guinea, totalling about 35,000 people, were long plagued by a particularly malignant disease, kuru; it kept slowly, horribly, and regularly killing a large part of the population. These people practiced "endo-cannibalism" (which in this case is the same custom that I referred to as "necrophagy")--i.e., they ate their dead. They also used parts of the cadavers, particularly fat and brain tissue, to smear their skins. About ten years ago, under the influence of government agents and missionaries, they switched to more conventional methods of disposing of the dead--and kuru began to disappear. A medical team under the leadership of Dr. D. Carleton Gajdusek of the National Institute of Neurological Disease and Stroke in Bethesda, Maryland, studied the situation and concluded that kuru is a virus disease, only seemingly hereditary, actually transmitted from those who died from it through particles of the brain tissue smeared on the skin of the living and penetrating into the blood stream through the nostrils and other mucous membranes.

Please do not think that I object to necrophagy as unhygienic. Everybody to his taste. I just never acquired this special taste; but give me time! I am able to learn, and if I read enough books like Stranger in a Strange Land, I may yet...

Best regards,
Robert Plank

I once rejected a story about a vendor of human meat because the idea was not original--and the story not fiction, as can be verified in this very city. So the moral is (to coin a word): Hygienity repudiates necrophagy--i.e., don't eat 'em: bury 'em!

1327 Leavenworth St.
San Francisco, CA 94109

Dear Leland Sapiro,

It's been a long, long time since I bicycled a couple of miles to see what the latest issues of Astounding Science Fiction and Fantastic Adventures had in store for me. And, frankly, since, I kinda lost interest in the field. As a kid, I couldn't wait for "the future" to happen and now, here it is upon us, looking very much like the past. Only, maybe, more regimented. According to the authors of Teg's 1994--An Anticipation of the Near Future, which Swallow Books has just published, the next couple of decades will be even more automated.

The book itself is really strange. It consists of reports sent to various people by Teg who is, I gather, some sort of student who visits various places. The whole thing is absolutely styleless and descriptionless, almost as if it was written by a computer. That makes it quite different from most of the tales written by the likes of C.M. Kornbluth, A.E. van Vogt, and Theodore Sturgeon. Robert Theobald and J.M. Scott, the co-authors, are not in the league with Kurt Vonnegut or Ray Bradbury either. As I say, the whole thing, report after report, is machine written. There are no defined characters, no plot, no described locales, just Teg, whoever Teg is supposed to be, moving from place to place, sponsored by the Orwell Foundation, which seems to be set up to commemorate that 1984, like, never happened. But then again, which makes the whole thing more mysterious, why is there all the report writing?

As I understand things, there are a couple of standard science-fiction type / forms: the bug-eyed monster story, the invaders from other planets, the time-travel tales, and, among them, the utopias. I guess Teg's 1994 is a utopia. Or maybe, an anti-utopia. I doubt whether it will rank with the classics of its kind by the time 1994 rolls around (if we're all still around).

Tom Mcnamara

The foregoing was sent as an informal book review, not a letter.// As to s-f type/forms, the standard one--to judge from stories sent here--is that of human unhappiness in an age of mechinization (such MSS always written on a typewriter, the typical product of a mechanical age). So I guess it was inevitable that there be such a complaint written not just with but (as if) by a machine.

1012 Lake Forest Drive
Claremont, CA 91711

Dear Leland:

Jim Harmon's column raised more questions in my mind than it answered. It is unfortunate Mr. Blackbeard placed Harmon in the position of having to defend old children's shows on the radio. Why should anyone have to justify his own personal preference of entertainment, either current or past?

The point Blackbeard seems to have missed is that those who enjoyed the shows such as "Terry and the Pirates" or "Jack Armstrong" did so not because they were on the level of, say, a Norman Corwin piece on the dedication of the UN, but merely because they were exciting. And, as Jim has pointed out, they more often than not had a moral. I have to admit I enjoyed myself when I saw "Airport," knowing artistically it didn't measure up to the profound emotional experience that was 2001 or Silent Running.

Blackbeard falls into an all-too-common trap; judging pure entertainment on its artistic merits. These shows he speaks of were not aimed at the thinking adult, but at the child. And as children's entertainment / they / should be judged by children's standards. As children's entertainment, they rank higher than anything I've ever seen on the tube in the 60's!

Happy listening,

Joel Bellman

Blackbeard was saying that certain grade-A works--e.g., "Thimble Theatre" and "I Love a Mystery"--can be enjoyed by children and adults, and lower grades only by children.// For easily-guessed reasons, radio s-f buffs are urged to write our correspondent at once.

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80 Auzerais #6
San Jose, CA 96110

Dear Leland,

In the Feb. '72 issue Harry Warner mentions that H.P. Lovecraft is enjoying a vogue in France now and that Poe was appreciated in France before he achieved lasting fame in the USA.

Poe was greatly admired in 19th century France and this was largely due to the work of Baudelaire in translating Poe into readable and poetic French. In fact some critics claim Poe is best when read in the French translations.

I think something of this sort has happened to HPL. The French versions of Cthulhu and Co. must be eminently more readable than their English counterparts. All that remains is for someone to translate Lovecraft back into readable English.

Regards,

Lafcadio Miroku

To justify HPL's prose style would require more space than the letter, so I'll just refer to our Symposium and, in particular, Fritz Leiber's comments.// Any such re-translation (to take seriously what's meant otherwise) would lose the essence. To see why, record on tape the sentence,"Lovecraft studied Edgar Allan Poe" while reading it backwards: "Op Nal-la Rag-de deid-uts T-farc-vol." Then play the tape backwards. You'll recover only a distortion of the original sentence.

WE ALSO HEARD FROM--

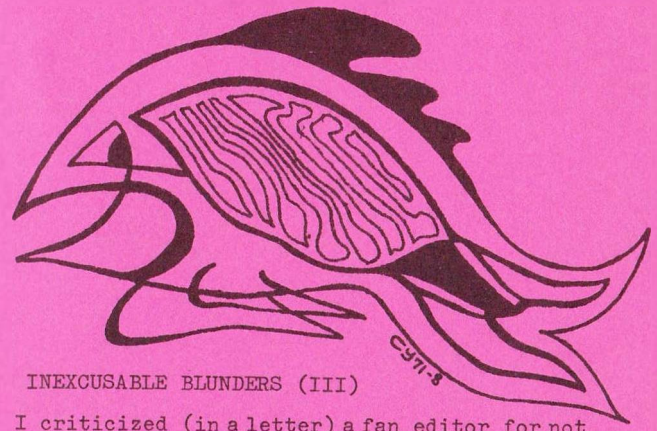
Cornelius Sommers (45 Charles St, Georgetown, Ontario), who agrees largely with David Engel's article on Vonnegut, whose pessimism "...is like that of some...anti-utopian writers... yet Vonnegut talks not of the terrible future but of the hopeless present." /// I think this is why Vonnegut isn't an s-f writer: he doesn't convey this terrible future, but "uses" it to deride the present.

Wally Stoelting (5 James St, Wilder, VT 05088), who thought"Blish on Moskowitz on Kuttner was excellent" and believes that "Garth Danielson should be more sure of his facts--Conan isn't even a DC comic. I'd like to know more of why he considers them bad."///The big indictment of DC was Bill Blackbeard's in RQ 17, and it'll be interesting to see reactions to his (forthcoming) column on the Conan strip and its deficiencies.

Eric Lindsay (6 Hillcrest Ave, Faulconbridge, NSW 2776, Australia), who enjoyed the pun / in Joe Christopher's review of Hays' Disappearing Future symposium / about Edward Mishnan's "distinguishing future societies (F-S) from other Science Fiction (S-F), which is clever at least initially." But he feels "Mr. Blish is in error when he mentions 'the entire literary output of the human race in some six thousand languages.' While there might be this many tongues, most languages are not written. This is, of course, nit picking, but then so are a few of Mr. Blish's comments." /// Still another classification is required for languages that are written, but never by their speakers--as with the African Mangani and the new world Indians.

RQ MISCELLANY

(continued from p.167)



INEXCUSABLE BLUNDERS (III)

A while back, I criticized (in a letter) a fan editor for not reading his own magazine (which had one article that claimed the first costumed super-heroes coincided with U.S. entry into World War II, and another--in the same issue--that noted how "Superman" began in '38, three years before the U.S. entered). But RQ 18 contained Jim Blish's remarks on Sam Moskowitz' carelessness with titles--e.g., his listing of Horror Stories magazine as "Horror Tales"--and the alert reader will have noticed that my own "Cliché" article repeats this error on p.108. So Randall Larson and Lee Sapiro both get an "F" for sloppiness. Larson's Fandom Unlimited--774 Vista Grande Ave, Los Altos, CA 94022--is nonetheless recommended to RQ followers (or leaders) who once enjoyed, or would have enjoyed, Astonishing Stories, Famous Funnies, Weird Tales, or allied publications.