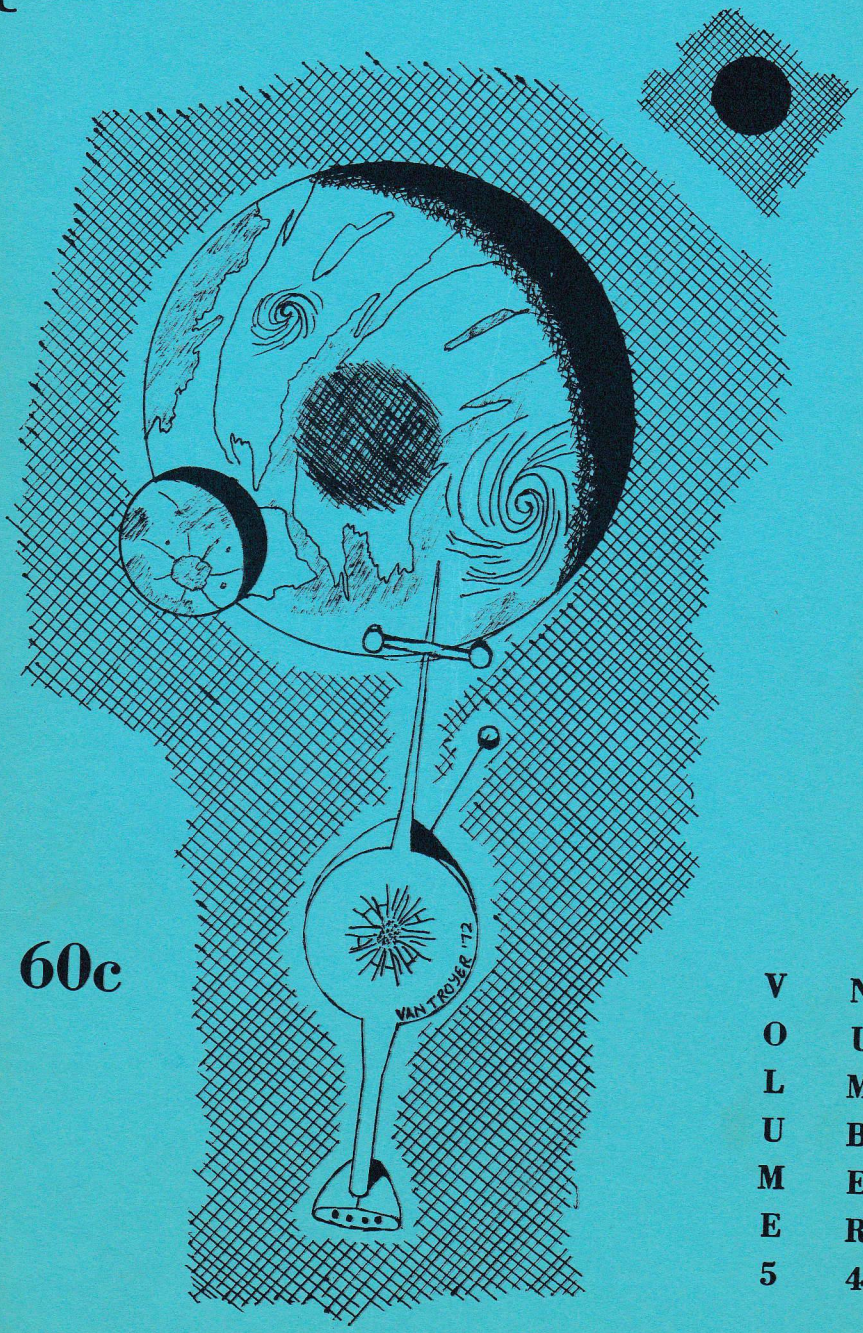
RIVERSIDE QUARTERLY



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RIVERSIDE QUARTERLY

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Editors: Leland Sapiro, Jim Harmon, David Lunde
Bill Blackbeard, Redd Boggs, Jon White

Send poetry to David Lunde, 1179 Central Ave, Dunkirk, NY 14048, and other correspondence to Box 40, Univ. Station, Regina, Canada.

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RQ MISCELLANY

BEER NIGHT IN CANADA

Introduced this issue are two new Regina artists, Kirsten Cameron and Jeanne Duff, both met as a result of neighborhood drinking parties. These drawings, then, represent my conscientious efforts to reduce Canada's malt surplus.

THE DRACULA KLAVERN

An item that has aroused local interest (from the 25 October Leader Post) is printed below.

Vampire a fantasy

Spokesmen for the city police denied Wednesday that a prowler nicknamed the "vampire" was loose in the city.

Recent reports on a local radio station have stated that a man described as looking like a vampire has been prowling in city residential areas.

A spokesman for the police criminal investigation division said there was no proof that such a person existed.

"We've had hundreds of calls and we've checked out each one without coming up with any kind of confirmation," said Inspector Jack Scott.

He said the police had received many complaints from parents who claimed their children had been attacked or scared by a man who looked like a vampire.

"The whole thing started in early September when some girls working late at the Carnival Drive-In saw a man looking through the window at them and thought he looked like a vampire," the inspector said.

"Since that time all kinds of people have reported seeing him but we've investigated and we can't substantiate this."

Inspector Scott said he was afraid that if the matter was "blown up" further, some person might decide to actually become the vampire. He said this was particularly likely with the nearness of Halloween.

"At the present time, everything would indicate that this vampire is a fantasy and we hope it won't become real."

Another conjectural topic is offered by two want-ads from the 9 November Post. One simply said, "Ku Klux Klan information: P.O. Box 2248, Calgary, Alta.," while another, from the same address (and on the same page), gave details: "Single? Age 18-25? Work as paid Klan organizer." Correlations are risky -- but I'll guess that some neighborhood tot, seeing a white-sheeted enclave in a back yard, ran home with an incoherent "ghost" story that was amplified by credulous parents, circulated about town as a tale of vampires and similar creatures, and finally relayed to the city police.

But if this Dracula surrogate really exists, I think that he deserves a grant from the Canada Council, which has subsidized much sillier projects than this (such as the Vancouver Town Fool, several years ago), to continue what seems a valiant effort to recall the terror films of the 1930's.

(continued on page 351)

Science-Fiction and the Mundane Egg

by

Wayne Connelly

(York University)

Aton, somewhere, was crying, whimpering horribly like a terribly frightened child. "Stars--all the Stars--we didn't know at all. We didn't know anything. We thought six stars in a universe is something the Stars didn't notice is Darkness forever and ever and ever and the walls are breaking in and we didn't know we couldn't know and anything--"

Someone clawed at the torch, and it fell and snuffed out. In the instant, the awful splendor of the indifferent stars leaped near them.

On the horizon outside the window, in the direction of Saro City, a crimson glow began growing, strengthening in brightness, that was not the sun.

The long night had come again.

(Isaac Asimov--"Nightfall")

The swift night of the Himalayas was now almost upon them. Fortunately, the road was very good, as roads went in that region, and they were both carrying torches. There was not the slightest danger, only a certain discomfort from the bitter cold. The sky overhead was perfectly clear, and ablaze with the familiar, friendly stars. At least there would be no risk, thought George, of the pilot being unable to take off because of weather conditions. That had been his only remaining worry.

He began to sing, but gave it up after a while. This vast arena of mountains, gleaming like whitely hooded ghosts on every side, did not encourage such ebullience. Presently George glanced at his watch.

"Should be there in an hour," he called back over his shoulder to Chuck. Then he added, in an afterthought: "Wonder if the computer's finished its run. It was due about now."

Chuck didn't reply, so George swung round in his saddle. He could just see Chuck's face, a white oval turned toward the sky.

"Look," whispered Chuck, and George lifted his eyes to heaven. (There is always a last time for everything.)

Overhead, without any fuss, the stars were going out.

(Arthur C. Clarke--"The Nine Billion Names of God")

One minute it was Ohio winter, with door closed, windows locked, the panes blind with frost, icicles fringing every roof, children skiing on slopes, housewives lumbering like great black bears in their furs along the icy streets.

And then a long wave of warmth crossed the small town. A flooding sea of hot air; it seemed as if someone had left a bakery door open. The heat pulsed among the cottages and bushes and children. The icicles dropped, shattering, to melt. The doors flew open. The windows flew up. The children worked off their wool clothes. The housewives shed their bear disguises. The snow dissolved and showed last summer's ancient green lawns.

Rocket summer. The words passed among the people in the open, airing houses. Rocket summer. The warm desert air changing the frost patterns on the windows, erasing the art work. The skis and sleds suddenly useless. The snow, falling from the cold sky upon the town, turned to a hot rain before it touched the ground.

Rocket summer. People leaned from their dripping porches and watched the reddening sky.

The rocket lay on the launching field, blowing out pink clouds of fire and oven heat. The rocket stood in the cold winter morning, making summer with every breath of its mighty exhausts. The rocket made climates, and summer lay for a brief moment upon the land...

(Ray Bradbury--"The Martian Chronicles")

During a discussion at the 1971 Toronto Secondary Universe Conference Joanna Russ confessed she was unable to read "Nightfall" without coming close to tears, experiencing, as she put it, "an emotional exaltation not unlike religious awe." Her impression was supported by Philip Klass ("William Tenn"), who recalled his own stupefaction and wonder upon reading the Foundation trilogy. The cause was not particular to Asimov, however. Both critics agreed that a similar effect was produced not only by such Arthur Clarke epics as Childhood's End but also, though in a more lyric mode, by many of Ray Bradbury's stories.

They were speaking, I suspect, of science-fiction's celebrated "sense of wonder"; however, Miss Russ and Mr. Klass both chose to call the effect "sublimity."

What of the nature and origins of this sublime peculiar to science-fiction? A comment of Klass's might well serve as a start, for he observed that science-fiction sublimity was a form of "manned intellectual content with excitement." Joanna Russ quickly agreed with what was apparently an impromptu definition, choosing only to rephrase it as "a fusion of intellectual contact with excitement." Both these definitions, I believe, suggest the cast of the true science-fiction sublimity. I suggest further that its affinities are not with the traditional Longinian sublime, but with the eighteenth century sublime as introduced by Thomas Burnet in his treatise, The Sacred Theory of the Earth.

In 1692 the Royal Society sponsored the Boyle Lecture "to prove the truth of Christian Religion through physico-theology"--one must remember that such men as Boyle in chemistry, John Ray in natural science, and Newton in mathematics and astronomy wrote their scientific works in support of religious orthodoxy. Thomas Burnet was yet another of these devout scientists. A scientific history of the earth's creation, his Telluris Theoria Sacra (1681) was written to buttress Christianity, harmonizing its theology with much of the new geodesic learning. However, its effects were to a large extent ironic. In its English language version, The Theory of the Earth, it became one of the most indispensable items in eighteenth century libraries -- particularly (one suspects) "romantic" libraries -- but it did so principally on the strength of its novel and essentially secular approach to sublimity.[2]

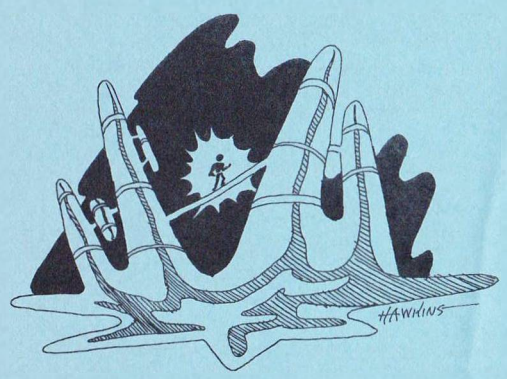
Burnet's remarkable contention was that the earth at one point existed in eternity as a quasi-Platonic form, an ideal worldly model that he called "the Mundane Egg." A perfectly smooth and uniform spheroid, this earth-form contained sealed within its core two immense pools of fire and water. Then, approximately six thousand years ago, about the same period as the biblical cataclysm, this absolute globe left its place in eternity and entered into the dimensions of space and time. It was under the extraordinary tensions, however, that its surface buckled and cracked, creating the unevenness of texture that has been described since as "mountains," while permitting the two vast reservoirs to begin erupting to the surface where the water formed into "oceans."

Accordingly, Burnet further maintained that when men now feel wonder in beholding these same mountains and oceans, they are being reminded subconsciously--in our modern terminology--of eternity and of the Mundane Egg. In other words, the ultimate perspective forming the basis of sublimity is here being provided through the direct apprehension of sensory objects, that is, notably without the intercession of God. It appears, then, that an altogether new concept of the sublime is emerging with Burnet, ironic in its secular implications, for it exists entirely within the compass of the physical universe and its perception within the human mind.

Burnet's scientific creation of the earth does more, though, than just provide a physical and subjective basis for sublimity. In displacing the Garden of Eden, it also accomplished the inadvertent negation of the time-honoured conceits central to revealed truth: namely, "the fallen state of nature" and "the sinister condition of knowledge." Congruently, of course, the underlying subject of s-f sublimity, as the three introductory illustrations testify, is the significance of man's place in the universe and the importance of his learning: thus, the prototype of the sublime figure in science-fiction typically has not been the hapless and enduring Adam but rather the defiant and wilful Odysseus.[3]

So, in truth, such nostalgic views of science-fiction as Jack Williamson's " Epic and Ironic" and J.J. Pierce's "Eschatological Romanticism," which lament the absence in contemporary s-f of a "sense of wonder," are in point of fact really mourning the current unfashionableness of rational-humanism, for it is upon this doctrine of the primacy of man and his knowledge that the science-fiction sublime is founded.

The further importance of Burnet's sublime for imaginative fiction can be best seen in its influence and development within Joseph Addison's series of essays written for the Spectator in 1712, "The Pleasures of the Imagination." Arguing in a somewhat Lockean manner, Addison claimed that all imaginative ideas, while they might later be compounded and altered, were received initially through man's sense of sight; and further, that the principal visible objects or ideas of such objects capable of producing imaginative pleasure belonged to a category he termed "the Great"--huge mountains, wide expanses of ocean, starry skies--:



> Our Imagination loves to be filled with an Object, or to grasp at any thing that is too big for its capacity. We are flung into a pleasing Astonishment at such unbounded Views, and feel a delightful Stilness and Amazement in the Soul at the Apprehensions of them. The mind of Man naturally hates anything that looks like a Restraint...Such wide and undetermined Prospects are as pleasing to the Fancy, as the Speculations of Eternity and Infinitude[4] are to the Understanding.

Addison's description is obviously of a human and not a supernatural phenomenon, but it should be noted that it is a "tranquil" experience--"excitement" coming as a later development in the new sublime. Even so, the importance of "the Great" to science-fiction would be difficult to over-estimate. Bubble-nosed space vehicles and strange time-effacing devices have been presenting "wide and undetermined Prospects" to amazed s-f readers since at least the days of Verne and Wells and their moon projectiles, undersea craft, and bicycle-like time machine.

Equally important, though, is Addison's second category because it points to a variant stimulant and one just as relevant to the science-fiction sublime. Noticing that the effect of great sights (or the idea of them) was considerably heightened when an element of the unusual was also present--when the mountains were jagged and precipitous, the seas rough and stormy, or the sky shot with meteors--Addison suggested a further classification to deal specifically with what he called "the Uncommon":

> Every thing that is new...raises a Pleasure in the Imagination, because it fills the Soul with an agreeable Surprise, gratifies its Curiosity, and gives it an Idea of which it was not before possest. We are indeed so often conversant with one Sett of Objects, and tired out with so many repeated Shows of the same Things, that whatever is new or uncommon contributes a little to vary human Life, and to divert our Minds for a while...It is this that bestows Charms on a Monster, and makes even the Imperfections of Nature please us.
>
> (ibid., 402)

This second classification is intended to incorporate both novelty and aberration, the fresh and original as well as the alien and atypical. As an aspect of the s-f sublime, consequently, Addison's "Uncommon" is significant on two distinct levels; it caters firstly to science-fiction's interest in new conceptions and, secondly, to its concern with the preternatural:

> On and on Coeurl prowled. The black, moonless, almost starless night yielded reluctantly before a grim reddish dawn that crept up from the left. It was a vague light that gave no sense of approaching warmth. It slowly revealed a nightmare landscape.
>
> (A.E. van Vogt, The Voyage of the Space Beagle (New York: 1957), p.5)

Such an Eater of Id prowling amid its unearthly world, as well as the van Vogtian "Nexialist" in the same story, is unquestionably as characteristic of the science-fiction "sense of wonder" as any vista of endless stars.

Indirectly, Addison's third and final category of "Beauty" is perhaps most important of all; he saw it in part as an effect of "Variety of Colours, Symmetry, and Proportion," but also as a function of the similarity of species. That is, beauty and deformity were part of the same thing and were determined primarily by the observer's own notion of self. And so, of necessity Addison's scheme had also to take some account of the psychological effect produced by the "deformed":

> There may indeed be something so terrible or offensive that the Horrour or Loathsomeness of an Object may overbear the Pleasure...but still there will be such a mixture of Delight in the very Disgust...
>
> (op. cit., 401)

This "Horrour" is clearly something quite apart from the strangeness of van Vogt's Coeurl. Its force is dependent not upon the unfamiliar, but upon the familiar distorted--the commonplace "horribly" changed.

The most memorable and specific instance of this sublime horror in science-fiction occurs, probably, with Wells's Martians:

> ...the strange horror of its appearance. The peculiar V-shaped mouth with its pointed upper lip, the absence of brow ridges, the absence of a chin beneath the wedge-like lower lip, the incessant quivering of this mouth, the Gorgon groups of tentacles, the tumultuous breathing of the lungs in a strange atmosphere, the evident heaviness and painfulness of movement due to the greater gravitational energy of the earth--above all, the extraordinary intensity of the immense eyes--were at once vital, intense, inhuman, crippled and monstrous. There was something fungoid in the oily brown skin, something in the clumsy deliberation of the tedious movements unspeakably nasty. Even at this first encounter, this first glimpse, I was overcome with disgust and dread.
>
> (The War of the Worlds (New York: Penguin, 1967),24-5)

Mars, it's to be remembered, is an older sister to Earth, a companion planet at an advanced evolutionary stage; these monsters are a prescient view of man. It's the similarity that is truly horrific. What Addison's "Horrour" anticipates, consequently, is a further and final development of the new sublime. For him the force of "Horrour" lay in its residue of pleasure aroused initially through curiosity. Latent in his "something so terrific," however, is also the force of alarm, the implicit threat contained in the distortion of the familiar.

The eighteenth century sublime achieves its final maturation with Edmund Burke's "Philosophical Enquiry into the Origins of the Sublime and the Beautiful" (1757). With the Enquiry Thomas Burnet's notion is given a startling twist, but one essential to the new homocentric sublimity. Moreover, an incidental result of that twist is the utter reversing of the relative positions of Addison's "Beauty" and "Horrour." It was Burke's contention that all sublime experience was to be discovered in "terror" and in the amazement and astonishment that accompany terror. The beautiful was an altogether distinct and antithetic experience, and inevitably one of inferior force. For Burke, through extreme fear, the Wellsian monster--and, of course, Mary Shelly's Frankenstein and the whole aesthetics of Gothicism so frequently allied with science-fiction--would evoke a more intense and profound emotion than could possibly be stirred by even the most beautiful of women.

Burke's rationale for this "terror" is both simple and cogent. He begins by accepting that the sight of a tossing sea or a starry night would indeed remind the observer of eternity and so fill him with wonder; but then he asks whether that observer would not also be equally reminded of his own mortality and finiteness, and so be struck with fear. What he maintained was that there had been a forgotten factor, the humanness of the human viewpoint.

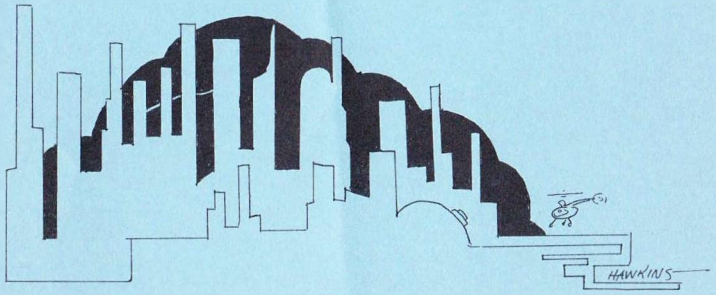
It is this sublime "terror," then, the alarm occasioned by one's own humanity, that exists as a powerful though unspoken undertone to Clarke's alien intelligences and Bradbury's unknown future. The force of the sublimity in both instances is complex, involving the notion of Addison's "Uncommon," but it is ultimately dependent upon the threat implicit in human limitation. In "Nightfall," this same "terror" has risen to the surface, more effectively, perhaps, than in any other work in science-fiction. Asimov's tale is in a sense an allegory that exhibits the nature of the sublime: its "long night" does more than merely stir the imagination; it evokes the terror of being human.

Further, it is this element of "terror" that is ultimately responsible for the intrinsic "excitement" of the rational-humanist sublime. Miraculous, or Longinian, sublimity quiets the mind, since it is actually a form of reassurance, a mystic communion with a Greater Being. Conversely, the sublimity developed in the eighteenth century agitates or troubles, for the form it must assume is that of either a threat or challenge. Between the restrictions of the human vision and the unlimited context of eternity there exists an opposition, an antagonism that charges its "great conceptions" with an inevitable tension.

Possibly, this point can be best made with a concluding illustration. One of the most audacious and dramatic instances of sublimity in science-fiction is the final scene of the 1936 Korda film of Wells's The Shape of Things to Come.

An effective reconstruction of the Wellsian idea, it combines the heightening effects of design, camera work, and music to create "a deeply moving, almost religious moment."[5] Cabal, the leader of a future technocracy, and Passworthy, his companion, stand before a gigantic telescope screen, their bodies starkly profiled against the brilliance of numberless stars. While they remain watching the progress of the world's first space craft on its journey towards the moon, all about them can be heard the cries of a disgruntled and avenging mob as it begins to over-run the launching site:

> "Oh, God!" Pssworthy says, "Is there ever to be any age of happiness? Is there never to be any rest?"
>
> "Rest enough for the individual man," Cabal says. "Too much, and too soon, and we call it Death. But for Man no rest and no ending. He must go on, conquest beyond conquest. First this little planet with its winds and ways, and then all the laws of mind and matter that restrain him. Then the planets about him, and at last out across immensity to the stars. And when he has conquered all the deeps of space and all the mysteries of time, still he will be beginning." (ibid., 7-8)



FOOTNOTES

1) Telluris Theoria Sacra consisted of two volumes, only the first of which was translated from Latin to English and published as The Sacred Theory of the Earth (1684). Subsequent editions have dropped the theological adjective from the exterior title, retaining it nevertheless on the title page.

2) The epigraph of Coleridge's "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" is, for example, a quotation from Thomas Burnet.

3) The panel discussion had been led off by a paper by Jack Williamson on "The Epic and Ironic" strains in science-fiction. The polar prototypes of Odysseus and Adam are his.

4) R.J. Allen, Ed., Addison and Steele, Selections from the Tatler and the Spectator (New York: 1957), pp. 401-2.

5) John Baxter, "Memories of the Future," Vision of Tomorrow, 1 (July 1970), No. 10, p.8.

AFTERWORD

Sublimity should not be construed as simply an effect of style, as necessarily being "the grand and lofty manner." Without the substance behind it, it becomes nothing more than pure bombast--a grin without a cat. From that subject matter, furthermore, there is a common feature that can be abstracted. Longinus described it as hypsos. (See G.M.A. Grube's introductory comments in Longinus: On Great Writing (On the Sublime), New York:1957.) Not a word easily translated, its nearest meaning is "greatness" or "the great conception," with the further implication of "ultimate greatness." In other words, sublimity is most usefully conceived as a matter of perspective: the experiencing of events within the context of eternity.

A subsequent danger is the customary misunderstanding of Longinian sublimity through Scholastic interpretations. For it is this view that has characterized "the sublime" as a supernatural or mystical experience. Man's modes of perception were conceived in the seventeenth century as hierarchial: the senses were considered to be at the lowest level, followed by the imagination, then reason, and ultimately the human soul. Normally information would enter through the senses and pass upward by stages, but on occasion it could be received directly at any of the higher levels. When this short-circuited communication took place at the topmost level -- when horizontal flashes passed from God to the soul -- man was believed to be experiencing "great conceptions" or sublimity.

In the Scholastic sense, then, the Longinian sublime is necessarily outside phenomenal experience; its concepts are not to be understood by the intellect and it engenders an effect of tranquility. We are already familiar with such instances of a "mysterious" sublime. C.S. Lewis' Perelandra trilogy is actually a confrontation of such a miraculous-theocentric sublime with the true science-fiction sublime; Walter Miller's A Canticle for Leibowitz is certainly evocative of this early form; and Heinlein's Stranger in a Strange Land illustrates its failure: succumbing to the peril facing all attempts at sublimity, it overstates, becomes sentimental, and so achieves not the sublime emotion but bathos --with the "heaven" scenes, I suspect, being the weight occasioning the plunge.

The Undivided Self:

J.G. Ballard's "The Crystal World"

by

Nick Perry and Roy Wilkie

(University of Strathclyde)

J.G. Ballard's The Crystal World, published in 1966, is informed by the same themes as The Drowned World. Set in an obscure corner of the Cameroon Republic, the novel is in two parts. It begins with Dr. Sanders, an assistant director of a leper hospital, arriving by river steamer at Port Matarre. He has taken a month's leave in order to visit his ex-mistress, Suzanne Clair, who, together with her husband, Max, operates a newly opened clinic in the area. Among the other passengers are Father Balthus, a priest returning to his parish, and Ventress, Sanders' enigmatic cabin-mate, "his moods switching from a kind of ironic humour to sullen disinterest." After disembarking, Sanders books into the local hotel, where he is visited by Ventress in search of the pistol that Sanders has unwittingly smuggled ashore for him. Sanders' irritation is compounded by the difficulties he subsequently faces in his efforts to arrange transportation to the clinic near Mont Royal, for "an atmosphere of mystery surrounds the whole place" (p. 27). He joins forces with Louise Peret, a French journalist who bears a "marked resemblance to Suzanne Clair" (p.25) and together they succeed in hiring a boat to take them up river. But prior to this, several strange incidents have characterized Sanders' brief period in Port Matarre; he saves Ventress from an attempt to kill him, witnesses a public outburst by Father Balthus, and is confronted with the mystery of a man's floating body with a right arm which has "effloresced into a mass of translucemt crystals" (p.51) like the crystallised crucifix that has prompted Balthus' earlier outcry.

With the help of the military, Sanders reaches Mont Royal. The deserted town is in the midst of a transformed forest in which "the crystalline trees / are / hanging like icons in / those / luminous caverns, the jewelled casements of the leaves overhead, fused into a lattice of prisms...the birds and crocodiles frozen into grotesque postures like heraldic beasts carved from jade and quartz" (p. 83). Part one of the novel closes after Sanders has easily warded off an attack by one such beast, a sluggish "bejewelled" crocodile.

In part two, Sanders meets up with Ventress once more, this time in a strange deserted house, within the forest, that belongs to Thorensen, a local mine-owner. Both Ventress and Thorensen roam through this crystal world in acting out their death feud, a feud in which Sanders is at times a decoy. The attempt on Ventress' life in Port Matarre is thus identified with the activities of Thorensen and his men. During their journey through the forest, Ventress and Sanders come across the crystallized body of Captain Radek, the military physician who earlier had helped Sanders to reach Mont Royal.

Sanders, to Ventress' horror, frees the body from the crystal outgrowths that link it to the forest, straps it to a non-crystallized bough and lowers it into the water, in the hope that the crystals will dissolve in the moving current. Shortly afterwards, Ventress is once more almost killed in an encounter with one of Thorensen's men, but he escapes, and Sanders is left to explain his presence in the forest to the mine-owner and his strange entourage. Thorensen's companions include Serena, Ventress' wife, a tubercular young woman whom Thorensen is trying to save from what he claims is Ventress' madness. She is clearly very ill but Thorensen insists that she remain in the summer house he is using as his base. He provides guides for Sanders, but they soon desert him. Nevertheless Sanders finally manages to reach the mission hospital run by the Clairs, but not before an alarming confrontation with a badly wounded Captain Radek. Sanders' efforts to save him from the forest has resulted in half his chest and face being torn away.

The morning after Sanders has reached the mission, Louise arrives, but after they again make love she elects to return to Port Matarre. Sanders also makes love to Suzanne Clair whose face now shows the first signs of leprosy, but she too leaves him, heading into the crystal forest. Sanders joins the search party that follows, but quickly decides to search the forest alone. Hours later he falls asleep exhausted and wakes to find that his right arm is covered in crystalline spurs. His efforts to return his arm to normal are only marginally successful, and he is once more caught up in the confrontation between Ventress and Thorensen. At last, however, Sanders reaches a small church and here his arm is healed by its exposure to a bejewelled cross. For the next few days Sanders remains in the church with Father Balthus, but the crystal forest slowly encroaches on this sanctuary and Balthus, although he chooses to stay behind, encourages Sanders to leave. With a bejewelled altar cross as protection, and after a final glimpse of Ventress and the now dead Thorensen and Serena, he finally returns to the outside world. Two months later, his recovery complete, he nevertheless decides to return to the forest, and the novel closes as he moves off up-river once more.

One is tempted to see in Sanders a familiar figure, for he bears more than a passing resemblance to Kerans in The Drowned World and Ransom in The Drought. He is forty, a medical man, and after years of contact with lepers, a social pariah. Like his counterparts in the other novels, he is predisposed towards self-examination and reflection on past failures. Thus--

> For some time he had suspected that his reasons for serving at the leper hospital were not altogether humanitarian, and that he might be more attracted by the idea of leprosy, and whatever it unconsciously represented, than he imagined.
>
> (p. 19)

> Sanders was well aware of the dangers of imparting his own ambiguous motives for coming to Port Matarre to those around him.
>
> (p. 13)

> Sanders looked down at her, aware that for once all the inertia of sexual conventions, and his own reluctance to involve himself intimately with others had slipped away.
>
> (p. 38)

> Sanders' affair with Suzanne had lasted for two years, kept going only by his inability to resolve it in any way.
> (p.13)

> His sharp reaction to the arrival of the priest made him realize how far he had already identified himself with the forest.
> (p. 63)

But Sanders lacks Kerans' charisma and Ransom's dignity, consequently his ambivalent relationship with Ventress is more critical than either Kerans' belated confrontation with Strangman or Ransom's intermittent links with Quilter and Lomax. Ventress is introduced early and his presence is felt throughout the novel.

It is he who more clearly expresses and exemplifies the mysteries of the crystallizing forest that is so central to an understanding of the book. As Sanders' cabin-mate he is introduced thus:

> During the journey from Libreville he had roamed about the steamer like an impatient tiger, arguing with the steerage passengers and crew, his moods switching from a kind of ironic humour to sullen disinterest, when he would sit alone in the cabin, gazing out through the port hole at the small disc of empty sky.
> (p. 15)

And when everyone else's attention is on the approaching jetty at Port Matarre,

> He was looking out across the deserted starboard rail into the mouth of the river, and at the distant forest stretching away into the haze.
> (p. 16)

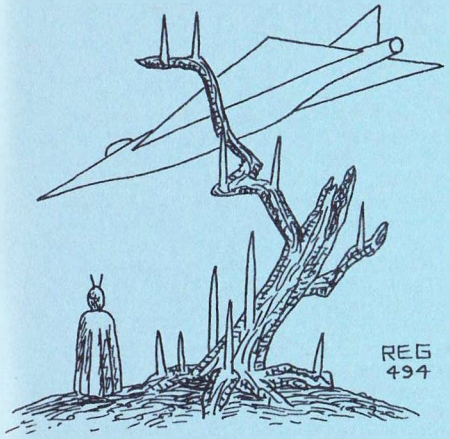
This preoccupation with the forest is confirmed by the observation that "his small eyes were half-closed, as if he were deliberately merging the view in front of him with some inner landscape in his mind" (p. 16).

His suitcase is made of polished crocodile skin, and when Sanders first sees him he is sitting in the red and yellow speedboat that eventually will transport Sanders to the forest with its "bars of yellow and carmine light" (p. 68). Furthermore, on stepping ashore into a different physical environment he too changes:

> The laconic and off-hand manner had given way to a marked restlessness. His compact figure, held together as if all the muscles were opposing each other, contained an intense nervous energy"
> (p. 24)

One may be forgiven for wondering how great a transition is involved; from "impatient tiger" to "marked restlessness" is hardly a radical transformation. But descriptive limitation notwithstanding, Ballard's intention is clear, and when Ventress is within the forest itself it is apparent that he is very much "at home." Thus one is told that "Although the main wave of activity had moved off, the forest was still vitrifying itself" (p. 88), and this is followed a page later by "At the end of this tirade Ventress turned away and resumed his scrutiny of the forest. A muscle flickered in his left cheek, like distant lightning marking the end of a storm."

Ventress' rapport with the forest is matched throughout the book by the insights that he claims into Sanders' behavior:



> "Believe me, Doctor, I understand you..."
> (p. 25)

> "Doctor!...obviously you have no idea of your real motives!"
> (pp. 91-2)

and subsequently,

> "Sanders, you were too late."
> (p. 100)

or again,

> "It's time for you to go, Doctor...Get out of the forest, Sanders, you aren't ready to come here yet."
> (p. 158)

From the beginning, Ventress' perceptiveness is acknowledged by Sanders himself. There is, for example, his confused and confusing admission "that Ventress...should have exposed his awareness of /his/ still concealed motives was all the more irritating" (p. 25).

Nor is Ventress above using Sanders for his own purposes, both to get a pistol through Customs for him and to act as a decoy in his feud with Thorensen. And this latter in spite of his earlier promise to Sanders, "Don't worry, I'll look after you" (p. 91). Earlier, of course, it was Sanders who had "looked after" Ventress, having intervened to prevent the success of a late night attack on the life of this mysterious figure. But only towards the end of the novel is Ventress' promise in any way honoured, when he instructs Sanders on how to act if he is to avoid becoming a victim of the forest (pp. 149-50), or a victim of Thorensen (pp. 151-2)--the very man who was responsible for the attempt to kill Ventress in Port Matarre.

Ventress has his origins in Hardoon (the pyramid builder in The Wind from Nowhere) and Strangman (the head of the looters in The Drowned World), but although he is hardly an endearing figure, he does make a greater claim on our sympathies than his predecessors. For example, although he dupes Sanders into taking a pistol ashore for him, we subsequently learn that he is the target of an attempt at murder. It is partly because Ballard deploys fresh information about him and how others see him throughout the text that we can begin to believe in Ventress, even to understand something of his obsessive psychology. The roots of his madness may not be made explicit but we do learn that he is a former architect who had kept Serena, his young bride, caged in a grotesque house from which Thorensen had freed her, and that

> After his disappearance and the first moves toward the annulment of the marriage Ventress had gone berserk and spent some time as a voluntary patient in an asylum. Now he had returned with the single minded ambition of abducting Serena and taking her off once more to his ruined house in the swamps.
> (p. 110)

Ventress may be mad but he is quite faithful to his conception of the world; he may be willing to use Sanders, but he is also prepared to advise him--especially if his own interests are not directly involved. Sanders, in contrast, expresses his understanding of Ventress in confused and misleading thoughts and utterances, and in the ambivalence that marks his contact with this strange character. Ventress ignores him to begin with, for even as his cabin-mate on the steamer journey to Port Matarre he keeps very much to himself (pp. 15-16). Yet Sanders refers to his accidental discovery of Ventress' pistol as having "immediately resolved some of the enigmas that surrounded Ventress's small brittle figure" (p. 16). But the reader remains puzzled, especially as Sanders had unbeknown to himself brought the weapon ashore, an act that he believes "seemed to symbolize, in sexual terms as well, all his hidden motives for coming to Port Matarre in quest of Suzanne Clair" (p.25). Sanders expressed irritation is, however, soon replaced by his observation to a sceptical Louise that "Ventress isn't in the least sinister. On the contrary, he's rather naive and vulnerable" (p. 49). This assertion follows on from the attempt on Ventress' life the previous evening. In the light of subsequent events, however, it is Sanders who is "naive and vulnerable." As we have seen, that he saved Ventress' life does not prevent him from being used as a decoy in the feud with Thorensen, though with dark humour Ventress has hinted earlier that he might employ him in this way (p. 87). Similarly, Sanders' conviction that Ventress would warn him of any physical danger that the forest might present (p.49) proves unfounded. Yet in spite of everything, including his own annoyance (pp. 25 and 95), Sanders continued to trust Ventress, despite his assertion that "I don't take sides between Ventress and Thorensen" (p. 136). It is because Sanders maintains contact with Ventress, even depends upon him, that the puzzled reader casts around for insights into the hold that Ventress exercises not only upon Sanders, but upon the novel itself. The most immediate reason is Ventress' expertise on the forest's mysteries, the symbolic representative of an environment towards which Sanders feels drawn. This is plausible but is still predicated upon a willingness to view Sanders' own behavior as understandable. It is thus tantamount to a redescription rather than a revalation. Ventress is an "expert" only in so far as one accepts Sanders' frame of reference.

Sanders and Ventress can more meaningfully be seen as two aspects of a single character. Despite Sanders' disparaging reference to Ventress' "manic rhythms" (p.42) he taps his feet to the same tune. A preliminary pointer is Sanders' "accidentally" going through the wrong suitcase in the dark and discovering Ventress' pistol. "Accidentally," because just half a page later Ballard refers to Ventress' "polished crocodile skin" luggage and Sanders "scuffed workaday bags." Ventress "deliberately" goes through Sanders' luggage after having planted the weapon there. Similarly, Sanders notes the "element of calculation in everything Ventress did" (p. 42) and Louise observes that Sanders too "can be very calculating" (p. 134).

Both men have come to Mont Royal, ostensibly at least, because of a woman, and each has a rival. With Serena's "death," Ventress accepts the imperatives of the crystal world, and with Suzanne's disappearance, Sanders too is destined to return to the forest. Serena is tubercular, Suzanne a victim of leprosy. Ventress' rival runs the mine, Sanders' rival runs the clinic.

Sanders plays chess with Suzanne's husband, "leaving him mulling over the possibilities of the end-game" (p. 138). Ventress and Thorensen fight it out with firearms and explosives. Ventress' actions throughout the book can be seen as the dramatised inner fantasies of how Sanders would act if he could free himself of social and psychological constraints. This, together with the division of the book into two parts and the persistent reiteration of the black/white motif, suggests that the crystal world is a study of a "divided self."

Further support for the notion of Sanders and Ventress as one person is provided by a curious observation from an exasperated Ventress when Sanders expresses concern about the stop-at-nothing tactics that may be employed by the diamond companies if they feel their interests threatened. He roundly asserts:

> "Doctor! You persist in finding the most trivial reasons; obviously you have no idea of your real motives. For the last time, I am not interested in Thorensen's damned diamonds." (pp. 91-2)

The transition from the second person singular of the first sentence to the first person singular of the second may or may not be self-consciously effected by Ballard but the implication is the same, that Sanders' "real" motivation is once more identical to that of Ventress. Ventress is a guiding psychological principle, rather than a character in his own right; he is one facet of Sanders' personality.

Sanders' own efforts to explain to Louise his understanding of these strange people and events is informative. He says:

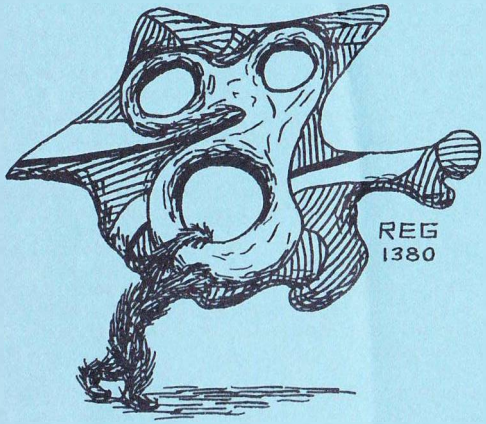
> "Looking back they all seem to pair off--Ventress with his white suit and the mine owner Thorensen with his black gang...Then there are Suzanne and yourself...She's your exact opposite, very elusive and shadowy...Again there's Balthus that priest, with his death-mask face, though God alone knows who his twin is." (p. 135)

When Louise suggests that Sanders himself may be Balthus' opposite number he replies:

> "You may be right--I suppose he's trying to free himself from what's left of his faith, just as I'm trying to escape from Fort Isabelle and the leproserie--Radek pointed that out to me, poor fellow." (p. 135)

One can accept the principle of "pairing off" as a basic theme,[2] but not Sanders' own classifications. For, it is not Balthus who is difficult to classify but Louise--her sole function seems to be that of providing an audience for Sanders' reflections. As had already been suggested, it is really Sanders and Ventress who go together, as do Suzanne Clair and Serena, Max Clair and Thorensen. These six people will admit of a further permutation, this time geometric. Sanders, Suzanne, and Max form one triangle, Ventress, Serena, and Thorensen another, and if the former is hesitantly drawn, the grey lines broken and not clearly defined, the latter is like three black brush strokes that cut into one another where they meet.

Apart from these six people and Louise there are only two other characters of any importance, Father Balthus and Radek, the military physician. Balthus' dilemma is that he is a priest attracted by heresy--a bizarre case of conscience. He comes to express the fear that "the Church, like its symbol, may have outlived its function" (p. 162). Radek's problem is that he is a bureaucrat, using traditional means to cope with a situation which, he privately believes, will not admit of such a solution. Where Radek had begun by relying upon science to provide an answer, quoting the scientific speculations of one Professor Tatlin with apparent approval, Balthus' starting point was the Christian faith, or rather the Christian religion, for Balthus confesses to having enacted the role of priest rather than that of true believer. His new-found faith he sees as incompatible with this priestly role. It is Radek whom Sanders endeavours to "rescue" from the forest after he has become trapped there, but he succeeds only in transforming him into a grotesque parody of Christ on the Cross.



> The right side of his body seemed to hang loosely, suspended from the wooden cross-tree like a long-dead corpse. A huge wound had been torn across the shoulder, the flesh bared to the elbow and sternum. The raw face, from which a single eye gazed at Sanders, still ran with blood that fell to the white ice below.
>
> (p. 117)

Although Sanders' crudely constructed wooden cross has hardly benefited Radek, Balthus, as a Christian, gives the altar cross from his small church to Sanders so that he may escape from the crystal world and, it would appear, allow the priest to enter it. Like Suzanne and Serena, or Max and Thorensen, Balthus and Radek have never met but they too can be paired off. A priest who rejects his Church and a scientifically trained military physician who becomes an unwilling Christ connect through the symbol of the cross. If science is an early casualty in this as in Ballard's other books, traditional religion fares little better: Sanders is protected not by the cross but by the jewels with which it is encrusted; it is the Church's wealth that saves him, and the disappearance of this wealth that subsequently disturbs the authorities in the outside world. The crashed helicopter, the abandoned cars, and Thorensen's immobile cruiser are all testaments to the defeat of technology. Finally it is only the firearms that continue to function, until they too are silenced by Thorensen's death, his chest wound transformed into the "delicate petals of a blood-red rose." But the crystal world claims not only the dead, the reptiles and insects, but also the living.

Sanders becomes its willing victim just as did Radek, Suzanne, and Ventress (and perhaps Serena) before him, claiming that "there is an immense reward to be found in that frozen forest...the gift of immortality a direct consequence of the surrender by each of us of our own physical and temporal identities. However apostate we may be in this world, there perforce we become apostles of the prismatic sun" (p. 169).

Taken literally, this can only be seen as Sanders' acceptance of an invitation--or an impulse--to commit suicide, but of course Ballard is no more arguing that we should turn into crystals than Kafka was warning us that we might wake up as beetles. The crystallization of the forest is clearly important, for when we are first introduced to it the prose seethes with imagery.

> The long arc of trees hanging over the water seemed to drip and glitter with myriads of prisms, the trunks and branches sheathed by bars of yellow and carmine light that bled away across the surface of the water, as if the whole scene were being reproduced by some over-active technicolor process. The entire length of the opposite shore glittered with this blurred kaleidoscope, the overlapping bands of colour increasing the density of the vegetation, so that it was impossible to see more than a few feet between the front line of trunks.
>
> The sky was clear and motionless, the sunlight shining uninterruptedly upon this magnetic shore, but now and then a stir of wind crossed the water and the scene erupted into cascades of colour that rippled away into the air around them. Then the coruscation subsided, and the images of the individual trees reappeared, each sheathed in its armour of light, foliage glowing as if loaded with deliquescing jewels."
>
> (p. 68)

Ballard does not push the landscape at the reader in the manner of The Drowned World and The Drought, but the crystal world carries no less status and significance. Thus, for Balthus, the body of Christ is in every crystal:

> "In this forest we see the final celebration of the Eucharist of Christ's body. Here everything is transfigured and illuminated, joined together in the last marriage of space and time."
>
> (p. 162)

We do not yet have to accept Father Balthus' mystic interpretation of the crystallization process to appreciate that the crystal is a very powerful symbol. The Austrian Marxist philosopher of aesthetics, Ernst Fischer, for example, devoted several hundred words in his book, The Necessity of Art (1963) to examining the idea that crystals possess the most perfect form in all inorganic nature. Carl Jung links crystals to the notion of self. He sees the central core of self as virtually unknowable, but notes the way in which the centre "acts like a magnet on the disparate materials and processes of the unconscious and gradually captures them as in a crystal lattice" (Collected Works, XII, 217). He further views the personal entanglements of life as "almost like petty complications and meticulous excuses for not facing the finality of this strange and uncanny process of crystallization" (pp. 217-8). Similarly, in de Becker's inventory of dream symbols, the crystal is referred to as "a symbol of whiteness and an image of the self / which / also exercises on others a fascination that is akin to hypnotism" (The Understanding of Dreams, pp. 332-3).

The twin notions of whiteness and self recur throughout the novel, with the black-white motif being particularly evident in part one. This section is in fact called Equinox, the date on which the sun crosses the equator, and day and night are the same length. When Louise tells him the date Sanders ruminates on this fact and notes that:

> These divisions into dark and light seemed everywhere around them in Port Matarre, in the contrasts between Ventress' white suit and Balthus' dark soutane, in the white arcades with their shadowed in-fills.
>
> (p. 37)

It is Radek who anticipates the second part of the novel when he, too, notes how outside the forest everything appears divided into black and white but goes on to say, "Wait until you reach the trees, Doctor--there, perhaps, these things will be reconciled for you" (p. 71).

The crystal as self, the theme of part two of the book, suggests that we see The Crystal World as a novel of self-discovery --the story of how one man, Sanders, is prepared to explore the hitherto hidden corners of his mind, the multiple facets of his personality--represented by Ventress, Suzanne, and the forest's other "victims"[3]-- in the quest for a more meaningful or "authentic" existence. His final journey into the forest becomes, on this view, an affirmative, even an optimistic act. It is an act of mysticism, and the optimism of spiritual enlightenment. Father Balthus is right, but so also is Sanders. Ballard's symbol of the crystal is ecumenical: its strength is that it touches upon so many histories and biographies. And just as Kerans must go south and Ransom must return to the desert, Sanders has no choice but to re-enter the forest; for the crystals are salvation, and to remain outside is to prefer sin and evil. Yet the metaphysical pessimism which permeates the book trans-literates the process of self-discovery into the necessity and desirability of recognising that we are incurably sick. The connexion between the crystals and leprosy, for example, is made explicit by both Radek and Sanders:

> "It seems to me that the business here / the crystals / and your own / i.e., Sanders' / specialty are very similar. In a way one is the dark side of the other. I'm thinking of the silver scales of leprosy that give the disease its name."
>
> (p. 64)

And Sanders writes:

> "...often I think that in our microscopes, examining the tissues of these poor lepers...we were looking upon a miniscule replica of the world...near Mont Royal"
>
> (p. 64)

Even more informative as to Ballard's intention is Ventress' advice to Sanders:

> "Look at the viruses, Doctor, with their crystalline structure, neither animate nor inanimate, and their immunity to time!"
>
> (p. 89)

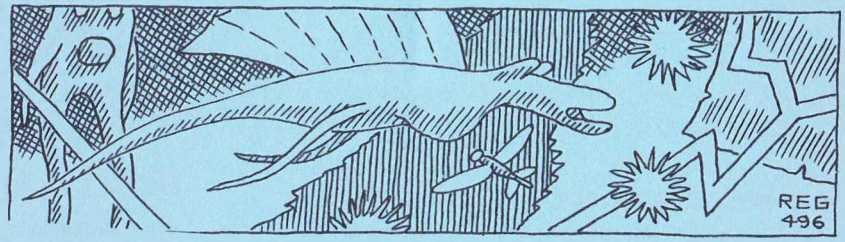
Interestingly enough, in The Wind from Nowhere, Maitland was investigating virus genetics, the basic mechanisms of life itself. But if the crystals exemplify the mystery of life, it is only the viruses that are immune to time. The rest of the biological kingdom, including man, is all too vulnerable.

Witness Suzanne's effort to explain the meaning of the forest for her, which takes the form of a quotation from Shelley. "Life, like a dome of many coloured glass, stains the white radiance of eternity" (p.125). The explicit connexion with the crystal forest is made in a reference to "the dome shaped lattice of crystal beams ...like an immense cupola of diamond and glass (p. 162) that Balthus approvingly points out to Sanders. The connexion with Shelley is informative; for the lines are from Adonais, the poem that Shelley wrote on the death of Keats. The final third of the poem enjoins the reader not to mourn for Keats, now absorbed into the immutable One Spirit, a Platonic notion "which injects the essence of beauty into all things by forcing stubborn material into approximations of the ideal forms observed by us as 'Nature' " (D. King-Hele, Shelley: His Thought and Work, p. 308). It also expresses the poet's doubt as to what constitutes reality, so that Shelley writes:

> Peace, peace! he is not dead, he doth not sleep--
> He hath awakened from this dream of life--
>
> (lines 343-4)

Such sentiments mirror Sanders' interpretation of the meaning of the forest and its victims, and Sanders sails up river at the end of the novel just as in the final stanza of the poem Shelley, in his imagination, sails out to join Keats, thereby anticipating his own death a year later.

The flowers of the first part of the poem become stars in the final section, and in the novel the sources of the crystallization process is to be found in changes in distant galaxies. There are at least two other sites like the Mont Royal one and even the Echo satellite is affected, "fired by the same light" as the jewelled flowers of the crystal forest. As a foretaste of things to come the sun begins to look "dismembered" (p.159), "refracted" (p.164), and "prismatic" (p. 169) when seen from within this crystal world. It falls to Ventress to make it explicit, but Ballard's sentiments are clear: for the human race time is running out.



FOOTNOTES

1) Page 15. All references are to the Panther Books Ltd. edition, London, 1968.

2) Literary admirers of Levi-Strauss would no doubt find The Crystal World of interest. Any parallels between our own and a consciously "structuralist" critique are, however, fortuitous.

3) Cf. Yogi Borel: "The story's general theme, the sacrifice of individual to group identity, has preoccupied mystics of many centuries" ("Notes on Science Fiction and the Symbolist Tradition," RQ III (March 1969), 267).

Over the Transom and Far Away

by

Leland Sapiro

The following may serve as comic relief amidst the erudition that surrounds it. It's a sequel -- more precisely, an amplification and correction -- to your editor's "Oath for Science-Fiction Writers" in the September 1965 Writer's Digest.

Although the RQ is not primarily a story magazine, usually printing at most one per issue, it continually receives fictional MSS ranging from 150 words to 150 pages. Since various clichés, misapprehensions, and technical failures keep recurring--and since I grow weary of explaining, e.g., that the Maddening Gaze or the Man vs. Machine story was obsolete 30 years ago--this listing is printed for my own benefit--and conceivably that of potential contributors.

Several objections will arise:

1) Various MSS to be cited--most clearly the Sword and Sorcery, the Frankenstein, and the space-pirate stories--were submitted not by seriously practising writers but by 12 year olds. However, these sub-teens constitute a measurable segment of the s-f audience, and in any case their ideas were derived from scripts written by and occasionally for adults.

2) Emphasis here will be on what not to do rather than on anything positive. But this method is best because it's shortest. To quote one of Playboy's former editors:

> No editor can ever say exactly what he wants and he may well turn down what he does claim he wants so that it's both easier and more profitable to concentrate on the kind of stuff that will go back over the transom more quickly than it came in.
>
> Durant Imboden, SFWA Bulletin, VII, 1 (1969), p.11)

What follows, then, is a compilation of things to avoid. With obvious exceptions, statements within quotation marks are taken either from rejection letters or from paraphrases thereof.

A) FAMOUS STORIES RETOLD

The antiquity of a theme doesn't mean it can't be used again--but a writer must add something to it or at least see a familiar situation from a new viewpoint.

1) "Genesis"

Male plus female to start populating a new planet--and it transpires at story's end that their names are Adam and Eve.

A frequent variant is the last pair of survivors after World War III.

2) "A Tale of the Ragged Mountains" (E.A. Poe, 1844)

Poe's reincarnation story, where a Mr. Bedlo shares the consciousness of a deceased Mr. Oldeb (Bedlo spelled backwards), indicates that this author didn't take his theme too seriously--nor can the present editor.

3) "War of the Worlds" (H.G. Wells, 1897)

Invasion by extra-terrestrials can be retold (e.g., Odean Cusack's "Shadenfreude" in RQ #13), but one should read Wells's story and at least a dozen derivations before repeating it.

4) "Metamorphosis" (Franz Kafka, 1915)

The transformation of a human into a pig, horse, beetle, etc. dates from pre-Homeric times. Abraham Merritt ("The Drone") was virtually the last writer to make this idea convincing.

5) "Intra-Planetary" (Chan Corbett, pseud. of Nat Schachner, ASF, Oct. 1935)

From a (later) writer's inquiry: "Imagine reading an entire story thinking that a spaceship is attacking the earth when in reality it's a micro-organism attacking a human cell."

Schachner's story was given a satiric dimension by the micro-organisms' belief that they were the purpose of the universe's creation.

6) "Davy Jones' Locker" (Raymond Gallun, ASF, Dec. 1935)

Alien autobiography--or biography from alien viewpoint

For a justly famous newer example see Richard Matheson, "Born of Man and Woman," F&SF, Summer '50. But The Studentin Gallun's story was the first attempt to convey an alien mode of thought.

7) "Beyond Which Limits" (Nat Schachner, ASF, February 1937)

Big Eye (super-telescope) peers into Great Beyond--to see barrel of microscope from super-universe in which ours is just an atom.

Schachner's story wasn't really this (he doesn't specify what the astronomer sees, but just has him go mad), but it can serve as prototype for both the Maddening Gaze and the Worlds-Within-Worlds themes. Our world as an atom and the converse idea, our atoms as inhabited worlds (based on the Bohr planetary atom of the '20's) were combined in John Campbell's "Atomic Power" (ASF, Dec.1934), without anything so crude as direct vision.

8) "Arena" (Frederic Brown, ASF, June 1944)

War decided by combat between two representatives of enemy races.

For a corrective to this notion--that the better fighter (or his race) deserves to survive--see Jack Vance's much better story, "The New Prime," reprinted in Eight Fantasms and Magics, 1969.

9) "Pillar of Fire" (Ray Bradbury, Planet Stories, Summer 1948)

Story told from viewpoint of reanimated corpse.

"The corpse in Bradbury's story is more interesting than that in yours because it does things, i.e., acts instead of merely being acted upon."

10) "To Serve Man" (Damon Knight, Galaxy, November 1950)

Alien book of this title turns out to be cookbook.

The idea of humans regarded as cattle (cf. Fort's aphorism, "I think we're property" and Eric Frank Russell's Sinister Barrier, based on it) has been expounded too often--as has the related notion of Earth as a home for the feeble-minded.

11) "Analogue Men" (Damon Knight, Berkeley Books, 1962)

Hypnotic ("subliminal") crime prevention

Knight's was a worthy prefiguration of Burgess' story--or, if you like, Burgess' was a worthy successor to Knight's.

12) "The Jigsaw Man" (Larry Niven; Harlan Ellison, ed., Dangerous Visions, 1967)

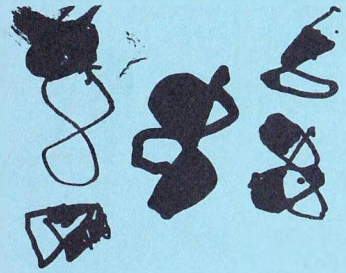
From another writer's letter:"The time is hard upon us when human beings, able to replace worn out organs with facsimilies, will themselves become just as expendable as their original parts. When the stock of parts runs out, one man may be cannibalized for another."

Variations on the organ bank theme are still possible after Niven's story, but they seem pointless.

13) "The Lottery" (Shirley Jackson; reprinted in Stanley Hyman, ed., The Magic of Shirley Jackson, 1970)

Holder of winning lottery ticket is executed.

For a less economical (but more science-fictional) version, see Frank Roberts, "It Could Be You," reprinted in Judith Merril, ed., 10th Annual Edition of the Year's Best S-F, 1965.



B) PLOT CLICHÉS

This overlaps with the "A" category, "Famous Stories Retold" -- but here the idea is not associated with one particular story but with a long series of them.

1) Human Alienation in a Mechanized World

This includes the person unable to find novelty or emotional fulfilment in an automated society (or the sleeper who awakes from suspended animation to find he's the lone human in a world of robots), the machine or robot that takes over human jobs, and the machine that runs independently of human control, e.g., the computer that thinks it's God.

2) Ecological Disaster

"Polluted air, by itself, doesn't suffice to carry a story. For an example of how it can be used in a story, see Philip Jose Farmer's Harold Childe novel, Image of the Beast, Los Angeles: Essex House, 1968."

Included in this category is the Overpopulation Problem and its most frequent fictional corollary, the Permanent Transients--where the government tries to prevent sexual relations between married couples by housing them in automobiles that are allowed to park only when refueling.

3) Christian Heaven-Hell Cosmology

St. Peter and the Pearly Gates should no longer be considered as a suitable theme for a fantasy story.

4) Counter-Earth

The Counter-Earth (rotating in the same orbit as ours but on the other side of the Sun) is the mirror image of our own except --to quote Damon Knight, Writer's Digest, Sept. 1965, p.26-- "...the drinks are tastier, the men handsomer, and the women sexier." Mr. Knight continues, "At least once a year, somewhere in the U.S., a writer rushes to the typewriter with this brand-new brilliant idea."

5) "Deja Vu" Explained

In this editor's biased view, Marcel Proust solved the problem in Remembrance of Things Past. If an account agrees with Proust's then it's superfluous and if it disagrees then it's wrong!

6) Aliens Amongst Us--Disguised as Humans

If you've seen "The Invaders" on TV, then you're already acquainted with the Paranoid UFO theme; if you haven't, be grateful.

7) Man Who Knows Better

The Man Who Knows Better (but who can't get a hearing from the scientific Establishment) was done to death in John Campbell's Analog magazine of the '50s.

8) Animal Savants

"True, your chess-playing dog is fantasy, but yours isn't a fantasy story. The central fact--that the narrator is a dog--is revealed only at the very end, hence yours isn't a fantasy until the very end. If you don't show how how a dog's thinking differs from a human's then you've written just another story with a trick ending."

(See A6: "Davy Jones' Locker.")

9) Messiah's Second Coming

In popularity this is right behind our first pair of topics, Human Alienation and Ecological Disaster.

10) Reversion to Savagery after World War III

Nothing has approached the effectiveness of Stephen Vincent Benet's "By the Waters of Babylon" (reprinted in Donald Wollheim, ed., The Pocket Book of Science-Fiction, 1943), even though this story was first printed in 1937.

11) The Mysterious Visitor

Funny looking stranger, a [fugitive from Galactic Police, / galactic policeman seeking a fugitive,]

demonstrates his superior ability by [changing beer into wine. / healing the sick. / making people vanish by pointing his finger and yelling Zotz!]

The Visitor also can be a representative of a superior civilization that "supervises" our own (e.g., to prevent atomic explosions) or--in a supernatural tale--somebody who later turns out to have died 100 years before.

12) The Earth-Man's Burden

"Your colonization story is a relic of s-f's Manifest Destiny period, with its assumption that man's duty was to bring his 'civilization' to other planets."

13) Frankenstein as Mad Scientist

One specimen sent to the RQ opened thus: "Once there was a mad doctor who was building a monster in order to get revenge on the people who were responsable / sic / for putting him in jail after killing a man during an operation."

While slightly above the general level of writing in Hugo Gernsback's old Amazing Stories, this isn't far enough above to merit its being printed today.

More generally, about the Mad Scientist--

> The existence of such men as Thomas Alva Edison and Albert Einstein gave some plausibility to notions of "Master Scientists" and "mad scientists"--that is, to the idea that a solitary inventor or thinker might be, because of his...intellectual ability a person of considerable power, benign or sinister... The mad scientist was, of course, merely an adaptation of this potent figure to the needs of certain naive types of pulp fiction. He gradually disappeared from...science fiction as it became more sophisticated and as the bureaucratized scientific projects of the war years, and after, crowded the individual genius out of our imaginations.
>
> (Arthur Cox, RQ #17, p. 7)

C) NAIVETÉ

This category results from a lack of reading--historical, scientific, etc.--or, more generally, from a lack of thinking.

1) Existential Fallacy

Involved here is the frequent assumption that Idea is an end instead of a beginning. "A Wild Talent or Marvelous Invention can be used in a story but it can't be the story, which must concern a human problem." In particular, "The supernatural event--a piano that recapitulates the playing of its former owners--shouldn't be the aim of such a story, which must convey a relationship that can't be expressed any other way. See, e.g., Kris Neville, 'The Outcasts' in our second issue."

2) Logical and Empirical Failures

a) "English Spoken here"

Here a time-traveller is addressed in English by residents of Atlantis or a scientist from Old Babylon speaks this language when he arrives in our own time. Or an extra-terrestrial invader announces, in English, "Men of Earth, we have learned your language from your radio broadcasts."

These were some of the less chauvinistic examples.

b) Scientific Vacuity

"Your biology is terrible. Transfusion of even the wrong type human blood damages the recipient--so imagine the effect of blood donated by a member (whether superhuman or not) of another species!" On the same elementary level is the impossibility of transmitting sound in a vacuum or walking normally where gravity is essentially non-existent (deep space or asteriods)--or recent discoveries about Mars and Venus: that one is virtually without atmospheric oxygen and that the other has a surface temperature of about 800 degrees. Note also that "radioactivity" no longer can be used (as by writers like Austin Hall in the '20s) to account for things the author can't explain otherwise. (See James Blish, More Issues at Hand, 81.)

3) Lack of Homework

"Since personality differences will still exist when humans settle on other planets, it's not enough to speculate on what the situation will be: one must find out what it has already been. You've obviously read nothing on personal conflicts (including the 'discipline problem') in previous similar situations, e.g., Pilgrim colonies in New England or Utopian settlements in North and South America."

D) FAILURES IN LITERARY TECHNIQUE

1) Victorian-Type Atavisms

The following examples simply do not represent current literary practices.

a) Opening denial of narrator's insanity

"...why will you say that I am mad?" (E.A. Poe, "The Tell-tale Heart")

b) Preliminary assurance of veracity

"There's no longer any need to increase plausibility by showing how the narrator heard the story from somebody else--this 19th century rhetorical device itself resulting from the older 'didactic heresy' that a 'true' story was somehow better than a fictional one."

c) Lovecraftian interior monologue

This is usually in diary form (with or without reference to the dreaded Necronomicon), telling of the narrator's increasing depression and approaching insanity.

d) Text without narrative

"You can't use 5 pages to set the background for a 10 page story; in fact you can't use any pages: nowadays, the requisite information must be conveyed in the story itself."

2) Stereotypes

These include not only characters like the stage Irishman, with his "Galaxy and Gemorrah!" every other sentence, but also the cold, sexless extra-terrestrial visitor. The basic premise here--that intelligence precludes emotion--is a carryover from pulp fiction of the 20's, the personality of the remote, emotionless scientist being transferred to members of any scientifically advanced species.

3) Wrong point of view

If the protagonist ends up in a sealed coffin (or in similar circumstances) there's little probability that his MS could reach the outside world, even if he were in a condition to write it--so this kind of story shouldn't be told by him but only from his point of view (as in Clark Ashton Smith's "The Second Interment").

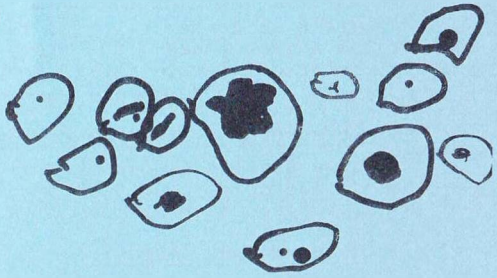
For a discussion of this problem, see Percy Lubbock, The Craft of Fiction. One Creative Writing instructor (in a midwestern college) objected that such a "writer's manual" had nothing to teach him--thereby indicating that he had seen neither the book itself nor any of the well-known critical essays (e.g., Mark Schorer's "Technique as Discovery") in which it is cited. Such wilful ignorance was surprising in somebody who professed writing as a vocation.

This category also includes what can be called immodesty. Bodily characteristics that are trite when described in the third person become downright obscene when given in the first. To quote a Sword and Sorcery MS: "My arms were steel and knotted oak, the muscles standing out in iron ridges."

4) The one-punch story

As used by Jim Blish in The Issue at Hand (Chicago: Advent, 1964), the phrase refers to "surprise" endings not implied by the rest of the story: "The one-punch story is no treatment at all, but simply an evasion." It is used here to include what Hugo Gernsback conceived as an "O. Henry ending," where the protagonist turns out to have dreamed everything, and the Grand Switcheroo, endemic to science-fiction, where the story, apparently told from a human viewpoint, turns out to have been told by (or from the viewpoint of an android or extra-terrestrial. A brilliant exception that "proves --in the sense of testing-- this rule is Brian Aldiss's "Super-Toys Last All Summer Long," reprinted in Moment of Eclipse (New York: Doubleday, 1972). But Aldiss's type of performance can't be repeated by a beginner.

(See B8: "Animal Savants")



E) WRONG GENRE

Stories in this classification look like science-fiction, but are not.

1) Synthetic S-F

Such a story, in Darrell Schweitzer's words (RQ #16), "...is science fiction only because it takes place in Outer Space / or on another planet /."

a) translations in time

--from the 20th century: "You describe a planetary landing party accidentally firing on its own men--but 20th century newspaper accounts, of World War II or Viet Nam, include various instances of such mistaken identity."

--from the 16th century: In one of these, a space-liner is stopped by the "boom" of a laser cannon across its bow, after which the crews exit and conduct a sword fight à la Douglas Fairbanks.

b) translations in space

"You describe how a terrestrial youth is adopted into a Martian tribe after he rescues a member from quicksand. Just change terrestrial into (say) British and Martian into Bedoin."

2) Passé Science Stories

On the Mars story just cited:

> ...as late as 1957...there was still some faint reason to hope for life on Mars. Since then...unmanned probes have ...made measurements. The atmosphere is thinner than the most pessimistic earlier estimates...What's more, there is no free oxygen...It seems quite unlikely...that there is, or ever was, intelligent life on Mars..."
>
> (Isaac Asimov, Where Do We Go From Here? (New York, 1971), p. 398)

(Again see C2b)

On a germ / biological warfare story: "We already possess weapons infinitely worse than those you describe. Recall magazine accounts of viruses and poison gases already developed."

3) Allegory

a) White-Black Prejudice Changed into Earth-Mars Prejudice

A more general case of this is where extra-terrestrial life-forms treat us the way we treat "inferior" terrestrial life-forms.

(Cf. A10: "To Serve Man")

b) Sexual Relationships Reversed

"To turn upside-down our previous male-dominated society, so that only females are bosses, is to show no understanding of Women's Lib, which doesn't seek to exploit others as its members (or non-members) are exploited."

4) Satire

"H.G. Wells's The First Men in the Moon made those comments on human greed and irrationality not made by Jonathan Swift. Don't you remember that scene where the narrator tells the Grand Lunar the benefits of the machine gun--that it thins the population?"

5) Horror Stories

This included physical horror and the gothic horror associated with graveyards, vampires, and walking corpses.

"The mere existence of a Malignant Entity--whether an evil spirit or a sea-monster that gobbles up boaters--doesn't scare us any more, a result, perhaps, of greater reader sophistication and current man-made horrors that transcend anything fictional."

6) Fairy Stories

This editor is simply prejudiced against stories with centaurs, dwarves, elves, gargoyles, gnomes, gobblins, griffins, leprechauns, nymphs, sylphs, trogdolytes, etc., etc.

7) Extended Metaphors

"It's not legitimate, e.g., to regard death as a goal toward which one can literally run or ride. A poetic cliché is even less appropriate when used in a prose narrative."

8) Sword and Sorcery

Our Playboy editor, Durant Imboden (see page 278) believed that S&S is strictly for adolescents--and that his adolescent audience was interested primarily in the magazine's pictures. * I don't fully agree with his first estimate, since there is at least one writer, Fritz Leiber, who writes adult S&S--and until the death of Clark Ashton Smith there were at least two. For a more detailed estimate of current epic fantasy see Darrell Schweitzer, "Warlocks and Warriors," RQ #19.

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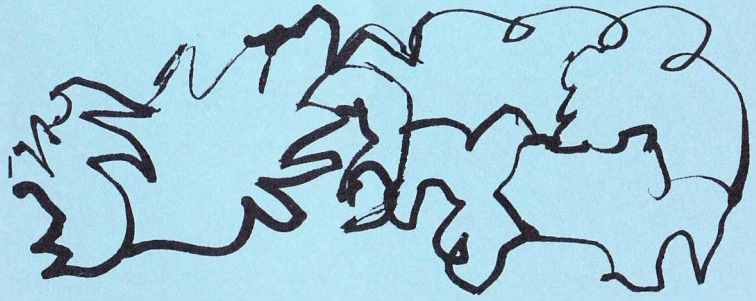
* It's noteworthy that Mr. Imboden was fired as a result of this article, since "...it was felt that the piece was in violation of the company's public relations policies" (SFWA Bulletin, VII, 2 (1969), p.11.).

AFTERWORD:

This editor is upset by a covering letter that indicates no familiarity with his magazine. For example, "My story has no fantastic machines or monsters in it, but is a story of basic human values." Since the RQ has printed nothing with "fantastic machines or monsters" and since "basic human values" are fundamental to any story, such a statement irritates more than it informs.



I Shook Someone's Tree

I shook someone's tree,
but instead of an apple
what fell into my hand
was more like steel.

And as I held it,
I felt myself pulled
toward the tree,
attracted by the wood.

And I found that any wooden object could
by this magnet be compelled.

Sticks leapt at me.
What had I shaken loose?
Force between wood and flesh
in someone's universe.

-- John Gage --

The Left Hand of Darkness

Ursula K. LeGuin's Archetypal "Winter—Journey"

by

David Ketterer

(Sir George Williams University)

As distinct from the general recognition that a relationship exists between mythology and any form of literature, science-fiction criticism has recently made much of science-fiction as a peculiarly significant vehicle for myth. Unfortunately this idea is being taken rather too literally by a growing number of science-fiction writers with the result that their work, far from being the articulation of a "new mythology," to use a current critical cliché,[1] consists essentially of the sterile revamping of the old. Where once it was possible to pass off a transposed Western scenario as science-fiction, now a book like Edith Hamilton's Mythology furnishes the basic plot material.

It is not, of course, totally erroneous to speak of science-fiction as a "new mythology" but what I wish to deplore is the lack of particularity that generally accompanies such assertions. New mythology critics are curiously loath to offer specific examples although exhibits are certainly at hand. There is, for instance, what might be called the "terminal beach" myth, to appropriate Ballard's title, the notion being that just as in Darwin's view the transposition of life from the sea to the land allowed for the genesis of humanity, so the end of man might appropriately be envisaged as taking place "on the beach," in Neville Shute's phrase. H.G. Wells is perhaps the originator of this "myth." His Time Traveller's glimpses of Earth's end are from "a sloping beach," while the scenario of destruction in an earlier short story, "The Star," which follows in the wake of that errant body, is imaged as follows: "Everywhere the waters were pouring off the land, leaving mud-silted ruins, and the earth littered like a storm-worn beach with all that had floated, and the dead bodies of the men and brutes, its children."

In Northrop Frye's formulation (The Anatomy of Criticism) the mythic basis of any fiction, aside from the occasional reworkings of an O'Neil or a Sartre, should exist irrespective of an author's intentions and in a severely displaced relationship to the storyline. In science-fiction stories like The Einstein Intersection and Nova by Samuel R. Delany, who is more than just a representative example, and some of Roger Zelazny's work there is no doubt as to the author's conscious awareness of his mythic source material and very little attempt at displacement aside from matters of environment. Inevitably in such fictions the logic of plot development is at the service of a mythic structure and suffers accordingly. The Left Hand of Darkness (New York, 1969) by Ursula K. LeGuin, the 1969 Hugo and Nebula Award winner, is a further case in point. However this work did not merit its accolades as a negative example: it is written with skill and a sense of dimension. Conscious craft is everywhere in evidence, leading, possibly, to the presentation in dramatized form, of some impression of the theoretical basis of science-fiction.

To a degree, it functions as a science-fiction novel about the writing of science fiction and particularly informative for that reason. Since the various fictional genres can be meaningfully defined in relation to basic myths or to segments of myth, the mythic consciousness of Miss LeGuin's tale, in spite of its attendant deliterious effects on the narrative, does then have its point.

As I have elsewhere argued, science-fiction should be understood as an aspect of the apocalyptic imagination.[2] Unlike mimetic or fantastic literature, apocalyptic literature is concerned with the creation of radically different and often visionary new worlds which, because of their credible relationship to the world of the reader, whether on the basis of rationality (as is usually the case in the extrapolative and analogical other worlds of science-fiction) or religious faith, destroy and take the place of that "real" world, at least for the duration of the reading experience. Thereby such works may be said to effect an epistemological or philosophical apocalypse. A new world destroys an old world; hence so much stereotypical science-fiction features world catastrophes. Given that this apocalyptic transformation involves the mythic structure of death and rebirth, for which the cycle of the seasons is the model, we can speculate as to why Gethen, the new world in The Left Hand of Darkness, enjoys such an inhospitable climate that the place is known, in English, as Winter, and perhaps hypothesise some connexion with Frye's "mythos of winter," by which he distinguishes the duplicious modes of irony and satire, as opposed to the unitary "apocalyptic" mode of romance. Science-fiction draws very much on the combination of satire and romance, and the concepts of unity and duality, variously interpreted, are, as I shall indicate, central to the theme of LeGuin's book.

II

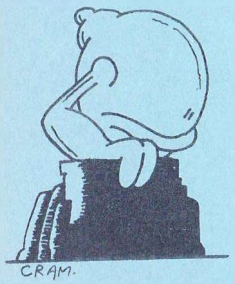
The Left Hand of Darkness is set in the distant future. Genly Ai has spent two unprofitable years in the nation of Karhide, on the planet Gethen, his mission being to persuade Gethen to join the Ekumen, a loose confederation of eighty or so worlds. Because of a political dispute over the desirability of joining the Ekumen and doubt as to its very existence, Ai's Gethenian friend, Therem Harth rem ir Estraven, one time senior councillor to Argaven XV, the mad king of Karhide, is exiled and replaced in office by his opponent, Pemmer Harge rem ir Tibe. The king gives Ai the impression that Estraven has been exiled, not for promoting the Ekumen's cause, as officially stated, but for working against it. Actually it transpires Estraven was protecting Ai's safety.

His faith in Estraven frustrated, Ai tries his cause elsewhere within the Great Continent, divided between Karhide and the rival nation of Orgoreyn to the north-west. At this point Estraven has already begun his exile in Orgoreyn. The central portion of the narrative, then, chronicles, in more or less alternating chapters, the respective yet linked careers of Ai and Estraven in Orgoreyn. Ai has the more eventful time. He crosses over at a disputed border area known as the Sinoth Valley and his first night's sleep in Orgoreyn is interrupted by a raid from Karhide which leaves Ai without his passport (an Inspector having kept it for the night) to join a group of refugees from the raid who, also lacking identification papers, are incarcerated in a windowless cellar.

The machinations of Mr Uth Shusgis, First Commensal District Commissioner of Entry-Roads and Ports, extricate Genly from this predicament and bring him to the Commissioner's home in Mishnory, the largest city on Gethen. In Mishnory Genly runs into Estraven from whom he learns something of the danger in his situation. Apparently Shusgis is a representative of the Domination faction which is opposed to the Free Trade faction, within the Government of Thirty-Three. In other words, Shusgis is opposed to the Envoy's mission, and is actually an agent of the Sarf, a police organization that controls the Free Trade faction. Consequently, Genly is imprisoned again, this time at the Pulefen Farm and Resettlement Agency, in the frigid northwest of Orgoreyn.

With the help of Estraven, who has followed and, to a degree, controlled Genly's progress (he plays a part in arranging that Genly feel disposed to leave Karhide when the king begins to favour an unfriendly faction), the Envoy escapes. The concluding third of the book traces their tortuous journey "north through the mountains, east across the Gobrin, and to the border at Guthen Bay"(p.191)--the Gobrin being the notorious ice-sheet and the border being that fronting on Karhide. Estraven had sent word to King Argaven of the Envoy's arrest on the assumption that Argaven, ignoring Tibe's advice, would inquire and would be falsely informed by Mishnory of Genly's unfortunate death. Estraven believes that later, on discovering Genly's presence in North Karhide, Argaven (aware then of Orgoreyn's duplicious treatment of the Envoy) would be sympathetic to Genly's mission and enable him to call down his Star Ship, which has all the time been circling Gethen. Except that Estraven, a traitor in his own country, is shot attempting to cross the border back into Orgoreyn, everything, however unlikely, happens as planned--Gethen joins the Ekumen.

III



That an intelligible summary of the often arbitrary action of LeGuin's novel is possible without any mention of what it is that makes the Gethenians especially distinctive, especially alien--namely their unique form of bisexuality--argues against the book's structural integrity. The truth of the situation appears to be that Gethenian sexuality, like Gethen's climate, has less to do with the surface plot than with the underlying mythic pattern of destruction or division and creation or unity. As my ensuing analysis will indicate, the narrative elements also appear designed to express this mythic conflict and hence they lack that surface coherence that comes about when the succession of events is determined by their inner momentum. Making sense of the novel, and this is its essential weakness, depends upon an act of dislocation on the part of the reader and seeing what should be implicit as explicit, seeing the way in which the mythic structure vigorously, almost mechanically, determines the various turns of the plot. Just as much of the narrative action is repetitious and sterile, as opposed to the much more fecund mythic material, so the Gethenians themselves alternate between periods of twenty-one or twenty-two days when they are sexually neuter, neither male nor female, and sex-day periods of kemmer when they become sexually active and take on sexual identity.

When a Gethenian in kemmer has located a partner in a similar condition intercourse is possible. During the successive phases of kemmer, one of the parties will develop male sexual organs and the other female, depending upon how they react to one another. It is therefore possible for any Gethenian to become pregnant. Incest, except between generations, is allowed with minor restrictions.

It is proposed that as a result of their ambisexuality Gethenians are much less prone to the dualistic perception that conceivably is related to the permanent male/female split which characterises most other forms of humanity: "There is no division of humanity into strong and weak halves, protective/protected, dominant/submissive, owner/ chattel, active/ passive" (p.94). Commenting on the Orgota (i.e., of Orgoreyn) word, translated as "commensal," "commensality," for almost any form of group organization, Genly remarks on "this curious lack of distinction between the general and specific applications of the word, in the use of it for both the whole and the part, the state and the individual, in this imprecision is its precisest meaning (p.107). Estraven cannot comprehend the form of love that demands"a boundary line of hate" (p. 201) although, as I have indicated in my summary, Gethen is not without its boundary lines. And Estraven's "loyalty is extended without disproportion to things" (p. 254). He is distressed at leaving the sledge which has taken Genly and himself across the Gobrin Ice. As one of the Handdarata Foretellers (whom Genly consults at one point),Estraven is "less aware of the gap between men and beasts, being more occupied with the likenesses, the links, the whole of which living things are a part." Genly concludes, "You're isolated, and undivided. Perhaps you are as obsessed with wholeness as we are with dualism" (p. 222).

This Gethenian peculiarity is epitomised by the book's title which is extracted from Tormer's Lay:

> Light is the left hand of darkness
> and darkness the right hand of light. (p.222)

Here is capsulized the destruction of unity and the re-emergence of unity out of a disparate duality, a movement that is implicit in the thesis, antithesis, synthesis structural arrangement of the book and a movement that is basic to my earlier theoretical definition of science-fiction. From the Gethenian point of view, a unified Gethenian reality is destroyed by the knowledge of the much larger reality of the Ekumen confederation, prior to being incorporated in that larger unity. Likewise, the reader's terrestrial vision is destroyed and then reintegrated to the extent that during the reading process he accepts the world of Gethen with its aberrant sexuality and the apocalyptic suggestion that both Gethen and Terran civilization were experiments by superior beings on the planet Hain. LeGuin's book effects a philosophical apocalypse in the three ways that science-fiction can: by presenting a radically different image of man, by pointing to the existence of a previously unsuspected outside manipulator, and thirdly, as a consequence, radically altering man's vision of human reality. The sense of mystical unity that Tormer's Lay initially suggests suffers an interim disorientation because of the paradoxical equation of the concrete with the abstract and the reversed correlation of light with the left hand, given the sinister associations of left, and of darkness with the right hand, while the traditional association between the female and the left and between the female and primal darkness helps reintegrate the breach.

IV

The state of division that Genly brings to Gethen is dramatised by means of a series of widening objective correlatives. Estraven, the first alien to whom we are introduced, is presented twice by Genly as "the person on my left" (pp. 10-11), hence somewhat apart and unfamiliar. The king of Karhide, being mad, is presumably divorced from his true self and thus a symbol of disorder and chaos. Hence the efficacy of deception and the rise of Tibe to power, Tibe who is spoken of as possessing the non-Gethenian trick of hate. Of course the major analogy for the state of duality, division and destruction, resides in this information from Estraven: "You know that Karhide and Orgoreyn have a dispute concerning a stretch of our border in the high North Fall near Sassinoth" (p. 20). We are told, "If civilization has an opposite, it is war" (p. 101), with the implication that we infer the opposition between order and chaos. In normal times war is unknown in Gethen perhaps because of the lack of continual sexual differentiation. It is hypothesised that war may "be a purely masculine displacement-activity, a vast Rape" (p. 93).

In Orgoreyn both Genly and Estraven are in exile, a condition of separation, Genly from his kind and Estraven from his homeland, although in some ways faction-ridden Orgoreyn is a mirror image of Karhide just as Gethen is an inverted image of Earth. For Genly the experience in Orgoreyn is that of a destruction of reality, of death, of chaos, of darkness. As he is approaching the shore of Orgoreyn, Genly observes, "Darkness lay behind my back, before the boat, and into darkness I must row" (p. 78). The raid that issues from some finally unspecified border town of Karhide appears to be a dream. After supper in Siuwensin, Genly "fell asleep in that utter country silence that makes your ears ring. I slept an hour and woke in the grip of a nightmare about explosions, invasions, murder, and conflagration." This is the moment of apocalypse. Although Genly has mentioned waking he continues to speak of what is happening as a dream: "It was a particularly bad dream, the kind in which you run down a strange street in the dark with a lot of people who have no faces, while houses go up in flame behind you, and children scream" (p. 108). From this moment until Genly's revival or rebirth from his mock-death (arranged by Estraven to aid the escape from Orgoreyn), unreal in a literal sense but real in a symbolic sense, the reader cannot be totally sure that everything is not a dream. But this intervening loss of a stable reality, one of the more subtle aspects of the book, is exactly appropriate as an analogy for the destructive effect that the apocalyptic transformations of science-fiction have on conventional reality. Thus it is that The Left Hand of Darkness may be viewed as science-fiction about the theoretical definition of science-fiction.

In his "dream" Genly is incarcerated with a group of refugees in a windowless "vast stone semi-cellar": "The door shut, it was perfectly dark: no light" (p. 109). Genly is metaphorically "in the dark" for most of the time in Orgoreyn as witness his ambiguous description of Mishnory, the capital city. "It was not built for sunlight. It was built for winter" (pp. 112-13). Yet at the same time Genly felt as if "he'd come out of a dark age"(p.113) in Karhide. This sense of unreality is subsequently confirmed by Genly's description of the buildings of central Mishnory: "Their corners were vague, their façades streaked, dewed, smeared. There was something fluid, insubstantial, in the very heaviness of this city built of monoliths, this monolithic state which called the part and the whole by the same name" (p. 141).

Later, confined in a windowless truck on his way to Pulefen Farm, Genly begins to understand the chaotic nature of Orgoreyn:

> It was the second time I had been locked in the dark with uncomplaining, unhopeful, people of Orgoreyn. I knew now the sign I had been given my first night in this country. I had ignored that black cellar and gone looking for the substance of Orgoreyn above ground, in daylight. No wonder nothing had seemed real.
>
> (p. 160)

Genly is suffering the sense of dislocated confusion attendant upon his awareness of a new world--the lack of coordinate points:"One's magnetic and directional substances are all wrong on other planets; when the intellect won't or can't compensate for that wrongness, the result is a profound bewilderment, a feeling that everything, literally, has come loose" (p.61). This is, of course, also a description of the apocalyptic sense of disorientation which the reader of science-fiction experiences and which is perhaps the major reason why he reads the stuff. This experience is not unique to science-fiction; it is just more purely expressed in the science-fiction form. Indeed the repeated references to the trunk as a "steel box" (pp. 161, 166), "our box" (p. 164), and to "existence in the steel box" (p. 165) are reminiscent of Private Henry Flemming's experiences, in a sense apocalyptic, in The Red Badge of Courage, as a member of an army that is referred to as a directionless "moving box." And it is surely not accidental that Estraven's first job on arrival in Orgoreyn involves running "a machine which fits together and heat-bonds pieces of plastic to form little transparent boxes"(p. 145), symbols presumably of unconscious containment, isolation, alienation, separation and hence destruction and chaos. As a final analogy to the import of dualism, the mock-death of Genly, the deaths of Estraven and of King Argaven's son all betoken the destruction of an old world of mind in the face of a radically new vision.

V

Out of chaos and destruction comes a new totality, a new unity. The extent to which the mythic pattern of death and rebirth underlies the action of the novel is re-enforced by the "myths" that are injected into the book in relation to various aspects of the plot. The myth of the "Place inside the Blizzard" (pp. 26-30), where two brothers, one then dead, who had vowed kemmering to one another, are momentarily reunited, bears on the later action.

Hode, the dead brother, seized the other, Gethenan, "by the left hand" which as a consequence was frozen and subsequently amputated. The Place inside the Blizzard is clearly a mystic point where life and death may be united. It subsequently transpires that Estraven had vowed kemmering to his brother now dead although, as Estraven reflects, his "shadow followed me" (p. 76). Later, as anticipated (p. 192), Estraven and Genly find themselves "inside the blizzard," a kind of still point, "a whitish-gray void in which we appeared to hang" (p. 246). This mythic configuration culminates at the novel's conclusion when Genly is introduced to Sorve Harth, the child of the two brothers, now both dead. Thus life and death are one, an intuition rather clumsily underscored by the book's final lines, Sorve's question to Genly regarding Estraven: "Will you tell us how he died? Will you tell us about the other worlds out among the stars--the other kinds of men, the other lives?" (p. 283).

Estraven has a family history of bringing unity out of discord through "treachery" as is indicated in the Romeo and Juliet-like mythic story of "Estraven the Traitor" (pp. 120-5). The matching hands of two mortal enemies make for a reconciliation that is symbolised by the fact that the Domain of Stok name Therem is subsequently given to children of the Domain of Estre. This is the myth that Estraven reenacts with Genly. Although they are aliens to each other they become as one, particularly when Estraven exhibits a capacity for telepathic communication or "bespeaking" (p. 238), as it is appropriately termed. In this way the mind expansion attendant upon the awareness of a new reality is made both metaphoric and literal. Why speak of telepathic communication as the "Last Art (p. 240) if not to insinuate the possibility of an apocalypse of mind? The old world is seen for the lie it was; thus, turning a phrase from Marlowe's The Jew of Malta, Genly tells Estraven, "If you ever lied to me, it was long ago, and in another country" (p. 236). And it is worth noting that although it is not possible to communicate telepathically anything other than the truth, Estraven believes at one point that it is his dead brother Arek bespeaking him. Genly ponders: "I did not know what, besides love and death, lay between him and that brother, but I knew that whenever I bespoke him something in him winced away as if I touched a wound" (p. 241).

At a later point, as a consequence of this telepathic awareness, Genly, hearing Estraven's words, believes that he has spoken them. This is a confusion that the reader is made to share because although most of the story is told from Genly's point of view, several chapters, without warning, are narrated from Estraven's perspective. Genly explains: "The story is not all mine, nor told by me alone. Indeed I am not sure whose story it is; you can judge better. But it is all one, and if at moments the facts seem to alter with an altered voice, why then you can choose the fact you like best; yet none of them are false, and it is all one story" (p. 7). What confusion exists is designed to augment the impression of unity. There is a similar gain in that The Left Hand of Darkness, while primarily the story of one man, is actually written by a woman. And in Chapter 7, "The Question of Sex," Le-Guin plays on the reader's expectations by delaying until the end of the chapter the revelation that the anthropological notes by Ong Tot Oppong are the work of a woman.

Unity of awareness is also enjoyed by the Handdarate Foretellers who are introduced in the chapter of injected myth called "The Nineteenth Day" (pp. 46-9) which illustrates the rather vague nature of their prophecies, a vagueness that Genly recognises when he consults them. The Foretellers are controlled by Faxe the Weaver, who brings the various disparate and chaotic forces together like "the suspension-points of a spiderweb" (p. 66). Indeed the weaving imagery, which permeates the book and which may be related to the triangular net-like structure created by the relationship of unity to duality, finds its nucleus here. Genly feels himself "hung in the center of a spider-web woven of silence" (p.64), "a point or figure in the pattern, in the web" (p. 67). Faxe gathered up the gazes of those around him "into a sheaf, a skein." "The web of force, of tension, of silence, grew" (p. 66). Much later, Estraven says of Genly, "Through him speaks a shrewd and magnanimous people, a people who have woven together into one wisdom a profound, old, terrible, and unimagineably various experience of life" (p. 151). The act of putting together a novel and creating an aesthetic unity can be imaged as a weaving process. Thus Genly speaks of forgetting "how I meant to weave the story" (p. 174).

Estraven, making his way to rescue Genly from Pulefen Farm, travels by caraven "weaving from town to town" (p. 178). And is it going too far to extend this imagery to Genly's "matted hair"(p.190), which Estraven perceives (p. 180) as "a mat of long, fibrous hair"? Likewise Estraven's mask of a face is "thatched with black fur" (p. 251). Between two volcanoes, Drumner and Dremegole, the traveller hears the hissing sound of Drumner, which in eruption "fills all the interstices of one's being" (p. 215). These "interstices" may be seen as objectified by the "crevasses" (pp. 215, 219, 248, 251) or "crevassed area" (pp. 233, 251) to which repeated references are made during the journey across the ice, objectified also by the indirect criss-cross path that Genly and Estraven travel, invariably turning "east-northeast by compass" (p. 223) or "a little south of east" (p. 247) and almost never directly north, south, east, or west. On a larger scale, what is referred to as the "shifgrethor" relationship in Gethenian society appears to be a theoretical network or unformulated pattern of right behavior rather similar, in fact, to that web of worlds known as the Ekumen, which is not so much a "body politic, but a body mystic" (p. 245) modelled on the process of evolution. In view of the importance of webbed relationships to the awareness of a new unity it is in no way accidental that Faxe the Weaver, at the end of the book, is likely to take Tibe's place as the Prime Minister of Karhide.

VI

The Left Hand of Darkness, which begins with a chapter entitled "A Parade in Erhenrang," and ends with chapters entitled "Homecoming" and "A Fool's errand," is primarily concerned with the journey in between from Karhide to Orgoreyn, "One Way" or "Another Way," and back to Karhide following "The Escape" from Pulefen Farm. Physically the journey describes a jagged clockwise circle. I mention its being clockwise because the book, beginning and ending in late spring, covers a temporal cycle. What is being dramatised is the ultimate unity of space and time.

Since Gethen is known as the planet Winter, when Genly speaks of his and Estraven's "winter-journey"(p. 259) it is intended that the reader infer the identification of space and time--it is a journey across and through Winter with, as I have intimated, all the associations of Frye's mythos of winter. The period of death and destruction here symbolised by winter, is occasioned by the conjunction of an old and new world of mind, the basic concern of science-fiction.

The journey to and across the ice is replete with imagery suggestive of the forces of creation. Two injections of Gethenian myth point the way. "On Time and Darkness" (pp.155-7) explains that "Meshe / note the net implications / is the Center of Time" (p.155), Meshe being the founder of the Yomesh cult that broke from the Handdarata. Genly experiences something of this insight travelling by truck with a group of prisoners to Pulefen Farm: "We drew together and merged into one entity occupying one space" (p. 163). One member of the group dies. It is significant that just before Estraven's death, Genly is "taken by fits of shuddering like those I had experienced in the prison-truck crossing Orgoreyn" (p. 267). And afterwards when Genly slept he "was always in the truck, huddling together with the others, all of us stinking, shivering, naked, squeezed together for warmth, all but one" (p. 269)--who is dead and now equated with Estraven the Traitor. Once again it should be apparent that all the narrative action illustrates the two basic structures of division/ duality and unity. The sense of temporal unity at Meshe is perhaps the inspiration for the Gethenian method of numbering the year backwards and forwards from the present year, which is consequently always at the centre.

"An Orgota Creation Myth" provides a second pointer. We are told that "In the beginning there was nothing but ice and the sun," a notation that explains the landscape through which Genly and Estraven have just passed. The previous chapter ends with a reference to "the veiled sun, the ice" (p. 224). In the process of reaching the blindingly white Gobrin Glacier, white with all the implications of fusion and unity that the colour holds for Poe at the polar conclusion of his Narrative of A. Gordon Pym, Genly and Estraven have made their way between the two volcanoes of Drumner and Dremegole, Drumner in eruption. The impression is of "the dirty chaos of a world in the process of making itself." "Praise then Creation unfinished" (p. 216), Estraven affirms here and later (p. 250). Sleeping Genly's arms "tremble and twitch" as "the world around us, ice and rock, ash and snow, fire and dark, trembles and twitches and mutters" (p. 218). The creation myth concludes with a reference to Meshe, "the middle of time" (p.226), which explains the environment of the next chapter. On the Gobrin Glacier, Genly feels himself and Estraven to be "at the center of all things" (p. 227). It is "On the Ice"(pp.227 -247) that Genly truly comes to understand Estraven having eradicated all preconceptions on those still nights such "as one imagines as existing before the stars began to form, or after everything has perished" (p. 232). Genly recognises Estraven as both man and woman. Until then I had rejected him, refused him his own reality" (p. 234). The telepathic experience and the experience "Inside the Blizzard" follows this understanding. This mutual understanding that is equivalent to a rebirth is symbolised by changes in the environment as "that bland blind nothingness about us began to flow and writhe" (p. 247) and the incident where Genly "delivers" Estraven from a crevass into which he falls to emerge with a vision of "Blue--all blue "Towers in the depths" (p. 250). The crevasses become the cracks in an eggshell with Genly and Estraven both inside and outside.

This unifying sense of a microcosm and macrocosm is dramatised by the arrival of the Ekumen Star Ship. It is as if the world view of the Ekumen and that of the Gethenian are collapsed together. Genly plans his call to the Ship with a consciousness of setting "the keystone in the arch"(p.272). One thinks perhaps of Hart Crane's Bridge or the bridge on Jupiter in the first volume of Blish's Cities in Flight but more particularly of the keystone ceremony with which The Left Hand of Darkness opens and which is now seen for its symbolic significance. From among the stars, which have earlier been likened to "far cities" (p. 106), the approaching ship is literally "one star descending"(p. 278) because it represents "the coming of a new world, a new mankind" (p. 280). For the reader a metaphorical conflation of Earth and Gethen has already taken place, encouraged by King Argaven's initially disconcerting reference to Gethenians as "human beings here on earth" (p.40) and by Estraven's similar reference to Gethen as "this earth" (p.87). In addition Genly points out that "Fundamentally Terra and Gethen are very much alike. All the inhabited worlds are" (p.118). Thus, for example, perverts on Gethen, people with a "permanent hormonal imbalence toward the male or the female," are "tolerated with some disdain, as homosexuals are in many bisexual societies" (p. 65).

My point has been that LeGuin's use of duality and unity as mythically connotative of destruction and creation is in fact a way of talking about the relationship between new and old worlds of mind and that this relationship is at the theoretical basis of science-fiction. As such The Left Hand of Darkness is a skilfully integrated, perhaps I should say woven, piece of work although my criticism remains that the plot is unfortunately subordinate to the overly conscious use of mythic material. The world of the novel, like the snowbound ecology of Gethen and the snowy metaphors to which it gives rise, is developed with a consistency that at least equals Frank Herbert's sand-bound world of Dune and might seem to borrow from it. For example, mention of "a snow-worm" (p.212) recalls the sand-worms of Dune which figure so prominently in that novel. But LeGuin's single and singular reference is perhaps indicative of that loss of dramatic surface incident compelled by her vigorous adherence to a mythic design insufficiently displaced. To use a repeated Gethenian image of unity, the wheel of the plot turns rather too inexorably and predictably in its seasonal and mythic groove.

FOOTNOTES

1) See, e.g., the 1968 MLA forum involving Bruce Franklin, Darko Suvin, Isaac Asimov, and Frederik Pohl, entitled "Science-Fiction: The New Mythology," transcribed in Extrapolation, X (May, 1969), 69-115.

2) See my "New Worlds for Old: The Apocalyptic Imagination, Science Fiction, and American Literature," Mosaic, V (Fall, 1971), 35-57; reprinted in The Novel and Its Changing Form, R.G. Collins, ed. (University of Manitoba Press, 1972).

3) Hermaphroditic beings have, of course, appeared in science-fiction before, most notably perhaps in Theodore Sturgeon's Venus Plus X (New York, 1960).

4) After hearing this paper at the 1971 Toronto Secondary Universe conference, Miss LeGuin indicated that she did not read Dune until long after completing The Left Hand of Darkness.

A Day of Revelation

Yesterday the planes began to nest,
Easing their eggs into the straw
Of mountainous crags. I see
Them angering the eagles, perched
To defend the boundaries of their ledge.
The bold birds smooth their long silver
Feathers as they glide the dawn, humming.
Occasionally, I see one lonely, whose mate
Has tumbled the trail of blood into a hunter's eye.
Though the timbers crack in disbelief
Around the spot where I sit watching,
I know a place where small
Steel orphans gaze hungry up the sky.
Look quick, before the quarreling claws
Of thought have scarred your eyes
(Long before the sun has time to sober morning.)
I will be on the Aquarian side of the mountain,
Climbing with pick and rope and a pocketful of worms.

-- William Harrold --

From Yukichi Fukuzawa

He turned away astonished with his face
full of tears and beer on his breath. His
enemies smiled to each other and decided
to be kind. Then, I wanted to leave. I packed
case after case of food in my luggage.
I would evade the point, thinking
Why does this fool love
to make so much noise?

I sit, sad, quiet, like a priest
doing penance. I was bold when I was young.

I should hide from my brother. O bigoted saints
who fear to act and distress others,
there are no police for your soul. You will live
to eat foreign food and the adulation
of those who put up with you
because of your age.
You know people wait for you to die.

The golden fish curl around the trees,
the branches, waiting. Be a happy child.

I think I am going crazy. Which is strange,
because I know what is tantalizingly sweet, I know,
I do know. I take bitter medicine
since no one else will.

This hardship is pleasure; meantime,
I die among you.

-- John Newlove --

The Meaning of "Foma" in "Cat's Cradle"

by

Sam Vasbinder

I must disagree with David Engle's "On the Question of Foma" (RQ V, 119-128), which to my mind fails to explain Vonnegut's central idea.

There are several clues that help a reader to understand Vonnegut's philosophy. I shall confine my statements to Cat's Cradle (the 1963 Dell paperback edition), but as I hope to show, this book alone suffices to illustrate the meaning of foma and illustrate Vonnegut's purposes. The use of a variety of mythologies to provide intellectual echoes in the plot and idea structure, the choice of names that are strong clues to personality as well as a character's state of being, the elaborate use of poetry and quotations from Bokonon's writing that consistently restate the same point of view, and well-selected images and actions all re-enforce the idea that man is a divine creation but, as such, is a work of art in the physical realm only, not the spiritual. Man's purpose for existing is just that: existence without essence, a coherent, thinking, creative creation without immortality or power.

Cat's Cradle is a tissue of myths, fables, and symbols--and among them the most crucial is the mythic anecdote of the creation.

> In the beginning, God created the earth, and he looked upon it in his cosmic loneliness.
>
> And God said, "Let us make living creatures out of mud, so the mud can see what We have done." And God created every living creature that now moveth, and one was man. Man as mud alone could speak. God leaned close as mud as man sat up, looked around, and spoke. Man blinked, "What is the purpose of all this?" he asked politely. "Everything must have a purpose?"asked God. "Certainly," said man.
>
> "Then I leave it to you to think of one for all this," said God.
>
> And he went away. (p. 177)

Despite the title page of The Books of Bokonon that warns, "Don't be a fool! Close this book at once! It is nothing but Foma!" the basic fact of the fable, that the creation is meaningless and lacks purpose, holds true for the book as a philosophical whole. The real foma is that any purpose man adduces from the universe will be a lie because the universe was created as an artistic act in which the created mind could marvel at the Beings that had created it solely for the enjoyment of the act of creation alone. This is the paradox of foma as a lie. Complex reasons for the world and its inhabitants can be evolved, but these reasons are as meaningless as the complex patterns of the cat's cradle, a pattern that has no symbolic significance. Once this paradox is understood, the book comes into focus.

Over and over in the teachings of Bokonon (in itself a literary cat's cradle) as well as other editorial observations of Vonnegut, this purposelessness of man and the rest of creation is reiterated.

One can see this in the obvious inferiority of the San Lorenzo military that threatens the power of the world, in the ambiguous position of Bokononism being a public crime but a private comfort, in the aimless, dangerous questionings of Felix's mind that attack all problems from silly to serious with equal fervour and no discrimination of levels of importance, the idea of the karass that brings people together in complex patterns without meaning (another philosophical cat's cradle); the list could be continued in profusion. All these facts make it clear that there is a difference between the created universe as an art-form or as a creative act whose impulse is a divine conceit and a universe that is created to establish a spiritual meaning with a noble purpose as the goal beyond its creation. Man-as-mud-that-thinks is hurt that he has no meaning beyond the fact of his existence; and that which he imagines as his dignity exists to satisfy only the ego of a divine, creative urge. Just as in the Greek myths, the concerns of the sons of men are remote from the sons of gods except as sport. The angel in the tombstone salesroom is of stone, hard merchandise that symbolizes a commodity of the imagination of man who, far from being ethereal, echoes the truth of Bokonon's couplet: "Around and around and around we spin / With feet of lead and wings of tin" (p. 43).

The monument over Felix Hoenikker's wife's grave, that should have been an angel, is the most earthly of symbols--an erect penis --on which is carved most significantly,"MOTHER." It symbolizes the physical purpose of reproduction in the world; there is nothing divine in either motherhood or death to erect an angelic monument of promise to. Mother is only a breeder of more people who will in turn form more patterns for divine amusement. It is fitting that the people who run the tombstone salesroom are named the Breeds. No spiritual motive can be adduced for man's existence. Only a meaningless repetition of similar, ever-changing patterns of the cat's cradle is the real truth. Man is being without essence. Life, like the cat's cradle, has infinite complexities but they have no meaning. They are like the red squiggles drawn upon cooking pots that Ursula LeGuin mentioned in here speech before the Vancouver science-fiction convention. A pot will "cook just as well without red zigzags," she explains. "Art is so glaringly non-useful" (RQ V, 94). Meaningless again in the sense that the order of the cosmos is nothing more than divine red zigzags upon a space filled with chaotic mud. Such is the idea that underlies all of Vonnegut.

Bokonon writes, "She / an Episcopalian lady / was a fool, and so am I, and so is anyone who thinks he sees what God is doing" (p. 13). This reminds one of the central fable and its premise that God's purpose may not be conceivable to man. At the outset of the book in chapter one, Jonah makes this point clear: "We Bokononists believe that humanity is organized into teams, teams that do God's will without ever discovering what they are doing" (p.11). Frank symbolizes God acting without serious purpose when he spoons insects into a Mason jar to make them fight. The Mason jar reminds one of the secret rituals and rich symbology that remain meaningless to the uninitiated. Felix is called "Secret Agent X-9" (ice-nine) by his classmates. His thought and research are rich to himself but empty of meaning to outsiders. Like God-the-Father and Felix-the-Father, Frank-the-Son is only experimenting with purposelessness to satisfy a whim. Thus we see meaninglessness operating at all levels.

Felix plays with the universe and is another God-symbol. He plays games of a serious nature, but he fails to realize the disaster his games may bring upon the race. His part in development of the atomic bomb ironically wins him the Nobel Prize. When a colleague remarks to Felix that "Science has now known sin," Felix's characteristic reply is, "What is sin?"

Sin is a concept of man's imagination just as is his concept of good; it has no origin in divine fiats of do's and don't's. On the day of the bomb's first real test, Felix plays with a loop of string, making a cat's cradle of it. Surely Vonnegut's use of a cat's cradle here is not a timely accident. The cat's cradle is everywhere in the book. God may act on whim but his creation must be coherent, following certain laws, just as Vonnegut may write of purposelessness but must be coherent and use a structure that has artistic meaning and integrity. If the artist acts without purpose the work collapses, becoming a heap of junk, words without meaning, images and actions that illustrate nothing. Vonnegut is too good an artist to neglect technique, and technique implies awareness of arrangement.

For example, the first three words of Moby Dick, "Call me Ishmael," Vonnegut renders as "Call me Jonah," thus uniting the novel with the biblical source. The boat called the Lady's Slipper casts McCabe and Bokonon upon the shore "like a fish," reminiscent of the Jonah fable. The means of executing Bokononists in San Lorenzo is the "Hook" that catches "fish." Christ promised the apostles that he would make them "fishers of men." Papa sits in a boat reminiscent of the boat of Ra the sun-god. Here, Ra symbolizes the soul seated in the body (the boat). This collection of images selected from Christian and Pagan beliefs draws together a number of backgrounds as symbolic data and to my way of thinking is provided as comment to the new religion of Bokonon: all have an equally meaningless origin in man's desire to make himself something he is not; spirit is not one of the things designed into his body.

Names in the book are artistically appropriate. The Old Testament Jonah and his bad luck are brought to life again in Vonnegut's Jonah. "Felix" means "happy," yet it means both this (since Felix is very contented) and the opposite (since he brings such unhappiness to others). The name "Hoenikker" has "Hun" in it, the savages who in happy ignorance attacked Rome, the ancient symbol of civilization. Angela, like any good angel, guards her family of "boys." "Newt" is not only small as befits his name but also represents Newton, whose discoveries are the basis of our present-day science of mechanics. Mona Aamons Monzano is a composite. Mona is the enigmatic beauty sought by the Renaissance artist. Aamons is Amon Ra, the Egyptian god of the golden sun--"Her pale gold hair was lank and long" (p.98) and the "mosaicist was making fine hairs on the nape of Mona's neck out of chips of gold" (p. 104). Her real father was Nestor Aamons, whose exploits offer a parallel to those of Nestor, the oldest warrior at the fall of Troy. Mona too is Greek, as is her white dress, both of which "had the simplicity of all." She was the "one beautiful girl in San Lorenzo, a national treasure," even as the Mona Lisa is a national treasure. Some aspects of Mona are evil, some are pure good. Therefore she adopts the enigmatic cast of Morgana, whose mixture of good and evil makes her paradoxical in the Arthurian legends, and the enigmatic quality of the Mona Lisa whose meaning always seems to lie outside rational explanation.

The "lucky me, lucky mud" ceremony (pp.149-150) ties the original meaning of the fable into the underlying thesis of the book. Just as "man as mud" alone can speak, so the ceremony repeated here at the funeral service of Papa uses the term mud over and over. "The only say I can feel the least bit important is to think of all the mud that didn't even get to sit up and look around." Thus the idea is brought full circle. If one considers these facts, one can hardly escape the meaning of the book.

for karen

behind the house, a man and his pet;
the animal, a coat black and white.

part husky, a touch of shepherd
though not golden like your pup Ivan.

when night comes, he blends with the dark;
his chain becomes hidden.

i want him for you
would you make him a pet?

he's soft as your desire
and would come at each of your calls.

it seems ugly to be so calm
a form of being i don't understand.

-- Jody Swilky --

Jellico Mountain is Closed to Traffic

We're going to see John and Judy!
The maps are on the kitchen counter.
We'll sit by their fire and drink and talk,
and talk and talk.
We'll take turns yelling at the kids
from time to time. But they get on
fairly well for such a crowd.
We'll take time out to eat, but
even then we'll talk
and be together.

We woke up and it was snowing;
it had been snowing;
it is still snowing.
John called:
It is snowing there, too.

The radio says Jellico Mountain is closed to traffic.

I took a long hot bath that
steamed up the window and
shut out the world outside and
I read a book.
Then I put on my new
lavender turtleneck to
cheer myself up.

Jellico Mountain is closed to traffic.

What will we eat?
At the grocery yesterday
I bought some cheese and
used it to make pimiento cheese
for John.
Judy's fridge is full of food for us.
We've got John's pimiento cheese.
And no crackers.

Jellico Mountain is closed to traffic.

Snow is stacked on the car and
the suitcases are sitting in the hall
empty. I like
my new sweater.

We'll build a fire, be warm,
watch television;
I wonder what's on?
Oh, I didn't even buy a TV Guide!
Who'd need the damn thing
with John and Judy!

Jellico Mountain is closed to traffic.

I wanted to talk about my Philosophy class,
Judy's Psysiology class and
Andy's books and John's teaching,
the Olympics, China, maybe Howard Hughes and JC Superstar.
Who knows what else! We'd get it all together,
together.

Maybe Skinner's right, and we
can control the environment.
For starts I'd flatten out
Jellico Mountain!
Or the four--or eleven--of us
could go off someplace
and tackle it together.
But then it wouldn't matter.

Jellico Mountain is closed to traffic.

Oh, I can't flatten any mountain,
even for John and Judy.
I'll dry my eyes and have a glass of wine
or the whole damn bottle
(it's late enough now)
And shut out the world outside.

And Jellico Mountain.

-- Jodie Offutt --

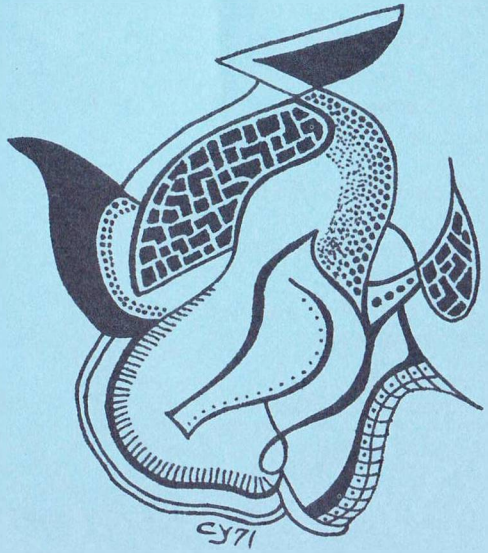
Books Received
(but not appreciated)
by Your Editor

David Levy, The Gods of Foxcroft, New York: Pocket Books, 1971; 75¢.

Here is the old theme of intellect versus emotion, personified, respectively, by a 25th century Dr. Delos and a male-female couple from our own time, roused from suspended animation. The girl finally is saved from Delos, who turns out to be not so dispassionate after all, and (with her companion) is literally spirited away to another solar system. Despite newer topics like Ecology, artificial satellites, etc., this book is essentially another Clarissa, "a paean to death, with the rape-motif central." For example,

> ...A scream came from inside Julie's room. I opened the door and saw Delos sitting at the foot of Julie's bed...Her clothes lay on the chaise...Somehow she'd been persuaded... to submit to a further examination...Then at the last moment ...a clone must have been called...The clone, like Julie, was naked; he had pinned her arms above her head and his next move was obvious.
>
> "Mr. Walker,"/ Delos / said, speaking over Julie's protests, "you are interrupting our research."
>
> (226)

Fortunate indeed is the reader who misses this one.



Heat Rays and Hotdamns
by
Peter Bernhardt
(SUNY-Oswego)

The Fiend, 15 stories by Frederik Pohl, Arthur C. Clarke, Robert Scheckley, & others, HMH Publishing Company, 1971; 75¢.

The war against chastity in science-fiction spans nearly a quarter century. Before the late Forties sex was relegated to symbolic acts of fetishism, sado-masochism, and homosexuality present in Sword and Sorcery (Heroic Fantasy) or to lurid covers of pulp magazines. I recently passed a nostalgia shop in Greenwich Village that featured a mawkish but excellent example. In the window was a 1940 issue of Weird Tales and on its cover a hideous spiderman shamelessly ogled a gauzy winged, loosely clad yet generously proportioned gnat woman. Finally, within the last few years, the New Morality has penetrated this last bastion of eunuch literature. However, one musn't forget the pioneers like Silverberg and Farmer nor that truly unsung hero, Theodore Sturgeon and his early collections like E Pluribus Unicorn. Sadly, there is still one residual problem: s-f remains sexually chauvinistic.

Like a lovesick poet who transforms his girl friend into a goddess or sylph, s-f writers have dehumanized women until they play a debasing role such as the Venerian Sado Queen or the already mentioned bug lady, suitable only for a magazine cover. Robert Heinlein's The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress is a perfect example, for it treats women as chattels and humanoid chunks of genitalia. This walking womb phenomenon has been discussed by Sam Lundwall in his book, Science Fiction: What It's All About. Lundwall thinks that s-f has given robots, androids, and extra-terrestrials a fairer shake than it has to the fairer sex. After all, Asimov has removed the Frankenstein from the robot, Weinbaum has defused the man-eating alien, and equal rights for pseudo-humans is fast approaching; but where does this leave womankind? Science-fiction has merely replaced the usual sexual discrimination by, "Woman, know your place: you can be exchanged for an android houri."

Following this dreary philosophy, Playboy Publishing Company has given us The Fiend, an anthology of sex (not love) in s-f. In the Preface Playboy congratulates itself as if it were responsible for a new vogue in speculative fiction. While not too bad a collection of short stories, The Fiend is marred by the attitudes so dear to the Hugh Hefnerites.

The title story is Frederik Pohl's version of sexual gratification through terror. Starship Captain Dandish is transporting colonists in suspended animation to some unknown point in the galaxy. In an attempt to satisfy his psychotic desire to terrify women Dandish revives Silvie, a sixteen year old go-getter who abruptly turns the tables and has Dandish petrified. Silvie threatens the captain with what will happen if he tries anything and gets caught, for in this future world lawbreakers have their brains removed and transplanted into machines. Playing this game, Silvie puts Dandish under her thumb until he refreezes her.

About to be rechilled, Silvie ineffectually yells, "Wait a minute! I never said I wouldn't--" Ironically, even if she would he couldn't because Dandish's body is being stored on Mercury while his brain controls the ship. A clever yarn, "The Fiend" is too redolent of the Good Old Days when monsters on magazine covers terrified earth women. If Pohl had played it more for laughs, "The Fiend" would have been an excellent satire on pulp s-f.

Charles Beaumont's "The Crooked Man" begins with great promise but rapidly degenerates into cliché and bad taste. In another future world homosexuality is the norm and heterosexuality the crime. Owing to government surveillance of private places, Jesse and Mina, two star-crossed lovers, are forced to take their tender moments in Gay bars. They are finally caught and taken away to the hospital, which in a 1984 sort of way will make them "fit in." What ultimately destroys this story is the author's attempt to produce a realistic setting by peopling it with pansies, overdoing the lavender, and cutely inverting morals and language.

> Jesse pulled his head back inside. He'd become used to the light by now; so he closed his eyes against his multiplied image. The disorganized sounds of love got louder. The sing-song syrup of voices: high pitched, throaty, baritone falsetto. It was crowded now. The orgies would begin before long and the couples would pair off for the cubicles. He hated the place. But close to orgy time you didn't get noticed here; and where else was there to go?
>
> (p.64)

> He had been lucky. He didn't look like a hetero. They say you could tell one by watching them walk--but Jesse walked correctly. He fooled them. He was lucky. (p.65)

Robert Bloch comes up with "I Like Blondes," a story that possibly was considered humorous in its day (about fifteen years ago) but seems very predictable now. What it is doing in this collection that wants to identify itself with mature attitudes I don't know. An alien from space masquerades as a human to seek out his great passion, blondes. After picking up a not too intelligent one (most of the females in this book aren't very bright), he meets a compatriot and they both discuss their vices. In a relatively short time you guess that the hero's incurable desire for blondes is a purely gastronomic one.

Two other stories, Vance Aandahl's "Adam Frost" and Ray Russell's "The Better Man," concern themselves with the Adam and Eve situation after they drop the Big One. Neither story is very subtle, but Aandahl's ends thus:

> He chased her wildly over the junk pile, caught her from behind, threw her onto the garbage and filth. She screamed. He pushed at her with his hands until she was quiet.
>
> Then, sprawling on a heap of refuse, Frost madly gave life to mankind's first new child... (p. 148)

Robert Sheckley is the true hero of this book, for he saves it with his wit and ability to express sexual candour. His two stories are unrivaled delights. In "Can You Feel Anything When I Do This?" Melisande, a bored but beautiful housewife receives a fully robotized vacuum cleaner that not only does a great job of cleaning the house but is capable of completely satisfying her sexually. However, when the garrulous machine plans their getaway and subsequent life of bliss she angrily shuts it off. Melisande's beauty is all a ruse, for underneath the creamy skin beats the heart of a maneater.

In "Love Incorporated" Earth is a world of pleasures and anything can be bought or experienced for a price. A tourist from the outerworlds spends his savings to go to Earth and experience love. Love Inc. sells him the real thing but takes it away as soon as his time limit is up. Furthermore, the girl they provided him with is little more than a Pavlovian conditioned dupe. Amazed that he should come back for more, the president of Love Inc. kindly informs him that

> "Love is a delightful interlude, a relaxation good for the intellect, for the ego, for the hormone balance and for the skin tone. But one would hardly wish to continue, loving, would one?" (pp. 186-7)

In this way the author satirizes the country innocent in the wicked city.

Unfortunately, Sheckley is the exception. If we wish to drop our customary plots for something more substantial like sex, love, hatred, and avarice or any other big boy topic we must change our attitudes on the function of women in s-f. By allowing such crude chauvinism in our literature we defeat its purpose. I find it depressing that Farmer's "The Lovers," which might have been our first story with a sexual plot, is about a man's love for a creature that only mimics a woman. I am also distressed with the characterization of career girls like Asimov's Susan Calvin. It appears that if a woman wants an important job in an s-f story she must be a spinster. Until we correct these problems any story that has sexual connotations will be as sophisticated as the graffiti on the walls of the men's room.

The Bourgeois Romance

by

Joe Christopher

(Tarleton State College)

Poul Anderson, Operation Chaos, New York: Doubleday & Company, 1971, $4.95.

In 1731 George Lillo produced The London Merchant, an attempt to reduce the traditional tragic drama to the level of shopkeepers and apprentices. That it was a poor drama is beside the historical point: it showed the stage reflecting the times--the growing middle-class influence in England which reached its height in the Victorian Age (since then diluted with the political power of labour). And no doubt someone has a dissertation somewhere that traces a tradition from The London Merchant to Arthur Miller's Death of a Salesman in 1949.

If the tragedy underwent a social transformation, what of the romance? The verse form in the nineteenth century hardly changed: Keats's "The Eve of St. Agnes" and Tennyson's Idylls of the King are still aristocratic. On the other hand, Hawthorne's The House of Seven Gables suggests that, in the prose form, a sun goddess (suitably euhemerized into a human, Phoebe) can work in a shop. Whether Poul Anderson intended in Operation Chaos to write a modern middle-class romance, or fell into doing it by trying to write so that his audience would identify with the material, is beside the point: his work is basically a middle-class (perhaps upper middle-class) romance.

What can be more middle class today than a war-time romance (in the sense of love); a college courtship; marriage, with some psychological adjustments; and an engineering job for the husband, and a first child for the wife? The war:

> I passed by the Air Force strip; they were bivouacked with us, to give support as needed. A couple of men stood on guard outside the knockdown hanger...Their blue uniforms were as mucked and bedraggled as my OD's, but they had shaved and their insignia...were polished. They saluted me, and I returned the gesture idly. Esprit de corps, wild blue yonder, nuts. (p.5)

College:

> We came to the stadium, and I handed over my ticket...My seat was on the thirty-yard line, between a fresh-faced co-ed and an Old Grad already hollering himself raw. A...tray went by, and I bought a hot dog... (p. 46)

Honeymoon:

> ...we had plenty of time for an afternoon of surf bathing. At sunset we climbed back a stairway hewn from the yellow rock, ravenous, and I prepared steaks by introducing them to a charcoal fire but allowing no further conversation. Afterward we moved onto a patio overlooking the sea. We sat in deck chairs, holding hands, and the stars came out to greet us. (p. 81)

The husband's job:

> The Nornwell...Corporation was among the new outfits in the booming postwar communications and instrument business. Though small, it was upward bound on the exponential curve. Besides manufacture, it did R & D, and I was invited to work on the latter. This was not simply fascinating in itself, it was a long step toward my ultimate professional goal. Furthermore, an enlightened management encouraged us to study part time for advance degrees, on salary. That pay wasn't bad, either. And before long, Barney Sturlason was my friend as much as he was my boss. (p. 103)

Dale Carnegie would be proud of the hero for that last statement.

Of course, I have deliberately avoided in these quotations those parts that indicate the fantasy. Operation Chaos consists of a prologue in which the hero, Steven Matuchek, attempts the projection of his thoughts across alternate universes (this prepares for the first-person exposition that appears later); an attack by Steven and Virginia Graylock (and her familiar, a tomcat named Svartalf) on the forces of the Saracen Caliphate (particularly an afreet), which are holding the western United States during World War II; an upset when a salamander gets loose in a college town; a temptation of the newlyweds by a succubus; and a kidnapping of their child. (What greater upset to middle-class emotions than such a disruption of the Family?) Northrop Frye comments (Anatomy of Criticism, p. 186), "At its most naive [the romance] is an endless form in which a central character who never develops or ages goes through one adventure after another until the author himself collapses" -- such as Little Orphan Annie, I assume.

Anderson's hero and heroine are not quite at this level. The series of adventures are in logical order -- logical middle-class American order -- for one thing. For another, the adventures are simple at first, complex later: a wartime raid and a piece of college humour; a psychological study (over-obvious, to be sure) and Charles Williams-like theological phantasia. The last, the most complex of the episodes, is also the longest. On the other hand, a string of four adventures is not, other things being equal, as artistically satisfying as one unified story. Sir Gawain and the Green Knight is better than Chretien de Troyes' Perceval (the latter is incomplete but I am thinking of its Gawain episodes).

Since my opening contention was the bourgeois character of Operation Chaos, I should like to note its romantic character, using the final episode for my example. According to Northrop Frye:

> ...as soon as romance achieves a literary form, it tends to limit itself to a sequence of minor adventures leading up to a major or climacteric adventure, usually announced from the beginning, the completion of which rounds off the story. We may call this major adventure, the element that gives literary form to the romance, the quest. (ibid., 186-7)

The visions that Steven has on pp. 21, 61-2, 87, and 167-8 prepare for the quest in Operation Chaos. Further, Frye indicates that the quest plot has four steps: (1) the agon or conflict, the stage of the perilous journey and the preliminary minor adventures (I will suggest some minor adventures in the last episode, but the first three episodes are also part of this); (2) the pathos or death struggle, the crucial struggle, usually some kind of battle in which either the hero or his foe, or both, must die; (3) the sparagmos or tearing to pieces, the disappearance of the hero; and (4) the anagnorisis or discovery, the recognition or exaltation of the hero (ibid., 187, 192).

The fourth episode begins about the time Steven goes to work after college--i.e., about p. 103. Since the book has 232 pages, this means over half the volume is given over to it -- a "climacteric adventure" indeed. The structure involves a double descent by the hero (and, in the second case, heroine). Almost a double romance; not quite.

The first minor adventure involves some Peace Protesters entering the ground of Nornwell Scryotronics Corporation, because Steven's employer makes "police and defense equipment, like witchcraft fluorescers and basilik goggles" (p.108). Steve, Virginia, and others manage to douse the protesters with "butyl mercaptan, butyric acid, methanethiol, skatole, cadaverine, putrescine... well, yes, the organic binder did have penetrative properties; if you got a few drops on your skin, the odor wouldn't disappear for a week or two..." (p.126). This stink bomb for protesters seems to me an excellent model of middle-class attack on what it considers the forces of evil.

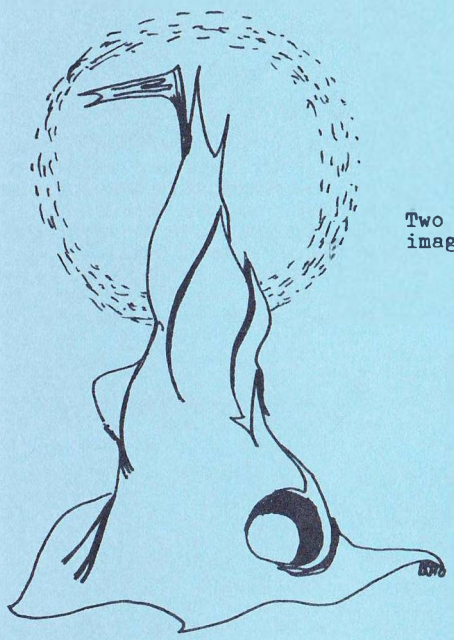
Meanwhile, the Matuckeks' child is kidnapped by a demon. From this point on, the adventures become more fantastic and less middle class, it must be confessed. Yet the loss of a child is not the basis of any mediaeval romance I can think of: as I said before, it seems a quest based on basically middle-class values.

The first descent follows when Steven steals into the subterranean chambers beneath the cathedral of the Johannine Church (a rather Gnostic denomination, following St. John, it says, rather than St. Peter as the first leader of Christianity). Steven finds the priest he is seeking in a small stone cell carved out of a natural cave. It is there that the last vision of Satan comes, (pp. 167-8)--certainly appropriate at the bottom of this natural Hell.

Literally, this is a preliminary adventure (and the vision does prepare for the final quest); symbolically, it is a foreshadowing of the great descent--the combined pathos and sparagmos--to come. At this point, the band of helpers (here called a "coven") forms around the hero. The names of all of them do not matter (see p.174), but they include, besides the engineers and mathematicians necessary to open the way to Hell, Pastor Karlslund of a Lutheran Church. (I suspect that the Lutheran Church in America could now be considered mainly middle-class.)

According to Frye (ibid., 195-7), the figures on the hero's side in a romance are such types as (1) the wise old man, (2) the sybilline wise mother-figure, (3) the faithful companion, (4)the hero's bride-to-be, and (5) the hero's horse or other helpful animal. I suppose the band mentioned above constitute the wise old men. The mother figure is missing, and Virginia combines the roles of companion and bride (I realize she is also a mother, but a mother-figure is old). Virginia's familiar is the helpful animal. Frye also comments on the neutral creatures, usually spirits of nature, who when they help the hero (i.e., when they are not neutral) are such types as (6) "the awkward but faithful giant with unkempt hair / who / has shambled amiably through romance for centuries"; (7) the helpful fairies; (8) the grateful dead; and (9) the wonderful servant. The dead spirits -- souls of Nicholai Ivanovitch Lobachevsky and Janos Bolyai von Ungarn -- appear on pp. 190-195. Other spirits, more powerful than fairies, appear on pp. 226-228; they are in the forms, at least, of Athena, Quetzalcoatl, and Thor. (Anderson does not name them, but the descriptions are obvious). No giant appears on Steven's side. And no wonderful servant appears as such, unless one recombines things and considers Svartalf (Virginia's tomcat) inhabited by the soul of Bolyai to be one.

Frye also says (pp. 195-6) that there are opposite figures to match each of these on the villain's side: the evil magician, the witch, etc. Since Steven, Virginia and Svartalf-Bolyai are invading Hell, the imagery of the opposite figures is undisplaced:



> We focused on a single band of demons. No two looked alike; vanity runs high in hell. A body covered with spines, a tentacled dinosaur, a fat slattern whose nipples were tiny grinning heads, a flying swine, a changeable blob, a nude man with a snake for a phallus, a face in a belly, a dwarf on ten-foot pencil thin legs, and less describable sights-- (pp. 215-6)

Two exceptions to this undisplaced imagery appear. One is a giant:

> The giant upheaded himself.
>
> Higher he stood than the highest spire of this stronghold beside which he had lain buried. The blackness of him blotted out the stars of hell. His tottering feet knocked a certain wall down in a grinding roar; dust swirled up, earthquake ran. Nearly as loud was the rain of dirt, mud, gravel from the wrinkled skin. Fungi grew there, pallidly phosphorescent, and worms dripped from his eye sockets. The corruption of him seized the breath. The heat of his decay smoldered and radiated. He was dead; but the power of the demon was in him. (p.226)

Here is the opposite of both "the awkward but faithful giant" and the grateful dead.

The other exception is the chief demon of the keep that the Matucheks attack:

> The devils, even the strewn wounded, fell quiet. Their noise sibilated away until the silence was nearly total, and those who could, withdrew until they merged in vision with the blackness behind them. I knew their master had spoken, the lord of this castle...who stood high in the Adversary's councils, if he commanded obedience from these mad creatures.
>
> Boots clacked over flagstones. The demon chief came before us. The shape he had adopted startled me. Like his voice, it was human; but it was completely unmemorable. He was of medium height or less, narrow-shouldered, face homely and a bit puffy, ornamented with nothing but a small toothbrush mustache and a lock of dark hair slanting across the brow. He wore some kind of plain brown military uniform. But why did he add a red armband with the ancient and honorable sign of the flyfot? (pp. 222-3)

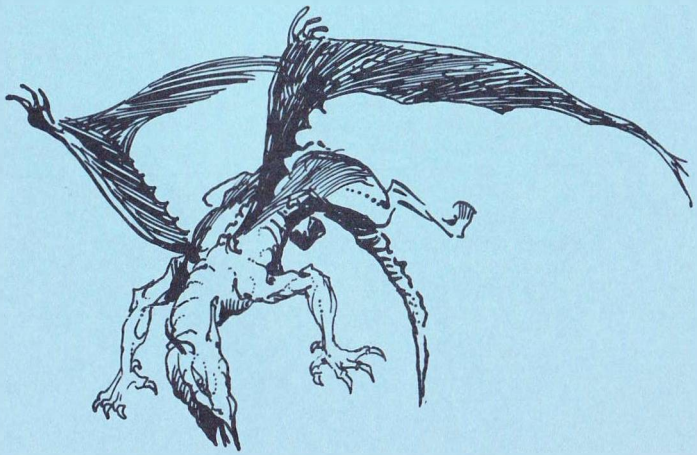
Steven does not recognize Hitler because, of course, he is from a parallel universe where World War II was fought with Saracens; but the Fuhrer is an effective symbol of ultimate evil for his audience, for his average-American (and mainly middle-class) audience. (Or is that only propaganda about college students and engineers who read science-fiction?)

With this catalogue of characters completed, let me return to the plot. Ordinarily the hero meets his foe, fights, and dies or nearly dies. Superman is weakened by Kryptonite. Gandalf plunges into Moria. Sir Gawain bares his neck to the Green Knight's Danish ax. Christ is crucified and, according to the Apostles' Creed, descends to Hell. Here, as I suggested earlier, the "death" and descent into the grave, the disappearance of the hero, the sparagmos, is united with the pathos or death struggle because of the nature of the quest: the child must be sought in Hell.

This is followed by the anagnorsis or discovery, the recognition or exaltation of the hero. Superman escapes. Sir Gawain receives only a nick and prepares to fight. Christ rises from the dead on the third day. And Steven and Virginia return from Hell with their child to fame. Theirs is a middle-class reward; it is Bolyai who receives a supernatural reward, being remitted from his time in Purgatory for his assistance of the Matucheks and being allowed to enter into Heaven:

> What broke our kiss was a joy greater yet, a happiness whose echo will never stop chiming in us: "Free! O Father!" And when we could look at this world again, Svartalf was only Svartalf. (p. 230)

Summaries are invidious things, but in this case perhaps one may also be clarifying. Operation Chaos is a commercial fiction well aimed at its middle-class, somewhat conservative audience. The protagonist, while retaining as an adventurous werewolf much of the heroic actions of a pulp or romance hero, nevertheless reflects the career progression of a modern bourgeois. The minor characters are romance types. The plot is episodic but traditional. The freshness of the fiction comes from the thorough development of a combination of middle-class setting with a magical society. The volume, therefore, provides enjoyable bourgeois entertainment.



The Death of Imagination

by

Cy Chauvin

Michael Moorcock, editor: New Worlds Quarterly 4 (whole number 205); Sphere Books, London; Berkley Books, New York, 95¢.

New Worlds, under Michael Moorcock's editorship, has probably aroused more controversy than any other s-f magazine published in recent years. Originally founded in Britain by the late John Carnell, the father of British s-f, the magazine was nearly stillborn; the original publishing company collapsed in 1946 after only three issues. Carnell was then forced to form a new company, Nova Publications, largely financed by British s-f fans. New Worlds was published on a fairly steady basis from then on, and Science Fantasy/Impulse founded as a companion magazine. Together, these two magazines published nearly all the first stories by many now prominent British s-f writers, ranging from Arthur C. Clarke to J.G. Ballard to Moorcock himself. In 1964, Carnell left the magazine to start New Writings in SF, the longest running original fiction anthology series (now up to its 21st volume in England). At the time, both New Worlds and Science Fantasy/Impulse were being published in a monthly paperback format and were not too healthy financially. When Moorcock took over New Worlds in 1964, he began selecting unusual kinds of s-f. In 1967, through the efforts of Brian Aldiss and others, the magazine was awarded a grant of £1,800 ($4,320) from the Arts Council of Great Britain, helping it to avoid imminent financial collapse. After receiving the grant, New Worlds immediately mushroomed into a large "slick" format, and began using great amounts of experimental artwork, photographs , etc. Unfortunately, by 1971 it was banned by so many distributors that Moorcock (who had been forced to become its publisher) was driven near bankruptcy. It was decided to convert back into paperback format, and publish on a quarterly schedule. The first large-size issue was #201.

This is the recent history of New Worlds. While it is no longer being marketed and distributed as a magazine (but rather as a book), New Worlds still manages to retain many of the good features of a magazine. It has editorials and book reviews (disguised as "introductions" and "critical essays"), illustrations that actually match the text, articles, and even serialized novels (in the form of a series of interconnected short stories). One cannot help but admire Moorcock's ingenuity. I'm afraid, however, that his taste in science-fiction leaves much to be desired.

The fiction's major flaw results from New Worlds' days as a big slick magazine. Moorcock's intention during that period has often been misinterpreted: he did not intend at that time to produce a science-fiction magazine but rather a general fiction magazine. New Worlds did not intend to foster any "new wave"--this, rather, was a term coined by Judith Merril and Harlan Ellison for the type of s-f they wished to promote. In an interview for Science Fiction Review (#34, p.11) in 1969, Moorcock said that:

> ...the new wave has to with science fiction /while/ New Worlds has not to do with science fiction. New wave science fiction is...traditional science fiction written with more gusto... perhaps it's more colorful, perhaps it's more sophisticated in some of its characterizations--but it is still essentially science fiction...Whereas, what New Worlds is trying to do is to...utilize...some of the conventions of science fiction and a lot of the subject matter of science fiction, and the attitude ...which science fiction writers bring to their subject matter. But to write something that is essentially different...

Moorcock has repeated a similar idea in New Worlds Quarterly 2 (pp. 10-11), where he refers to certain writers who have been restricted by the limitations of s-f, and have felt the need to go outside the field. "The work these writers produce in the future," says he, "will simply be a type of fiction which may employ some of the techniques and subject matter / of s-f /.

Moorcock may see--or wish to see--a certain kind of new fiction evolve out of s-f, and this undoubtedly explains much of New Worlds' past history (as well as some contents of this present volume). But New Worlds is no longer a big slick general fiction magazine subsidized by the Arts Council; rather, it is a paperback once again, with the words "science fiction quarterly" boldly printed right across the front. Moorcock is therefore obliged at least to attempt to print good s-f. Unfortunately, he fails by neglecting to develop one of s-f's most important aspects.

S-F would not be receiving the critical and academic attention it is getting today if it did not have some unique quality, nor would it have drawn the readers it has if there were not something in it they could find nowhere else. Literary virtues alone do not explain this appeal; there must be something else that is essential in good s-f. And I believe this "something else" to be the exploitation of s-f's imaginative characteristic.

By this phrase I mean the imaginative "non-real" elements loosely derived (via "extrapolation" and "speculation") from the physical and social sciences that are found in every s-f story--everything from "slow glass" and Phil Dick's talking suitcases to the sex-changing inhabitants in The Left Hand of Darkness. These are the elements that make s-f unique.

Since s-f's special appeal rests upon this characteristic, the implication is that s-f cannot be adequately judged by literary criteria alone. This does not mean (as has been said in the past) that we should disregard normal literary standards when judging s-f, but that we should add another criterion to them--an imaginative criterion.

This issue of New Worlds fails largely, as I have said, because it fails to exploit s-f's unique quality. At one extreme, the stories repeat clichés; William Woodrow's "Simeon," for instance, uses the old idea of a hive culture in a routine and stale fashion. The "surprise" ending reveals that the protagonist is really a drone. B.J. Bayley's "The Exploration of Space" is a similar effort that reads like a bad cross between Jules Verne and Alice in Wonderland. Interesting possibilities are hinted at, but the author never bothers to develop them. At the other extreme are borderline pieces like Alan Aumbry's "Man in Transit" or John Sladek's "The Locked Room Case." That there is indecision as to whether or not a story is s-f obviously means that it cannot have exploited s-f's imaginative attributes; otherwise the story would be clearly recognizable as s-f. Hence "borderline" stories are by their very nature inferior science-fiction.

I believe that New Worlds' failure is in part caused by Moorcock's (and his writers') loss of faith in s-f: they think that the medium is already exhausted. "True creativity these days exists only outside the field," says Charles Platt (in this same volume), writing about Alfred Bester. "After / The Stars My Destination / everything seems a little derivative...Bester gave up writing s-f and perhaps some of his contemporaries should have followed his example"(p.212). Moorcock himself said in New Worlds Quarterly 2 (p. 10) that s-f was inherently inferior: "...sf...is written within what is as best a minor artform. It would be foolish to claim more than that." And: "Reasonable s-f readers accept the fact that s-f, as such, can never by its very nature offer the richer, more profound pleasures of the best novels."

There is another reason why New Worlds took its present course: prestige. The slick paper, modernistic graphics, and extensive nonfiction in the large-size magazine were all designed to make New Worlds into a prestigious product. Moorcock wanted to avoid the old s-f stigma and make New Worlds a respected magazine. Unfortunately, what happened is that the New Worlds writers--in a similar quest for prestige and respect--adopted not only the techniques of contemporary fiction (which were well worth adopting) but the subject matter as well. On this phenomenon Stanislaw Lem comments:

> If / s-f writers / imitate "mainstream" literature, / they / will lose their exploratory powers rather than become accepted by the "mainstream" and be acknowledged as equal members. We can't compare the s-f writer's status to that of the American Negro who, when he asks for equality, wants to maintain all his cultural characteristics, and wants to enrich them with the white man's culture. At present the aspiration of the s-f writer is like the Negro who tries to bleach his skin and make his curly hair straight. In short, an imitative s-f writer resembles a Negro who totally renounces all his intrinsic qualities. When / an s-f writer does this / s-f / no more / succeeds in becoming a branch of "normal" literature / than the Negro succeeds in becoming a white man /.
>
> (S-F Commentary 22, p. 48)

S-F's real potential lies in the fusion of its unique characteristic with true literary quality, not in any prestige-seeking imitation of "mainstream" contemporary fiction. Whatever the merits of the new type of fiction Moorcock wishes to encourage, it is obvious that if New Worlds is ever to regain its status as an important s-f magazine, it will have to change directions.

Until then: read at your peril.

Editor's note: I could make no sense of the above Lem quotation--which after saying that Blacks and s-f writers can't be compared goes ahead and compares them--until Cy Chauvin explained it (in a letter), so I assume the reader's obtuseness equals my own. Lem is saying that some Negroes try to acquire the White's culture while staying Black themselves and others try to acquire it while not staying Black--and that a certain category of s-f writer can be compared to the latter but not to the former. Those who think my explication is as garbled as the original passage are requested not to write me and say so: I've enough complaints already.

The Ticking of an Orange

by

Steven Dimeo

What can you say about a nadsat chelloveck who tolchoked lewdies and never had to say he was sorry? Or the movie "A Clockwork Orange" itself that critics have universally acclaimed as a real horrorshow horror show?

Not much else, it would seem, after the superfetation of publicity accorded the film in national magazines.

Certainly it is a classic of its kind as much as director Stanley Kubrick's "2001: A Space Odyssey" and "Dr. Strangelove," combining the visual expertise in the former with the black humour of the latter. He has obviously done as much for the field of cinematic science fiction as he has in popularizing classical music--and in a field flooded with such timeless embarrassments as "Trog" or "The Green Slime" needs any help it can get.

Certainly, too, the film, a brilliantly executed piece of professionalism, only confirms Kubrick's controversial genius.

This time, however, a good deal of the credit belongs to British novelist Anthony Burgess whose ten-year-old book Kubrick has adapted with a fidelity uncommon in the movie world. The film is often at its weakest when Kubrick's sense of cinema shadows Burgess' vision.

Because he relies heavily on the original story line, Kubrick avoids the tedium of overt allegory and superficial characterization that plagued the otherwise visually exciting 2001. He retains the novel's cyclical unity. Gang leader Alex (Malcolm McDowell) returns to the life of carefree victimizing he had before subjected to the Ludovico Technique which, in reconditioning him against sex, violence, and Beethoven, reduces him to the will-less victim of a vindictive environment. As Alex assaults an old bum, his own droogs (friends), and the author and his wife in the first part, so he is turned upon coincidentally by the bum, the droogs, and the writer in the last. It is Burgess' irony, too, when the wronged author at the end is put away while the 17-year-old delinquent who wronged him is unleashed upon the world again. Kubrick does not retain the question that neatly begins each of Burgess' three parts like an incremental refrain--"What's it going to be then, eh?"--a question that accentuates the theme of choice and the story's implications for our own future.

Without overdoing it, Kubrick also brings the nadsat dialect to the screen. In having Alex (whose name ironically means "wordless," so Burgess tells us) mix childish words like "baddiwad" and "eggiweg" with the more formal and archaic nouns of address like "thee" and "thou" and "O my brothers," or adopts Joycean puns from Russian or Anglo-Saxon root words, Burgess--unlike Orwell and the political portmanteau words of Newspeak--aims at universalizing the story beyond our own time. It's easy to see why such a gimmick would appeal to Kubrick who in 2001 made his soundtrack a mosaic of classical greats to the same effect. Much of the movie's dialogue, in fact, comes straight from Alex's original narration unchanged.

The question, however, should not be how derivative Kubrick is but rather how successful he is at making Burgess' vision his own.

Satire walks a narrow line between too much exaggeration and not enough. With a camera rather than a pen for balance, Kubrick sometimes leans too precariously one way or the other. In the long prison library cut, for example, Alex, who has just been appreciating the Bible for its scourges and "in-outs" (copulations) rather than for its teachings, tells the chaplain he intends to go straight. But he plays the scene so straight that the subtlety risks taking the tongue from his cheek altogether. Kubrick does direct McDowell to overplay the part in the final scene when the Minister of the Interior feeds the disabled Alex, but McDowell opens his mouth wide so often with impertinence that the effect is ultimately undermined. In another unusually long cut, P.R. Deltoid, the Post-Corrective Adviser, confronts his advisee in Alex's bedroom with his idiosyncratic "yes's" so frequently we aren't sure whether Kubrick means him to come off sinister or merely moronic. It is after all only risible when Deltoid realizes he has been drinking water from a glass with false teeth in it and it seems only queer or meaningless that he should punctuate his talk with Alex by slapping the boy on his genitals as though slapping his back.

Of course most of the time these satirical embellishments to Burgess' story are trenchant. Chief Chasso, for instance, reduces the rule of a martinet to the absurd when he shouts out the list of Alex's possessions before the boy is admitted to prison, or when he stamps his feet and salutes in exaggerated respect. Pomposity falls when the Minister of the Interior examines the prisoners to the tune of "Pomp and Circumstance." A question of values is underscored when Alex's groans of pain are juxtaposed to the groans of ecstasy from a nurse who is finding more in a nearby hospital bed than misery's company. Irony magnifies the satirical horror even more when Alex warbles "Singin' in the Rain" to express his sadistic delight while he oscillates from raping the writer's wife to kicking the writer into paralysis. It is a more mordant exploitation of music reminiscent of the similarly ironic "Till We Meet Again" that accompanies images of nuclear annihilation at the end of "Dr. Strangelove."

Though he is occasionally too gimmicky, Kubrick's visual devices are more consistently successful--a predictable achievement in the light of his special effects and brilliant star-gate sequence in 2001. When Alex subdues the mutinous members of his gang by tolchoking them into the river and slicing at Dim's hand, the slow motion camera makes the action and facial expressions of horror ridiculous--but there should be little ridiculous about it. Slow motion, on the other hand, might have been particularly evocative in Alex's final dream sequence while he listens without pain to Beethoven's Ninth Symphony--except for the choice of subject matter. He envisions himself frolicking gaily in the virginal snow with a naked female before a crowd in Victorian garb; Burgess has Alex think instead of bloody violence. One feels at the end of the novel that the author, although he still thinks moral choice imperative, looks in horror at the consequences either way of tampering with a man's will or letting the will to destroy run free. Kubrick's choice suggests only ecstatic freedom, not the ominous implications of the novel's climax. It's true that fornicating before those who don't approve undercuts conventional order--but not as incisively as slow-motion rape.

Such instances, however, are infrequent. When Alex "appreciates" the two girls he has picked up at a record shop, Kubrick appropriately speeds up the film and the soundtrack drums with the Wilhelm Tell Overture, thus reducing the "loving" to slapstick. It is a visual confirmation that love to them is as "cold and pointless" as Alex says one of the girl's drooping phallic popsickle seems. And despite the controversial emphasis on graphic sex and violence (enough to rate an "X"), Kubrick does demonstrate a sensitivity to character reaction rather than pornography by means of the camera. As Alex rapes the writer's wife, we see only a close-up of the writer's horrified and helpless face. Or when Alex rams the white statue of a penis and testicles (Kubrick's touch, not Burgess') into the mouth of the spinster, the campera jerks to sudden close-ups not of the bloody results but of surrealistic lips on canvas--a scream heard only by sight--and a shot of Alex's uncertain disgust at what he has done.

Moreover, Kubrick's command of the colour camera is always professional. Its documentary-like mobility increases our sense of impending doom when we are compelled to follow Alex and his two ex-henchmen-turned-police into the woods where they can beat him with immunity. His composition is carefully aimed at enhancing the theme or the character's centrality. The blood-red screen that opens the film emotionally portends the world of violence to come as the same device did in Antonioni's too timely examination of American violence in "Zabriskie Point." When Alex comes home from prison to find a boarder named Joe has taken his room and his place in the family, Joe's red shirt blends with the red living room wall while Alex's black coat alienates him chromatically. And the camera becomes Alex's eyes when he peers up at the threateningly tall figures over him in the interrogation room or when he watches the two huge stereo speakers (looking odd-ly like the overseeing monoliths in 2001, an unsettling similarity to ponder) that are rolled to each side of the foot of his bed.

The props are eyecatching here, too, as they were in Kubrick's last film, but for a different purpose. The naked mannequin-tables in the Korova Milkbar, the bloody eyeballs on the uniforms of the hoodlums, the blatant phallic symbols, the obvious shot of the 2001 album cover, the writer's doorbell chiming the first four "V for victory" notes of Beethoven's Fifth--all are touches that show Kubrick at a masterful distance from his material, laughing not only at the values of that future but of his depiction of it as well.

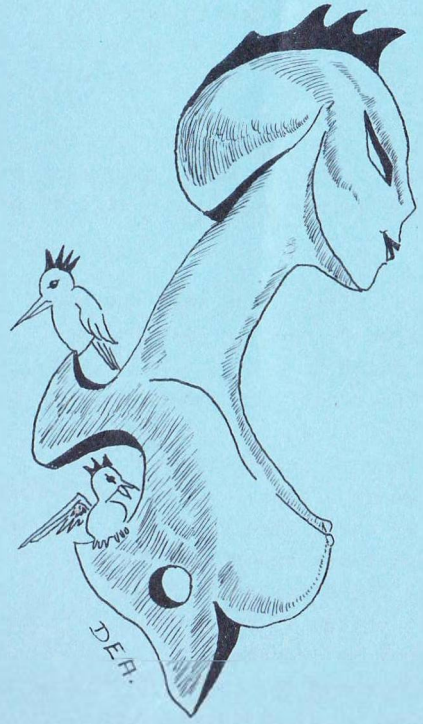
Probably because of this distance, Kubrick omits any explanation of the title "A Clockwork Orange," but to his advantage. Such an explanation risks homiletic overstatement--something Kubrick deliberately sidestepped in the final editing of 2001, incidentally, at the cost of clarity. In the book Alex notes the following passage from the novel A Clockwork Orange being written by the author whom Alex and his droogs have interrupted:

> --the attempt to impose upon man, a creature of growth and capable of sweetness, to ooze juicily at the last round the bearded lips of God, to attempt to impose, I say, laws and conditions appropriate to a mechanical creation, against this I raise my sword-pen--

An ironic cry especially since that "sweetness" man is so capable of in his time inevitably whelms both the author and his idealism.

Burgess claims he overheard the title phrase used by an 80-year-old cockney to describe madness. But in a generation that has since 1962 seen the rise of youth rock groups like the "Electric Prunes," the violence of assassinations and Kent States, and the empty political pleas for law and order, he has provided a prophetic catchword that means even more than the societal insanities implicit in Joseph Heller's "catch-22." Life, like an orange, does not work like clockwork; its ticking is as much a heartbeat as it is a time bomb.

Kubrick's print of such a forbidding fruit may not always be technically perfect but it is artful enough to tempt us into biting--and real enough in its grim humour for us to know that bitter aftertaste of foresight.



Sonnets in Celebration of the Film

"A Clockwork Orange"

by

Robert Plank

I

Like tunnel entrances that suck up trains
The theatre's mouth sucks up the girls and boys,
Offering a hell of unfamiliar joys
In barter for the outside's paltry pains.
They are a motley crowd, who form those queues.
Their mood is lighter, but their fate is darker
Than ours had been. Should we feel bound to use
The stricter forms of Shakespeare and Petrarca
In talking of them? Look: With midriffs bare
Some come, in ski suits some, some wearing bonnets.
For critical essays, this is likewise fair:
Some come like studious modern boys and girls
All hung with footnotes as if they were pearls.
Let some come in the guise of a sort of sonnets!

II

I've seen the film. I've read the book. I've read
Enough reviews to need an Alka-Seltzer.
What they amount to can be simply said:
Reason still stands, but modern feeling belts her.
Malcolm McDowell, who played Alex, says
That Alex "enjoys leadership and life."
He has "a sense of fun." . . . The writer's wife,
Did she, one asks, like his fun-loving ways?
The New York Times reports on the belief
Of students who accepted violence
As "kind of rhythm in the culture," hence
"Precluding moral judgment." Logic, grieve:
They have devoured the apple of knowledge; but
It seems that it is still stuck in their gut.

III

They ate the apple, and they lap it up
The blood and tears and gore, so fresh and steaming.
They munch their popcorn and they drain the cup
Of this new brew, of sex and mayhem dreaming --
While music, glorious as a heavenly light
Proclaims joy to mankind . . . music . . . and rape . . .
This scene of double rape, quick as a flight
Of nightmare birds, how did it get its shape?
Kubrick has now revealed he found the trick
While playing Eine kleine Nachtmusik.
His sound-effects are neat, and fast, and clear.
But what's that rumble from below I hear?
If you do not believe in ghosts, be brave:
That's Mozart turning in his unmarked grave.

IV

He has survived the grave. Be not dejected.
He will survive this recent would-be killer,
And so will Beethoven, and so will Schiller
And all the towers of sound that they erected.
But wait: So great a work is never finished.
And there are termites nibbling at its base.
We have our heritage (to coin a phrase)
To pass it on intact and undiminished.
With spunk and luck we even may increase it.
The mechanism, though, seems a bit rusty
To do it with; and all the red and lusty
Blood of the films will scarce suffice to grease it.
And with this melancholy observation
My sonnet have reached their final escalation

Sources:

II,7--"a sense of fun"--Orange Times, vol.2, no. 001, 1972

II,12--"precluding moral judgment"--New York Times, 15 March, 1972

III,10--"Eine kleine Nachtmusik"--Saturday Review, 25 Dec., 1971

OPERE CITATO

BY HARRY WARNER JR.

A couple of years ago, everyone was talking about the fanzine explosion that had just gone off in Australia. Everyone was wrong, because it turned out to be the start of a steady outpouring of Australian fanzines, not a one-shot phenomenon. Now the United Kingdom seems to have done something quite similar. Fanzines are arriving more frequently and with greater impace from England and other parts of Great Britain than they'd done since the great Retribution-Hyphen-Aporrheta era a dozen years ago.

Riverside Quarterly readers would take the most interest, I suppose, in the UK fanzines that most resemble in intent the fanzine they are now reading. I know of three such fanzines, out of the recent spate of all sorts of publications from the other side of the Atlantic. The most celebrated of them is Speculation, which has been read regularly by North American fans who know nothing of other British fanzines. Its 31st issue, the most recent to arrive, typifies its policy: emphasis on science-fiction, some coverage of fannish events that aren't too far removed from the professional field, and more humour and fannish intrusions than many people associate with the title. This issue has such unexpected things as a Brian W. Aldiss contribution entitled "I'm only a yellowing skull without any yellowing ears and yet I can hear every word you say as clearly as if it were yesterday" and four pages of beautifully reproduced photographs of the first Eurocon at Trieste. The pictures give a non-participant a firm impression that everyone who attended looked like a movie star in a relaxed mood.

An equally serious-slanted fanzine that has published twice as many issues seems to be only half as well known over here. It is Vector, whose status as the official journal of the British Science Fiction Association Ltd. leads many fans to assume that it's unavailable to non-members, true enough in the United Kingdom but not in the remainder of the galaxy. Or perhaps some North American fans assume that it's as club-centred as the National Fantasy Fan Federation's fanzines. In actuality, the bulk of each issue is crammed with reviews, texts of con talks by celebrated professionals, and other material that is sercon in the best sense of the word. Those who like some excitement to vary such quiet reading experiences will also find insight into the mysterious annihilation of the BSFA's fanzine collection at an auction and some sideline punching related to the great Lem-Rottensteiner tumult which normally concentrates in Australian fanzine pages. Vector is the least British-looking of current fanzines from the islands, in an octavo photo-offset format which gives it a New World appearance.

Cypher is the newest and currently biggest of the serious-slanted fanzines from that area. The eighth issue runs to 82 pages that approach legal length. The format seems a trifle awkward to fingers accustomed to smaller fanzines, but it permits quite large illustrations on pages that contain lots of text as well. Half of this issue has a special theme: the science-fiction of E.C. Tubb, and as a result the amount of non-review fanzine material devoted to this writer has probably doubled instantaneously. Walter Gillings, my personal choice for the least-heralded of all the valuable contributors to fanzines, tells interesting things about the sudden fame that The Day of the Triffids brought to John Wyndham, and there is a giant letter section which includes, as you might fear, some more in-fighting with respect to Lem's science-fiction.

Unfortunately, the United Kingdom does not have just now a fan-oriented fanzine that quite reaches the quality which made editors like Willis, Berry, and the Clarke-Sanderson group so celebrated. But unbelievably, there is one fanzine that actually survives from that era, not much changed in appearance or policy, and not too far below the level of its more celebrated former contemporaries. It is Ethel Lindsay's Scottishe. The 64th issue is typical of recent issues in general. It starts with book reviews that are an approximate equivalent of Buck Coulson's fanzine reviews: extremely short, but quite informative after you've learned to deduce things from the brief remarks. Arthur Thomson's fanzine work is now concentrated in Scottishe, one of the last outposts of the old general custom of artist-stenciled illustrations. I would rather look at ATOM's postage-stamp-sized sketches for the letter section than spend an hour at the art show at a worldcon. Ella Parker, whose first visit to North America was almost as publicized as the initial voyage of Columbus, reveals how she accomplished a Second Coming to observe the Apollo 16 launch in almost complete fannish obscurity.

Zimri is probably the most promising of the newer fanzines which seek a balance between professional and fannish matters. Lisa Conesa has published only four issues to-date, but there is no evidence of trial-and-error or tentativeness. The 48-page fourth issue is notable for the spectacular return to fandom of Harry Turner, who contributes a striking front cover, the material for a long interview, and even a little essay on his duties as proof-reader. Lisa didn't waste any time getting the pro back into reactivated fan status as an associate editor. A minority opinion on A Clockwork Orange, book and fanzine reviews, and an excellent piece of fiction by Robert P. Holdstock are also in this issue.

Somewhat more hectic and more fan-slanted is the second issue of Madcap. It's hard to be sure what direction Peters Presford and Colley will take, but the energy is there; there is a remarkably high proportion of material that is rich enough in originality to compensate for what it lacks in polish, and the issue has the great virtue of unexpectedness: size and colour of paper, format and subject matter vary with every second or third page. I particularly liked Roger Waddington's fanciful little visit to S-F City and the wildness of a couple of full-page illustrations.

Lurk has one particular distinction: it's the first fanzine I've ever received with a customs sticker on the envelope. A douane official must be easily contented, because it reached me with the following inserted as the Detailed Description of Contents: "A Magazine." It's the only European fanzine known to me with husband-wife editorship, and its habit of frequenting OMPA mailings doesn't cause much of it to be incomprehensible to those who don't belong to that apa. The text of James White's 1971 Novacon speech provides Lurk with a genuine touch of Irish Fandom's glory days, and there is also an interesting transcript from a 1972 Eastercon panel whose subject matter sounds unpromising: "Why do you write science fiction?" Niven, Pohl, Harrison, White, Shaw, and Wollheim give explanations of why they don't write mundane fiction.

United Kingdom fanzines have contained a lot of recent soul-searching, mainly lamenting the fact that they don't look as sleek as the best North American fanzines. I don't think it's worth worrying about, when they retain the atmosphere of literacy and good humour even in their scruffier-looking pages. There are at least a half-dozen other worthy fanzines emanating from that area, Eric Bentcliffe has been planning a resumption of fanzine production, and there's still a chance that old fans will stop longing for the era when the Goon, Inchmery, and Oblique House held us all in thrall.

Speculation: Peter Weston, 31 Pinewall Avenue, Kings Norton, Birmingham 30, UK. Irregular, 50¢ per copy or four for $2.00; "please send cash rather than cheques since these are subject to surcharging"; also available for trades or contributions.

Vector: Malcolm Edwards, 75A Harrow View, Harrow, Middx. HA1-1RF, UK. Almost bi-monthly, 60¢ per copy or ten for $5.50 (not for sale in the UK, where it is restricted to members of the BSFA).

Cypher: James Goddard and Mike Sandow, Woodlands Lodge, Woodlands, Southampton, Hants, UK; 60¢ per copy or four for $2.00, from American agent Cy Chauvin, 17829 Peters, Roseville, Michigan 48066. No publication schedule listed.

Scottishe: Ethel Lindsay, 6 Langley Avenue, Surbiton, Surrey KT6-6QL, UK. Three issues for $1 from American agent Andrew Porter, 55 Pineapple St., Apt. 3J, Brooklyn, New York. NY 11201. Also available for trades, in all probability. No publication schedule listed.

Zimri: Lisa I. Conesa, 54 Manley Road, Whalley Range, Manchester M16-8HP, UK. Available for trade, contribution, letter of comment, art, or 20p per issue or 50p for three, no North American rates listed. No publication schedule listed.

Madcap: Pete E. Presford, 10 Dalkeith Road, South Reddish, Stockport, or Pete Colley, 2 Bristol Avenue, Levenshulme, Manchester, UK. Available for trade, letter of comment, contribution or 20p per issue, no North American rate listed. No publication schedule listed.

Lurk: Mike and Pat Meara, 61 Borrowash Road, Spondon, Derby DE2-7QH, UK. Free to OMPA members, also available for contribution, letter of comment, trade, or 50p per issue, no North American rate listed, sample copy free. No publication schedule listed.

Dollar and cent prices above were published before the most recent devaluation of the United States dollar. An international money order is the simplest way to subscribe to UK publications, except where cash is requested.

the Seasonal Fan

Jim Harmon

FANTASY NOT UNLIMITED

Roy Squires, bearded scholar who first edited Fantasy Advertiser, which through a complex mating dance somehow gave birth to the present Riverside Quarterly (under the direction of the clean-shaven scholar, Lee Sapiro), has been issuing other publications for the past few years. The imagination behind them may be unlimited, but the publication is not -- they are limited to an average of 300 copies each.

While a detailed checklist of these small books would be just the sort of thing the type of collector who buys them would prefer, I will only sketch the fact that a number of them are concerned with the horror-fantasy of H.P. Lovecraft and Clark Ashton Smith. There are only three publications in print, atypically none of Lovecraft or Smith. These are:

Black Dawn, by Robert E. Howard, limited to 234 copies,

The Road to Rome, by Robert E. Howard, limited to 217 copies,

Old Ahab's Friend, and Friend to Noah, Speaks His Piece, by Ray Bradbury, limited to 485 copies.

Each of these particular books is a poem, although other Squires publications have been short stories, essays, bibliographical information. The Road to Rome is 54 lines on 6 pages; Black Dawn is 105 lines on 7 pages. Mr. Bradbury's work, slightly longer than its title, is on 6 pages, exact line count not specified in the offering I have. The paper, the type faces, the inks used are all beautiful, and could be described at length (as they are in the accompanying papers from Mr. Squires). The end result is a small booklet, bound in textured, heavy paper, hand-tied with coloured cord.

Five bucks for this?

Yes, five dollars is the price, and hundreds of people are willing to pay it. Why?

Two points are to be considered -- the collector's instinct and the economics of publishing.

"Collecting" is an almost universal human instinct, according to one article I read many years ago. Almost everyone collects something. Pieces of string, stacks of old newspapers, match book covers, books matchless and paper-covered. The object that is both rare and beautiful is desired. These books being limited to a few hundred are certainly rare and destined always to be. Being handmade by a dedicated craftsman they are beautiful.

Editor's note: For Roy Squires' address see the WAHF column, p. 350..

Another attribute of collectors is a tendency to be "completist." If one has a "run" of a certain author or a certain series of books or magazines, one may pay varying prices on each unit of the set -- this one for five dollars, that one for fifty cents (a lucky find), this one $12.73. Ah, but that last one to complete the set -- the last one you "need" -- that one you may find yourself paying $25 for, even though it may really be worth no more than the one you found for only fifty cents.

To those people with complete sets of Lovecraft, or Howard, or Bradbury, this edition is needed to keep their runs complete and a few dollars is a small price to pay for such satisfaction.

Mr. Squires has arrangements made with the various authors and authors' estates, but the limited edition publisher issuing his own work can often make as much money off a publication of a few hundred copies as he can in selling his work to a large publisher who will issue hundreds of thousands of copies.

For instance, I put out a booklet called The Pictorial Guide to Old Time Radio, forty pages, slightly bigger than digest-size, offset, but far from the printing perfection of the Squires output. Over several years, as much money has trickled in to me as I would have gotten from selling first serial rights on a science-fiction novel.

I had the work of putting my booklet together, and of putting it into envelopes and addressing them. But I also had the opportunity of opening all the incoming envelopes and removing the money. I knew exactly how much was coming in.

More and more such small scale publishing may be happening as time goes by. The large publishing houses are doing their best to make the profession of "writer" completely obsolete.

Publishing companies are run in some cases literally by computers and in other instances, figuratively so. They are programmed almost exclusively to their own best interests. The publishers decide when it is to their best interests to pay the writer (if at all), when to publish his book (a delay of three years is inconvenient if you are waiting for royalties), and exactly how much of the author's work it is convenient to buy. Not an unreasonable situation? An analogy would be to tell an employee in an automobile factory: "The company wants you to work twelve hours a day, seven days a week through January, but only Tuesday and Thursday afternoons in February, then mornings of alternate days March through June. We will, of course, hold all your salary for the year until September or such time after that we feel in a mood to give it to you. We can't use you at all, or pay you for the months of July through December. But we're sure you will show up here bright and early next January because this is the only automobile factory in town."

Not so many years ago, a publisher realized that a writer was a human being who had to buy groceries, pay the rent, and otherwise live his life. The old pulp publishers in the Thirties routinely supplied writers enough work to at least "get by" on. Even a few years ago -- six or eight -- when I was writing these modern-day pulps, the sex novels -- those publishers often would try to supply me with enough assignments to pay the bills.

But in the area of the "big time" publishers, nothing could be further from their minds. Each book is only a piece of merchandise to be hacked and sliced and wrapped in brown paper for the highest profit. The field of freelance writing is the last stand of dog-eat-dog capitalism, which is why the workers are so miserably off. (Of course, the publishers take advantage of all the tax write-offs and windfalls as any other businessmen.)

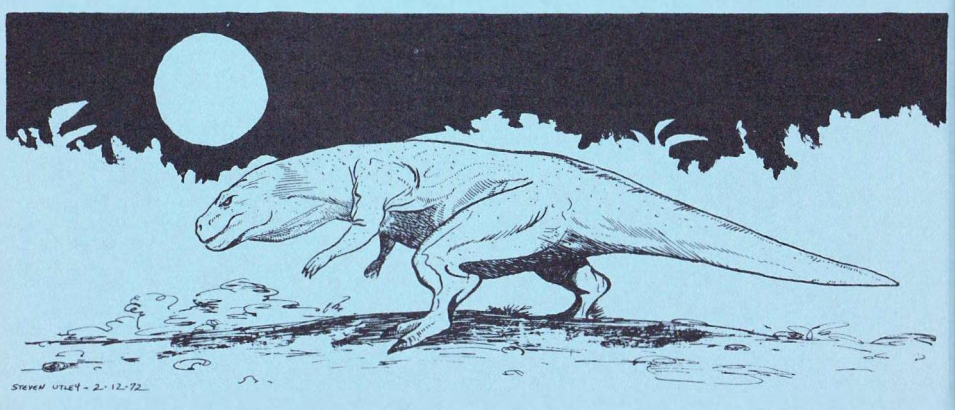
If the big publishers can not stay in business by paying the writers a decent wage, then let them go out of business. Books would still get written, published, and read.

Another factor in present-day publishing is that publishers routinely do not fulfil their contractual promises. There was a great deal of agitated debate in the Science Fiction Writers of America some years ago about the exact terms of the contract on books. In point of fact, the terms of the contract do not matter a great deal. The publisher will not live up to them. On most paperback books, one never receives more than the advance regardless of how many copies are sold in actuality or how much one is supposed to receive per copy. For a highly saleable author, some publishers may pay the extra money to get him to produce more or to prevent him from wandering to another publisher, but they do not pay anything further to the rank and file.

Defences by publishers themselves or from happy writers might be brought forth, but an overwhelming amount of evidence to the effect of the above could be offered from those with sufficient experience.

It may well be that publishers may make all writing of books totally unprofitable except for reasons of ego. Perhaps all publishers will become vanity publishers and make writers pay for the printing of their own books. No doubt they could maintain a certain output in this way. But whether publishers are practising relentless greed or are merely caught up in "the system" it is getting tougher and tougher to be a writer.

We may be forced back into the pamphleteering of the 17th and 18th centuries, printing our goods by offset (or hectograph), peddling them on street corners. Roy Squires may be the prophet of publishing to come.



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

Nearly everyone interested in the comic strip is aware of the pioneering job of recognition given the strip as art in two chapters of Gilbert Seldes' seemingly brash but actually kitsch study of 1924 pop culture, The Seven Lively Arts.

Any attentive reading of the text on strips (best pursued in the strikingly designed first edition, by the way, which contains two Krazy Kat sequences unreprinted elsewhere), must vitiate a great part of the good will we are inclined to feel toward Seldes purely on the basis of his ground-breaking effort.

For, aside from certain basic mistakes in comic strip history and chronology, which have been faithfully repeated in subsequent books, articles, and encyclopedia entries on the subject; some atrociously poor writing ("The strip...prospered by William Randolph Hearst especially in the coloured Sunday supplement"), all left uncorrected in the 1957 Sagamore Press revised edition; and poor proofing, the great flaw that indicts Seldes' writing on comics is his highly erratic judgement of which strips were significant and memorable in his own time. The dithyrambic chapter devoted to Krazy Kat would seem to be an exception to this, but since anyone then as now with the least justified pretense to taste and intellectuality can dig the gorgeously inspired Herriman--it is about as easy as perceiving Picasso's or Michelangelo's mastery of most graphic media--Seldes' applause doesn't count for much. No one who has ever given the least serious look at comics has failed to single out Krazy Kat for specific praise, and it was a sizable intellectual vogue in the early '20s. Seldes was simply riding a popular tide of approval in his glowing exegesis of the kat.

It is not in his chapter on Herriman, but in his preceding text on comic strips in general that Seldes does so much to exasperate us. This is particularly true of his attack on The Katzenjammer Kids ("least ingenious," he writes, "least interesting as drawing, the sloppiest in color, the weakest in conception and execution of all the strips...it is now divided into two / The Katzenjammer Kids and The Captain and the Kids / -- and they are equally bad"). This now amusing and preposterous attack on Knerr and Dirks, whose work was plainly among the most richly inspired and genuinely comic of the time, makes us turn a jaundiced eye to his enthusiasms for such now forgotten but remarkable cartoonists as Frueh (whom Seldes says "approaches" Herriman in quality, but whose work, while often fanciful and funny in concept, falls to a generally flat level of execution), and "Tad" Dorgan, the Jimmy Hatlo of his time, whose inventiveness with slang earned him some later etymological fame, but whose bouyant facility with ideas and concommitant inability to develop character and theme leaves his oddly wide appeal in his era embalmed with his work.

Seldes does praise Dorgan's closest popular rival, Clare Briggs, justly (Briggs possessed in abundance the talents Dorgan lacked at every level) and singles out De Beck's Barney Google and Fisher's Mutt & Jeff for deserved compliments, but only a few lines later he condemns The Gumps as nothing more than "columns of conversation" with no story movement, missing the point of Sidney Smith's searing commentary of American domestic relations as an endless and fruitless dialogue among the power-frustrated and money-hungry husbands and wives of the middle class, and absurdly ends by denouncing the whole "Chicago school" (which at that time included Frank King, Harold Gray, Frank Willard, and Ferd Johnson) as a set of strips about people "doing nothing."

These misjudgements, combined with a great deal of forgettable commentary on a number of dull or routine strips of the time (Abie the Agent, Day of Rest, Us Boys, Jerry on the Job--best of this poor lot--Petey, and so on) leave a bad image in the modern researcher's mind, as well as a sense of having wasted time on much irrelevant windiness. This reaction is confirmed, sadly, by Seldes' follow-up comment on comic strips in the Sagamore Press reprint. Here he writes:

> Again and again, year after year, I have tried to follow a comic strip--and failed. It is as if I had grown blind. The nearest I came to success was with Al Capp's work and when he caved in, yielding to some pressure he couldn't himself properly identify, and let Li'l Abner marry Daisy Mae, I gave him up. I was told that Barnaby had the real stuff, I still am told that Pogo is as imaginative and fanciful and great as I thought Krazy Kat was--but I cannot focus on these or any other strips as I turn the page of my newspaper.

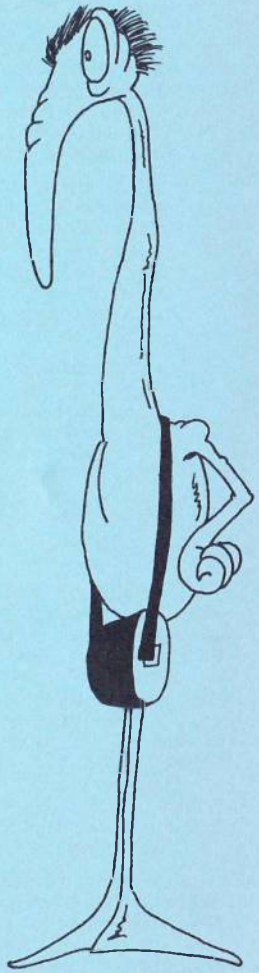
There is more, but it is even sadder. The statement is an epitaph to Seldes' critical competence, but it is an epitaph that could have been anticipated thirty-three years before.

All of which is a perhaps overlong buildup to tell you about another writer of the '20s who rebroke the ground Seldes left insufficiently turned and seeded. This author, an Englishman who viewed the American scene with fresh and very observant eyes at the close of the flapper decade in a series of articles for the New York World, wrote a shorter piece about the comic strip than Seldes, but what he wrote was considerably more trenchant and effective. His taste, too, holds up much better than Seldes': he praises only a few strips, but those he names are among the best of the period.

William Bolitho, whose World articles were collected into a book called Camera Obscura in 1930 by Simon and Shuster, was much better known in the '20s for his Murder for Profit (a superb collection of true crime narratives), Italy under Mussolini, and Twelve Against the Gods (enjoyable accounts of derring-do which was a Book-of-the-Month Club selection and is a stalwart denizen of the Goodwill-Salvation Army bookshelves along with many other good but over-common books) than for these World pieces. Unfortunately for whatever repute the collection might have normally garnered, it was published not only at the height of the year-long shock wave from the Wall Street crash, but after Bolitho's own premature death on June 2, 1930, at the age of 39. It was, accordingly, regarded as a minor last work (after all--newspaper articles!) rather than the latest product of a rising young author. Noel Coward's brief but moving preface to the book surveys Bolitho's life and (too few) works, and makes even clearer than the essays in the collection how rarely perceptive and tasteful a talent was lost.

What Bolitho had to say about comic strips, in a piece simply called "Comic Strip" (p. 31) was essentially this:

> Allow a diffident foreigner to tell you that among the curious and characteristic native products of America...the comic strip is one of the most to be appreciated. Nations are almost always slightly ashamed of their truly admirable idiosyncrasies; they all want to be distinguished only for massive virtues, which, even if they possess them in a remarkable degree, they only share with the rest of humanity...
>
> So without any critical insolence whatever, I confess I find the comic strip a more interesting cultural institution than, say, the Mid-Western novel, or the mystical voyages of O'Neill et al. in search of God, or sophistication in all its branches.
>
> Further, there is a kink in my outlook for which a terrible critic abashed me recently in a company by observing that "if Variety started counting points for what plays would be revived a hundred years hence you might come in the critics' competition." I had to admit even to myself that this Pharaonic norm, stultifier of all practical usefulness, does govern all my judgements. It is there too in this matter of the comic strip.
>
> I have that fallacious feeling of absolute knowledge that a first edition of Theodore Dreiser will only have the value of its covers for a quaint period chocolate box in 2000 A.D., whereas the single copy known of three famous comic strips, say, Mutt and Jeff, The Gumps, and Krazy Kat, complete from their beginnings, cut out and pasted in endless oil-cloth-covered volumes by an invalid spinster of the epoch on an isolated farm, will have something like the value of the original manuscript, say, of the Book of the Dead...
>
> Ephemerality is one of the causes of rarity, speculative collectors should notice, not initial cost. The limited editions of today will never became rare, because no one will throw them away. But this certain rarity is nothing compared to the peculiar interest of the contents...
>
> These interminable stories (in narrative strips) are...like an immense system of burrowings in the world of fantasy and imagination made (in spite of the occasional celebrity of their authors) really by anonymity itself. In these illustrated palimpsests there are traced not only our jokes and our business but our dreams.

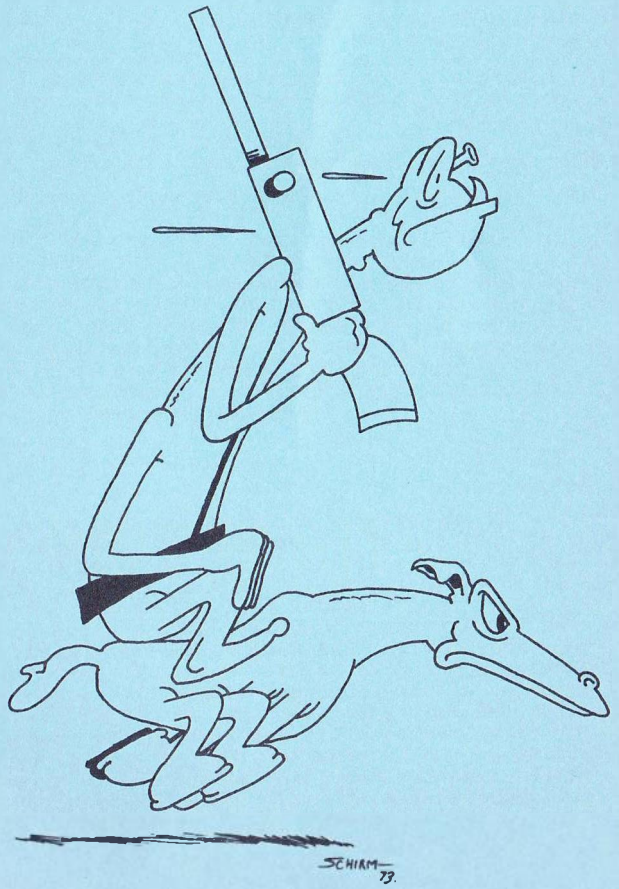


> Take that dear cat Krazy. My imagination shivers at the learning and the research necessary, historical as well as psychoanalytical, before the reason for its special--Mexican, apparently--setting...Have you noticed that it conforms to one of the highest ideals of creative art...that here is the creation of a world habitable to the imagination because it is internally true to its own laws?
>
> A heavy explanation for a thing all children, and every one who has ever had a dream in his sleep or read Alice in Wonderland knows a priori. Herriman has made a little world, queer, original, new, in which the imagination of millions has wandered and yet knows its way as easily as in Central Park--those flat-topped hills; that jail, in its small, shuttered stillness, as uncannily recognizable as the "Inn of the Crocodile" by Gustave Dore itself; all the desert roads and trees where Ignatz hides and discovers his bricks.
>
> In this, the art of the comic strip at its best--there are naturally innumerable degrees of excellence and dullness in it--above its peculiar technique of drawing, as special and interesting at least as Egyptian hieroglyphics, as in the English inspiration. Pickwick Papers started notoriously as a sort of celestial comic strip. Doctor Syntax's Tours and all the Tom and Jerry cartoon stuff of the 1820s are much inferior to the Mad Count of Milt Gross...
>
> How often I have admired the narrative technique into which the best of / the comic strips / have grown out of the sheer pressure of daily inventions, the endless, beginningless novels or romances, unfatigued by any main plot. The dogmatics of the future, with that mythical and complete collection in their hands I have prophesied for them out of my own unfulfilled wishes, will have time as well as material to work out, I hope, the development of such a strong, folkish, primitively vigorous method of composing a story, alongside all the others of our day. I wish I had their luck.

I would be obtuse if I didn't admit that the discovery of this piece in a book I picked off a shelf of essays in a second hand store just to kill time had pleased me inordinately. Bolitho seems to have seen comic strips forty years ago much as I see them now--as things of great future rarity and value, as being most worthwhile in complete runs (which he wants himself: the first person I know of to have recorded such a wish anywhere), as being variants of the novel narrative form (any cartoonist with any sense of the duration of his work in time had to handle continuity as a novelist handles it) and as being more valuable as art than many much more touted works in our culture. Seldes says none of these things, and I had no idea, until I ran across Bolitho, that anyone else had said them so early.

Needless to say, Bolitho's essay wasn't written in a sympathetic milieu; Seldes' good opinion of the comic strips, like those of a few others bold enough to clearly see the wonders under their eyes and speak out, had failed by the time Bolitho wrote to dent the preconceptions of the American middle class or of the educational-critical-editorial establishment (which are one and the same thing, of course) that comic strips were vulgar, barely tolerable trash for kids and the sillier variety of adults.

Bolitho's column, alas, was simply read (with many other newspaper items) with the morning coffee and toast by half a million New Yorkers, smiled at as an Englishman's fey fancy, and forgotten in the serious business of the day--like picking up the new, best-selling Emil Ludwig masterpiece to impress the Snyders at bridge, and deciding whether to spend the evening seeing the new De Mille masterpiece at the Rialto or the wonderful, wonderful Abie's Irish Rose in its sixth year at the Globe. The essential message of Bolitho, that Krazy Kat, or any number of other fine strips, read that morning, would provide more genuine experience of art and creativity than the majority of the books, films, and plays being commercially packaged by the entertainment industry of the day, was missed or scorned completely. One can only hope that, at least, a few not-then-too-elderly ladies were impelled by the piece to start putting up strips in those big oilcloth volumes--and that dozens of these are now lying about in nicely safe places, not to be discovered by posterity in 2000 A.D., but by some of us, right now.



Selected Letters

Red Hill Farm, Box 153
Ottsville, Pennsylvania

Dear Mr. Sapiro:

Thank you so much for Mr. Riggenbach's brilliant analysis of my work. I congratulate both of you. I read the critique with fascination and surprise, for the author pointed out patterns that I was never aware of, consciously.

The fact is that I work on the conscious level as a trained writer trying to create the most colorful and grabby story possible. The Freudian truth is that what's buried inside me must inevitably control the conscious creation. The art is the man. Mr. Riggenbach makes me feel as though he'd been my psychiatrist for twenty years and is now blabbing all. Has he never heard of the Hippocratic Oath?

It's for this reason that I'm going to do my best to forget the piece completely; it makes me self-conscious, and a self-conscious artist is no artist at all. It would be a hell of a situation if, every time I planned a piece of work, I stopped myself, saying, "Oh! What would Mr. Riggenbach have to say about that?"

Thank you again, and all my best...

Alfred Bester

One function of literary criticism is to make the reader aware of things missed (in the original reading). Now here's a second: to make the author himself aware. However, the topic under discussion was not the subconscious of Mr. Bester, but his use of Freudian notions about the subconscious in general. Inhibitions should occur only if the critic were trying to establish pathology in the author.

2442 Moreno Drive
Los Angeles, CA 90039

Dear Leland,

The new RQ was exceptionally interesting and...I particularly liked your analysis of the early pulps. But somehow the Rupp article left me with a little feeling of nagging discontent. I had some difficulty localizing it, but it finally came down to what seems to me to be the fundamental assumption underlying the article: that the literary community ought somehow to be persuaded to pay attention to s-f. This same assumption, alas, underpins much of the thinking of SFWA and is central to the philosophy of the most activist of the promoters within the lists of the organization. With the best intentions in the world, it seems to me, this wrecking crew is absolutely demolishing our prospects. Sturgeon's law remains yet to be repealed. Rather than encourage the uninitiated in the literary community to sample our wares--with disasterous consequences readily foreseeable to anyone who stops for a moment to think on them--it would seem preferable to plug steadily along suggesting individual authors occasionally to their attention, if any can be located worthy of it.

I construct the scenario of a literary figure journeying down to the corner newsstand with, say, $20 in his pocket to find out what s-f is all about. He picks up several randomly selected issues of the magazines. Say a particularly undistinguished issue of F&SF, Amazing, If, and Analog. It might even be one of those months when not even one of the editors of the innumerable Best of the Year anthologies could find something usable. In addition, this literary figure picks up a couple of juveniles, otherwise as modern 1984's or successors to H.G. Wells. He gets an additional three novels, each written in three weeks for $1,500 apiece, and bearing lavish endorsements by fellow practitioners on the back covers. He tops it off with two Best of the Year anthologies, a Doc Savage, which he vaguely identifies as s-f of some kind, and the current Nebula Award volume. He goes home and sits down and attempts to read these books. Christ, not even a fan is up to that! Worse yet, he hits on an all new anthology by one of the crusaders, wherein he is repeatedly assured that he is reading LITERATURE, GOD DAMN IT, and anyone who doesn't think so is welcome to cram the Grand Canyon up his ass, or some similar well thought out piece of instruction.

It would be better, I think, to circulate to these literary figures a novel and a collection of short stories by one of our more competent practitioners, hopefully selected to represent the best the field is presently offering. A mailing to 30 or 40 shouldn't cost over about $100. If accompanied by a little form, explaining the project, and leaving space for yes and no answers to certain questions, plus room for comment, then the person conducting the survey might get back some comments that would be meaningful. If it turned out the literary figures were unimpressed by the best we have to offer, then we might as well suspend the effort.

I can construct the case that the field can properly be indifferent to the comments of literary figures, since s-f, perhaps properly, is not supplying the values they are accustomed to looking for and their advice might even serve to misdirect it, but that isn't my point here, obviously. If we are going to solicit their attention, it does behoove us to put forward our best foot, if any, rather than to insist they find their way to works of merit unaided --something that can be done, if at all, only with extreme diligence and unflagging persistence.

Sincerely, Kris Neville

As Jim Blish says, the big irritant is not critics who ignore s-f but those (like Orville Prescott) who when confronted with an s-f item they like "...go out of their way to tell their readers that this isn't actually science fiction at all..."

---

26 Oakwood Ave.
White Plains, NY 10605

Dear Leland:

I don't like the way William Rupp phrased his survey questions. Or answers. The surveyor's wording can strongly influence the respondent's answer--especially when the respondent is choosing among preselected answers. If the respondent's opinion is entirely different from any of the choices, he or she may or may not so indicate. (Some people feel limited to the multiple choices, while others--like me--feel limited by them.)

Furthermore, I would say that some respondents have rather peculiar ideas about the characteristics of "serious" literature. According to Rupp, "The proper subject of 'serious' literature is often said to be the real world, by which contemporary society is implied." One of the respondents said that " 'serious' literature...never really deals with stock situations or technological predictions."

The proper subject of serious literature is contemporary society. In one fell swoop we have eliminated much of satire which depends on "imaginary" worlds to mirror this one. Limiting literature to the "real" world would limit it to only such things as actually happened or would be likely to happen--now. We would be eliminating all works written in the past, set in the past, written or set in a society other than our own. Shakespeare's plays would be eliminated twice--they wouldn't even have been "serious" literature in Shakespeare's day since the plots were based on previous happenings and plays.

I believe that one of the most important uses of s-f is to teach us to question our unconscious assumptions about reality. S-F shows us other possible ways of seeing the same reality--our own reality --as well as other realities. S-F takes a different slant, looks in a different way, at the norm--or at things which are different from the norm ("norm"--a completely imaginary idea, which implies that one person can say, "This is reality--that is not").

Of course, if you want to speculate whether certain characteristics of humanity are true universals--whether certain things are true in our contemporary society and will always and everywhere be true, or are true of our society alone--you have to reason against the background of a different culture, a different time, a different place.

Male chauvinists sometimes argue that sex roles are inherent in nature--that the ones we have are the only possible ones. Then there is The Left Hand of Darkness. S-F can point up our unconscious assumptions and self-limited thoughts...

"Serious" literature never deals with stock situations. We just eliminated Shakespeare again. It seems to me Shakespeare had several "eternal triangles" in his plays--not to mention ghosts seeking revenge, as stock a device as there was in the Elizabethan theatre.

Re: Lundwall and women in s-f -- Florynce R. Kennedy says, "If you've been hit a lot, you tend to stay sore for a while. Trying to help an oppressed person is like trying to put your arm around somebody with a sunburn." I couldn't have put it better myself and it would have taken me ten pages to do it. I begin to think that there isn't any right way to talk to a feminist -- because both Lundwall and Jeffrey Anderson got me right in my sunburn.

I don't like the fact that Lundwall deals with women in the same classification with sex. However, he may have meant to indicate that this is what the s-f writers themselves were doing. As long as some men see women as "that with which men have sex" there is going to be a strong connection between their attitude toward sex and their attitude toward women.

Granted, in showing male chauvinism many s-f writers were simply reflecting the views of their times. Lundwall could have pointed out that s-f, or any literature for that matter, should be read with some awareness of the social context in which it was written. I would criticise s-f writers for accepting the opinions of the majority instead of breaking new ground; I wouldn't criticise them as though they were the only ones to do so.

Hasn't Lundwall read any s-f by women?

What about Jirel of Joiry?

In one respect, s-f as a whole has not treated women very well. Virtually all female societies have been anti-utopias, from the society in Alph to the one in Marvel's Savage Tales #1. (A possible exception would be Philip Wylie's "mainstream" work, The Disappearance.)

Joanna Russ discusses this subject in the Afterword to her story, "When it Changed" printed in Again, Dangerous Visions. "Manless worlds...are either full of busty girls...writhing with lust...or the women have set up a static, beelike society..." (Apparently the most dangerous vision around, for some men, is the idea that women are equal to men--and could manage without them.)

But the "static, beelike society" brings me to a story called "Consider Her Ways" by John Wyndham. It shows a (deliberately) antlike society. It is possible to interpret this story as violently male chauvinist: implying that the loss of men would be the greatest possible catastrophe for all people and that women alone could formulate no better society than an ants' nest.

It is also possible to interpret the story as a feminist tract, foreshadowing qualities of Germaine Greer's Female Eunuch, if one agrees with the indictment against men in our present society set forth by Laura, and if one believes that Jane (the heroine), as a product of her society, would be unable to see its lack of freedom.

Well, now I see why critics argue. Now I see that beauty--and male chauvinism--and good s-f--are in the eye of the beholder.

Sincerely,
Adrienne Fein

Women's Lib in s-f is retarded even more than our correspondent thinks it is. See Peter Bernhardt's review in the present issue.

A-2762 Ortmann
Felsenstr. 20, Austria

Dear Leland:

Speaking of proofreading: the title of the Blish story is "There Shall Be No Darkness." And I was a bit shocked to learn that the RQ apparently is not familiar with the name of Jorge Luis Borges, preferring to speak of him as Juan L. Borgas. I also very much doubt that "Other Inquisitions" appeared in New York in 1937; but probably this can be explained by the fact that the essay concerned is about time travel.

Jeff Riggenbach's article also contains some puzzling features, e.g., he discusses the reference to Cyrano in Bester as if Cyrano were only a character in Rostand, without giving the slightest indication that he is aware that there was a real person of that name. Nor is Beelzebub as private to Milton as is the Count of Monte Cristo to Dumas. So why Milton's Beelzebub and Rostand's Bergerac? Nor can we know which feature of their character Bester had in mind (if he had anything more in mind than just a little name-dropping of interesting people): poor is the man who is only a man of one part.

I shall refrain from commenting on the piece by Richard Hodgens, for anything I could say would be very insulting; I had only thought a fanzine such as the RQ wouldn't print such stupidities.

Cordially,
Franz Rottensteiner

While acquainted with the "reality" of these figures, Mr. Riggenbach knew that in the present instance essence was prior to existence. Not until the Miltonic epic did Beelzebub acquire a personality that distinguished him from others in the satanic pantheon--and a similar argument applies to Cyrano, who is known almost entirely through the account of Rostand.

17829 Peters
Roseville, MI 48066

Dear Leland,

William Rupp's piece on "Science Fiction and the Literary Community" was very worthwhile, although I think he may have influenced his results by including a disproportionate number of negative responses. For example, the first question has three negative answers and one positive one. And these..."juvenile," "escapist," and "entertaining, but 'just for fun'," all tend to sound alike, while the last response ("a significant branch of modern literature") seems too much of a jump. Wouldn't it have been better to include some answers on the order of "..mediocre, but has occasionally produced some outstanding material" or "..often bad, but just as often good," etc.? Sometimes I think, too (whenever I answer a poll), that no one should include prearranged answers on the questionnaire--since often the answer that best suits me is not on the piece of paper before me but in my head! I suppose that a write-in questionnaire would be very difficult to tabulate, however.

Darrell Schweitzer's review of Warlocks & Warriors was interesting...I am surprised, however, that Darrell finds Leiber and Zelazny the only two writers attempting to produce any worthwhile fantasy these days. What about Ursula K. LeGuin and Avram Davidson? A Wizard of Earthsea and The Phoenix and the Mirror rank up with the classics in the field; Joy Chant's Red Moon and Black Mountain has also received some praise, and Piers Anthony also made a fair attempt with Hasan (in FANTASTIC). Or how about John Brunner's "Traveler in Black" series (also in FANTASTIC), or some of Keith Robert's stories? Not that I doubt Darrell when he says that most of the new fantasy being published is crud, but he seems to have overlooked some good new stories.

Richard M. Hodgens' "Sleeping Beauty and Darko Suvin" is good--when I read the revised version of Mr. Suvin's article in SF COMMENTARY, however, I didn't notice the many errors Mr. Hodgens pointed out, perhaps because the text is rather obscure and difficult to understand at times, or perhaps because Mr. Suvin revised it extensively. I think Suvin is definitely off the track as regards myths in s-f; while his idea that "myth claims to explain once and for all the essence of phenomena" sounds good...it doesn't really mean anything when applied to an s-f story with mythic qualities--such as Lord of Light, for instance. Does Zelazny's novel attempt "to explain once and for all the essence of phenomena"? I think most s-f stories with mythic characterizations do not adopt the mythic philosophy which Suvin describes, but rather just mythic symbols (such as gods, elves, ritual, magic carpets, etc.). To me, this seems obvious--though perhaps I'm misinterpretating what he says...

I was rather amused by Franz Rottensteiner's statement about Blish's "moral reprehensibility," since I think it's morally reprehensible for a literary agent to go around writing articles saying that one of his clients was "the best s-f writer in the world." A U.S. agent that did that would be laughed at. Also, I was under the impression that "William Atheling, Jr." was a transparent pseudonym--that everybody knew Atheling was Blish. His introduction to The Issue at Hand clearly states this. Also, I don't think that Blish intended any of the reviews /he did/ of his own books as commercial plugs, but rather as a means of expressing what he felt were the book's basic faults...

Yours,
Cy Chauvin

Rottensteiner may be naive--in his opinion of Stanislaw Lem and in his expression of that opinion--but not morally reprehensible. Indeed, one might reverse the argument (though I shall not) by saying an agent is morally defective if he represents (and profits from) a writer he thinks is inferior.// Regarding Darko Suvin's antiquated views on "myth" see the discussion that follows.

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29 Avenue R. Schumann
13100 Aix-en-Provence, France

Dear Mr. Sapiro,

I am writing to you about the article by R.M. Hidgens entitled "Sleeping Beauty and Darko Suvin."

I) I am astonished at the author's attacks on D. Suvin for using "heretical" English. R.M. Hodgens ought to consider Professor Suvin, a Yugoslav, highly praiseworthy: it is hard to think, even in one's own language, and even harder in translation. But native English speakers imagine everyone should know English, "naturally." No comment.

II) In any case, why reproach D. Suvin or anyone else with using critical concepts from other fields of literature to define/delimit/ fix the scope of Science Fiction? D. Suvin is trying to give an intrinsic definition of S-F. He follows the example of the Russian formalists (he quotes Chlosvki), placing himself in direct line of descent from the German formalist A. Jolles (Einfache formen Halle, 1930) who looked for the original "mental attitude" underlying every form; every "simple form"--story, riddle, witticism, legend, etc--has a corresponding verbal/mental attitude. D. Suvin applies a similar method: he shows the difference between S-F and the story, or the scientific marvel, etc.: it may not be wholly original (who can be?) but the starting hypothesis and the result appear to be correct. This could probably be taken further and expressed with greater subtlety; it is the lot of every interesting idea to be infinite.

III) Why hold that because every type of fiction contains a grain of knowledge (which is obvious) S-F cannot be defined as "cognitive estrangement"? Here R.M. Hodgens gaily muddles up the content and the attitude towards the content. In "classic" S-F, the content (idea, attitude, myth, knowledge, extrapolation, etc.) is highlighted in such a way that it reveals new /potentialities/ to the reader which stimulate thought and induce the well known "sense of wonder." This attitude to the content is what D. Suvin calls "cognitive estrangement." It could be given another name perhaps, but that is not the point.

IV) And now for the distinction myth/ science fiction. The one proposed by D. Suvin seems to me to be pertinent. His definition of the functions of the myth can be verified elsewhere, either in works by the structuralists (Levi Strauss) or in works of more classical authors (M. Eliade: Aspects of the Myth, Harper, New York, 1962), Malinowski: Myth in Primitive Psychology, 1926). The myth in S-F constitutes a subject providing material for literature (see above III), which places it in a "critical/poetic" perspective. See for instance the S-F stories taken from the Bible, the countless versions of Genesis, etc.

V) It is possible however--either through misuse or new application of the term--to talk of the myth in relation to the fabrications of mass media: see Myth and Mythmaking, Murray, New York, 1960, or R. Barthes: Mythologies, Paris, 1958.

Personally, I was pleased when, at Eurocon I at Trieste in July 1972, C. Frabetti defined S-F as a "counter-mythology." However the debate would appear still to be open.

I hope my English is readable. If not, R.M. Hodgens is welcome to send me a bad mark for my translation through the post.

Yours faithfully, R. Bozzetto

"Myth" is currently used in the sense of a controlling image or pattern of thought via which an event or person becomes an "instinctive centre of reference." See E.M.W. Tillyard, Myth and the English Mind, pp. 11-12; Stephen Scobie, "Mythology in Samuel Delany's The Einstein Intersection,"RQ V, pp.12-18--or cf. Tom Shippey's query in Speculation #31 (p.28): "What is it that makes so many writers work to a formula, without...any direct contact between them?" So Darko Suvin's notion of myth is as antiquated as the usage of "manners" to designate Emily Post's rules of etiquette. Suvin's "cognitive estrangement" is much better--enabling us, e.g., to separate the Space Western from bona fide s-f--but it's valid only insofar as it does not depend on his conception of myth.

2123 N. Early Street
Alexandria, VA 22302

Dear Leland,

The last installment of your article on "Clichés in the Old Super Science Story" was the best of the three parts. This is because the question it explores is of great historical importance to the s-f field...The inevitable conclusion seems to be that Harry Bates was a rotten editor. The one problem with this conclusion is that he went on to write such masterpieces as "Alas, All Thinking!," "Farewell to the Master," and "Death of a Sensitive," all of which are very original and mature stories, not to mention the fine action yarn, "A Matter of Size." How could a rotten editor, with a juvenile formula notion of s-f, go on to write such classics? Possibly his view of s-f changed during the intervening time, but I find this hard to believe, considering how rapid and drastic the change would have to have been. Also, I must mention two things: I think Amazing during the '40's was the worst s-f mag ever; and, I did enjoy some stories by Paul Ernst and Arthur Zagat which appeared in Thrilling Wonder Stories. In fact, Zagat's "The Lanson Screen" is a good story.

...Wayne Connelly certainly makes a unique and valuable critical observation by suggesting that Wells turned sour on Marxism earlier than is generally thought. His article brings to mind that a sequel to The Time Machine has recently been discovered and printed by DAW Books. It is entitled The Return of the Time Machine (what else!) by the German dramatist Egon Friedell. The story is unbelievably poor, but I suppose the book is interesting as a curiosity...

Cordially,
Michael T. Shoemaker

Because he viewed the Clayton Astounding solely as a commercial product, Bates accepted junk from writers--like Ernst and Zagat--who could've done better. He also misjudged his own stories, saying (in a private letter) that they were written for a fast buck. Of course, it's not writing for money that counts: it's what one writes for money. Bates's failure to see this is what vitiates all his literary judgements.

5252 Borden
Montreal 265, Quebec

Dear Leland--

On the Vonnegut piece by Gerard O'Connor. He obviously did not notice that Slaughterhouse-Five conforms to the Tralfamadorians' time sense because laying the book out on a table, we can see all the facets of Billy Pilgrim's life with a single glance. The whole circle from past to present can be seen. Slaughterhouse-Five presents verbally what a Tralfamadorian experiences visually. Instead of bombarding us with all the different images at once, Vonnegut uses the vehicle of time travel to unravel the confusion which could assault the human reader. Tralfamadorians would certainly enjoy this book.

Best--
Ralph Alfonso

Despite the letter that follows I'll make the obvious remark--that humans can't read the book simultaneously, only serially.

//////////////////////

I won't describe my own feelings on learning of Ralph Alfonso's recent death (via a speeding auto), but I felt obliged to print his letter and at least a part of my original answer.

---

935 South Irwin
Green Bay, WI 54301

Dear Mr. Sapiro,

Tripping along with your confirmation of Joyce Carol Oates' "easing into a unity of visions" I found myself coming smack hard up against an unseen wall! Dazed I watched in disbelief as Kurt Vonnegut, one of those who helped usher in this "unity," became hopelessly ensnarled in a web of indignation that seemed to be reaching toward an opposite direction. Love it or Leave It? Is this where the fanzine people are at! Too bad. Like Oates I too felt we were heading toward "a future far more energized and calculated than the past."

The strain of resistance directed at Vonnegut / in / your publication seems to stem from his relatively recent put-down of "most of" s-f. While I agree with you, there are many better s-f writers than Vonnegut, his criticism is nevertheless valid.

Vonnegut, in fact, is a notoriously bad s-f writer, especially when he sticks exclusively to the genre. The Sirens of Titan, much of the fiction of Welcome to the Monkey House, and the senseless Tralfamadorian aspect of Slaughterhouse-Five are indicative.

Vonnegut's criticism is directed precisely at the "love it or leave it" bunch, an elitist group that more and more turns toward a cultivation of the dubious merits of the "past." A period where much of the reading material was so bad it couldn't serve as entertainment anymore than much of what is presented on TV these days. Praising of the past simply because it was the past is a stifling trend. Were the Wells's and the Gernsbacks writing to preserve their cultural heroes or were they attempting a new "vision"?

Beyond this petty crisis of indignation isn't Vonnegut the writer who made light of the age old mainstream prejudice in his dialogue with the Comparative Lit professor in the preface to Slaughterhouse-Five! Seems to me that Vonnegut is standing on a battlefield between two warring camps, both with the past on their side.

O'Connor's "critical look" at Slaughterhouse-Five might reveal that Vonnegut relies heavily on the rhetoric of s-f but where in heaven's name does Vonnegut deny its use? He begins the book in its defense!

Billy Pilgrim's mode of time travel by the way, purely psychic phenomenon that it might be, is far more sophisticated than that envisioned by Kilgore Trout. Your critic seems to opt for the latter. The "most significant kind of time-travel," that of the Tralfamadorians, is nothing more than an amplified metaphor of Billy's condition. While its inclusion ruins what otherwise would be an excellent novel Vonnegut seems to use it to restate, in the form of the philosophical digressions, the mode of Billy's metaphysical wanderings...

Vonnegut's time travel then, is unique. It has a valid feel of the temporal relationship. It is not time-travel at all! Pilgrim, a rather disengaged protagonist, is able to move through past/ present/ future with relative ease. His journeys back and forth with the temporal existence however, are completely will-less and happen through the workings of random events. In a sense, this is a very good portrayal of Bergsonian man. Vonnegut's anti-hero, or rather non-hero, is aware of his future down to the instant of his death and is trapped by his perception. Much more and also much less, than your usual run of the mill time travel!

The many comments concerning Norman Mailer were interesting. In our TV world, beyond the claims of a writer whose stance does indeed "date" him, one would be hard put to find a single kid past the sixth grade who could conceive of science as adventurous. Going beyond man's pursuit of knowledge Mailer seems to suppose that it is the spirit of adventure (could this be fed into a computer?) that justifies space exploration...

Individuals in modern scientific pursuits, unlike / those / in the old fashioned space opera, are hardly individualistic in the true sense of the word and it has been our unfortunate history that more often than not they have hid behind their guise of neutrality to be used like a pawn or dupe by the political authority to which they owe allegiance.

Mailer's notions bring to mind the strange twist in perspective used in the film 2001. Here the cosmonauts are the "pure" examples of the human machine, at least as far as our scientific impetus can visualize them. Their "risks" are merely part of the job--any true individualistic assertion on their part would indeed jeopardize the "mission." In fact, the computer/ship is the only component capable of human imperfection. He lies, conspires against the human element, murders four men and attempts a fifth! How much more human can you get!

To Mr. Connelly: Wells was wrong--cruelty is justified through its particularly human origin and has nothing to do with the theories of Marx...

Sincerely,
Gerald Lange

Current circumstances prevent a complete answer. But Vonnegut is disqualified by neither his renunciation of current s-f, also derided by Jim Ballard, nor his "sour apples" remark on present s-f writers, a conclusion anticipated long ago in Sturgeon's Law. Briefly, if Ted Sturgeon says most s-f is junk, I believe him; if Kurt Vonnegut says so, I don't believe him.

Northern Illinois Univ.
Dekalb, IL 60115

Dear Mr. Sapiro:

There is no reform in the Marxist sense...As Lucien Goldmann sums up the Marxist view, "the March of History will transform individual evil into the very vehicle of a progress which will bring about the good as a whole" (The Hidden God, p.176n.). Notice also The Monthly Review (Nov. 1972), p.4:

> The distinguishing characteristic of the radical Left is precisely that we categorically reject this view / i.e., "that revolutions only replace one form of established violence by another, that the costs of violence to overthrow established violence are always greater than the gains" /. We believe that the gains of genuine revolutions typically outweigh the costs, and we find in very recent history, the history of the last half century, encouraging signs that mankind has now reached a stage where a new non-exploitative and nonviolent system of production and society is not only desirable but for the first time actually possible.
>
> ("Terrorism and Marxism," comment on a review of The Air War in Indochina, in New York Times Book Review, 13 Aug, 1972)

The basis of Marxist revolution is not what Wells thought,"mere resentment and destruction," but the capability of the working classes to alter their human nature in the process of political and cultural revolution. Wells was not capable of "ridding himself of the muck of ages," any more than any bourgeois (like myself) is capable of it, by himself, by taking thought. He lacked the moral passion for real and necessary change in capitalistic society. I recommend to you George Jackson's Blood in My Eye, for a revolutionary critique of what you call "reform" as really the essence of fascism when it is most efficient and sophisticated.

I thank you for the copy of Riverside Quarterly.

James Kennedy

Perhaps Wells's generalization about "mere resentment and destruction," derived from Bolshevist oppression after the Revolution, was the only one possible with respect to facts then available (1934). Today we know that the outcome might have been different--e.g., if the Mensheviks had won out--but could Wells have known it?

2986 Lacombe
Montreal 250, Quebec

Dear Mr. Sapiro,

About Lafcadio Miroku's comments on translation of Lovecraft into French (p.254), may I point out that these translations are not good, mostly devoid of poetry and rhythm, and in no way comparable to Baudelaire's translation of Poe. This opinion is not mine alone: in the Cahiers de l'Herne's book on Lovecraft (p.22) it is said that the Randolph Carter stories should be re-translated in French. Why these translations nevertheless established Lovecraft's fame in the French-speaking world remains to be investigated; as the translator seemed preoccupied with the rendering of ideas and not of style, perhaps...his work /did/ stress points which were hidden behind the English language.

Best regards,
Esther Rochon

To explain such French popularity recall Bob Bloch's comment (in HPL: A Symposium) on U.S. naivete when Lovecraft first was published in the 20's--with college education limited to 3% of the population, anthropology an infant science, s-f virtually non-existent, etc.--and the empty background against which this author was new and mysterious. Now hear Archie Bunker: "Aw, them Frenchies is just as ignorant now as we wuz in the 20's!"

2111 Sunset Crest Drive
Los Angeles, CA 90046

Dear Leland:

Just home from the Worldcon to find RQ 5/3, and despite the glut of mail on hand I couldn't resist reading it immediately. My reward was Bill Blackbeard's dissertation on Tuthill and The Bungle Family, with accompanying samples of the strip. I'll be most curious to see the reaction, if any, on the part of today's readers of s-f, and wonder if they can or will in any way relate to George Bungle. Tuthill, in the 1920s and '30s, anticipated not only the "situation comedies" of TV but also the much-more venerated All in the Family--at least atmospherically, for Bungle wasn't a Bunker. Most s-f fans, when considering comics at all, reserve their regard either for sword-and-sorcery or beefcake strips, else opt for the whimsy-poo variety. I've always loved The Bungle Family and happen to think it far more imaginative--but I suspect many readers will ask, in effect, "What's the point?" It's like reading the name of Lafcadio Miroku backwards.

Best, and many thanks--
Bob Bloch

I won't dogmatize about today's s-f fans, but earlier ones--except those who avoided comics altogether--must have related to the Bungles, at least in their later years when the combination of voodoo and black magic with Tuthill's yak-yak, sock-whammo type of reality made his strip literally the most striking fantasy item than available.

---

820 Charlotte
Stephenville, TX 76401

Dear Lee--

Got the new RQ, and what I have read so far is quite interesting. The Bungle Family strips selected to go with Blackbeard's column do not, however, center on family bickering in the early ones, so they do not quite support his thesis.

On William Rupp's "Science-Fiction and the Literary Community": I think he perhaps asked the wrong names to go between Wells and the moderns. How about asking whether academicians have read C.S. Lewis? (I thought to add Olaf Stapledon, but I find on re-checking that his name was listed--p. 212--and brought only a 20% response.) Or it might be fun to list a number of works by respected names in modern literature and ask whether the professors regard these works as science fiction: E.M. Forster's "The Machine Stops," Bernard Shaw's Back to Methuselah, and Graham Greene's "A Discovery in the Woods." The point would be to discover the professors' attitudes toward considering "reputable" works to be science fiction. (Is s-f a genre or is it just a term for certain magazine and paperback pulp writing?)

Regards,
Joe Christopher

Blackbeard did mail strips that illustrated domestic squabbles, but I selected those that chronicled a typical Bungle day, starting with the ride fiasco in the morning, continuing with landlord trouble in the afternoon, and finishing with the brawl after dinner. So the inaccurate choice was all mine.// On the s-f classification of "reputable" authors see James Zychowicz' findings on p. 350.

Funnelle Hall, room 911
SUNY, Oswego, NY 13126

Dear Leland,

...I'm beginning to agree with Vonnegut, apples and all. The tendency towards mediocrity in this field is starting to get me down. Not that I'm going to start crying the blues like Moorcock and Lundwall...I simply don't like my room mate (a comic book buff) shoving a copy of the latest Marvel or DC miscarriage under my snoot and telling me it was written by Theodore Sturgeon, Sam Delany, and Ron Goulart. Can't these good authors find decent work? Well, I suppose they have to eat and I hope that's the only reason they're doing it. However, that doesn't excuse RQ from wallowing in the same muck. Honestly, Leland, I did enjoy your cliché article because... you didn't glorify anything /but/ simply told the truth. However, as to all your co-authors who are treating comic books...and space opera with the same delicacy as they would War and Peace...Look guys, trite is trite and there are enough good authors to work on without having to root in the garbage for pennies. Why do they seem to prefer R.E. Howard to Robert Nathan and Doc Smith to Brian Aldiss? Not that everything these other authors have written /is a/ classic, by any means, but there is a most noticeable rift between honest literature and crud, and I think all RQ-ites can see it easily. Do you think the RQ is frightened of taking on an intellectual hue?

Yours,
Peter Bernhardt

If our correspondent thinks the RQ treats comic books--not to be confused with daily or weekly newspaper comics--with delicacy, I suggest he read Blackbeard's column in RQ #17--or at least Doug Barbour's comments about it on the next page.

8824 - 90th St.
Edmonton, Alberta

Dear Leland;

I only recently got around to reading RQ 5:1, and Robert Plank's article on Stranger. I went on to read Bill Blackbeard's piece in the same issue and they juxtapose beautifully if a further point about Heinlein's writing in his later work (definitely including Stranger) is recognized: to wit, that his writing style has devolved as his passionate wish-fulfillment has flowered. I know Alexei Panshin has talked about this, but I don't think even he was willing to come right out and say that the late Heinlein is a bad writer, period. But he is!

Nevertheless, Plank's discussion of the psychopathology of Stranger is identical with Blackbeard's discussion of the psychopathology of the bad comic and pulp writers of his youth, for they, with their silly superheroes address the same "fantasy of omnipotence" Plank says Heinlein's Stranger does. Now, I'm not as positive as Plank is that that's a necessarily bad thing: what's frightening is that so many people take the novel (and the fantasy, I presume) so seriously (I cite a letter to Mount to the Stars #2, in which the writer tells how he and his woman, and later some friends, have formed a water-brotherhood, as an example of how silly/seriously the book is taken).

I don't mind some of Heinlein's ideas (as religious ideas in themselves they may even have some value) but, as Plank pointed out, the ideas are peripheral to the novel's appeal. What I do mind is the sexism, the blank sexuality...and the peurile mindlessness of the ideas' presentation when they do sneak into the story of Michael, our Heinlein hero...What really bothers me is the fact that so many contemporary readers, many of them much older (and therefore one would hope, apparently hopelessly, wiser) than the young Blackbeard's comic reading friends, think Stranger is a good novel, a work of art! God help us all! Heinlein never really wrote artistically, but, at his best, he wrote a lot better than he did throughout the 60's.

This lack of any sense of literary discrimination is sad, for it suggests a lack of intelligent discrimination elsewhere as well (not to say people shouldn't read trash, not at all, only that they should recognize it for what it is, and enjoy it as such). And to put Dune and Stranger in the same group, along with LoTR, as Peter Marin did in that quote from the Times is to reveal an abysmal ignorance of any number of discriminations. Just one: Herbert's hero, Paul Atriedes, is very powerful but also very human, and his story,unlike Michael's, is one of learning limits, emotional, political, religious, ecological, military, etc. Oh, he wins all right, but at a human cost we can sympathize with and learn from, for the ideas, based on a number of different disciplines, are central to Herbert's novel (which, I must admit, is nevertheless not that well written, if you take, even with s-f, the work of such writers as Delany, Russ and LeGuin, e.g., as yardsticks). (Always, surely, there are these discriminations. Here they are basically literary ones, but even they have their moral dimension, I believe, and bad books, too, have theirs: Stranger is a perfect example of what I mean.)

Best,
Douglas Barbour

For the Defence I'll argue that at the very start Heinlein displayed mastery in the Craft of Fiction--quick openers, pungent dialogue, conveyance of background within the narrative, etc. Current views on this author approximate the (New and Old) Orthodoxy on Wells: that his work "devolved" when he took to pamphleteering instead of story-telling. So Heinlein didn't lose his native ability: he just buried it!

WE ALSO HEARD FROM:

Harry Bates (207 8th Ave., New York, NY 10011), who refuses to comment on the Cliché article "except to say that I am surprised at the reference to Moskowitz's Tremaine 'fact,' and that I am not surprised Leland Sapiro's Astounding mental equipment and judicial faculties have not altered." // And I am not surprised that Mr. Bates's opinion of my opinion about the Clayton Astounding hasn't altered.

Mark Mumper (1227 Laurel St, Santa Cruz, CA 95060), who thinks that Darko Suvin, despite the "circularity" of his attempts to define s-f, "does have insight to bring into the field...He just spends too much time in a vain effort to pigeonhole the genre--once he is finished with that he can contribute valuably to s-f criticism."

Dave Lewton, with a comment that "Darrell Schweitzer's reviews are always a delight, and his observations concerning Warlocks and Warriors made for good reading. As is the case with such a person, unfortunately I agree with him and have nothing to add."

Richard Hodgens (25 Appleton Place, Glen Ridge, NJ 07028), who especially liked Anderson's and Schweitzer's reviews and thought "the series on 'Clichés' important and lively, and W. Connelly's /article/ on Wells's T.M. ...correct and also well put. One reservation: Wells certainly did not pose 'for the first time'this question of the socialist revolution's aftermath..."

William Gibson (2421 25A St SW, Calgary, Alberta), with an addendum to Riggenbach's article on Alfred Bester:

> He speaks of allusive names, but omitted a couple of avian ones, Aquila = Eagle, the form in which Jove snatched Ganymede to be cup-bearer. Halcyon (with a "c") = the mythical kingfisher whose floating nest was granted good weather during breeding-incubation season. And Alcyone, daughter of Aeolus--who flung herself into the sea--became a kingfisher instead of a corpse. Bester must have found relevance in ornithology or myth to have picked the names.

Murray Moore (Box 400, Norwich, Ontario), who objects to the tautological character of a William Rupp survey question:

> To say in question 3 that s-f's emphasis on the future (C) "is one of its strongest points" is similar to...stating that one of man's most useful characteristics is that he is bipedal. The choosing of this alternative proves nothing in the way of the respondent's attitude. The fact that someone picks mysteries' emphasis on murder (C) as one of their strongest points reveals nothing about that person's attitude or knowledge of mysteries. Necessarily no useful conclusions can be drawn from the responses to the other alternatives, because of the fallaciousness of choice C.

Roy Squires (1745 Kenneth Rd, Los Angeles, CA 91201), with the encouraging news that "The conclusion of your Clichés in the Old Super-Science Story ends at a level of distinction at least as high as that with which it began. I hope to see it published as a book sometime." // So do I, Roy, so do I!

James Zychowicz (3132 Mulberry St, Toledo, OH 43608), who "found the article S-F and the Literary Comminity most interesting. It seems relevant that when I ask /teachers/ about the s-f of Aldous Huxley they don't consider his work s-f; they think of s-f as being apart from the 'better' novels of the genre, and in no way link Clarke with Huxley or Orwell."// Here again is the snob-dissociation syndrome--'If it's good, it can't be s-f'--though I'd guess it prevails less amongst those academics (college, as opposed to high school, English teachers) who have no public façade to maintain.

Ken Smookler (321 Keewatin Ave, Toronto-12, Ontario), who thought the latest RQ a big improvement: "I don't know if it is the university background but on occasion RQ has tended to be a little too dry for my taste but this issue is, to use the current idiom correctly for once, 'right on.' " // RQ's in no danger of becoming too academic--at least according to Bruce Gillespie(S-F Commentary, April '72): "You and I must have different meanings for... 'serious' if you think RQ talks 'seriously' about s-f...Generally RQ talks about fewer topics more serious than comics, Tarzan, heroic fantasy, and other kids' stuff."

Wayne MacDonald (editor: Scicon, c/o Silverthorn Collegiate Institute, 291 Mill Rd., Etob., Ontario), who praises "Opere Citato" and Blackbeard's column, and reports a "boost to / the / morale" of his editorial staff upon receiving RQ as a trade. // Well, if Canadians support Wayne's magazine with the same enthusiasm they display toward less useful activities (see p. 259) I'm certain Scicon will succeed. Meantime, I can only say it boosts my morale to learn I'm boosting somebody else's!

Mrs. Lewis Bird (7000 S. Dent Rd, Hixson, TN 37343), who has discovered Costa Rica and would like to share her good luck with RQ's "retired, or about-to-be-retired, readers."

> How would you like to retire in a place with no pollution; with no tax on retirement income...with no teenage subculture (elders still rule the roost); with no major crime and an 85% to 90% literacy rate? ...In 1948 Costa Rica disbanded its army and put the money saved...into medical facilities and education (they actually have more schools than policemen). And Costa Rica has Hawaii's beauty and climate--but with 1940 prices!

If there's no youth culture I assume there's no youth, so the natural question is: where do young people go when they leave Costa Rica? That's the place I want to learn about.

THE RQ RECOMMENDS

Called to readers' attention is Popular Arts Review (send $1.50 (60p.) to 8 Limeside Ave, Rutherglen, Glasgow, Scotland,for two issues), "a journal which concentrates on detailed discussion of particular works of art, mainly drawn from the field of popular culture." Included in issue #1 are Nick Perry and Roy Wilkie, "Landscape as Hero," on J.G. Ballard, and Martin Baillie, "The Light that Failed," on Picasso's Guernica. (The objection that Guernica is not popular art is answered in the editorial: subscribe to learn details.) A comment on Guernica's origin--"Passion cycles of the fourteenth century, Florentine mannerisms of the sixteenth, Goya's Execution of Third May and Disaster of War, Beardsley and the American comic strip"-- has this footnote:

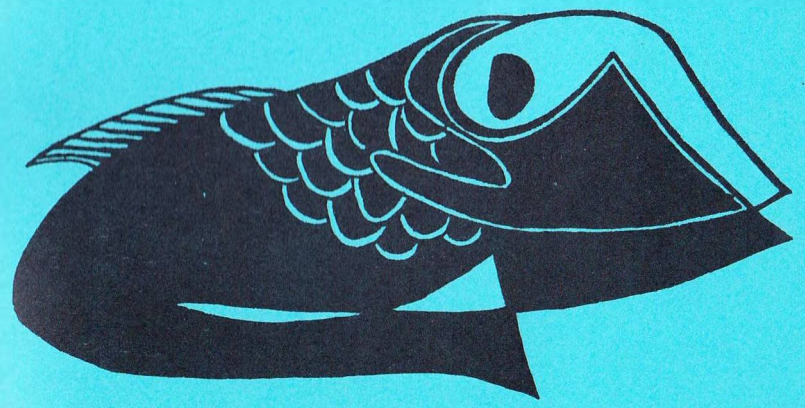
> One thinks particularly of George McManus' Bringing Up Father in its use of line and judiciously placed areas of black. It may be worth remarking here that people often find something comic in Guernica.

Compare with Bill Blackbeard's remarks in RQ #16 about Picasso's addiction to a U.S.comic strip and with William Bolitho's comment quoted by Blackbeard on p.333 of the present issue. So I hereby dismiss as snobbery--or bad taste--past and future derision of RQ's slum manners in running a column on the Funnies.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This issue marks an addition to the list of books "previewed" in these pages (or in the case of Alexei Panshin and Jack Williamson, published because of earlier appearance in the RQ) --namely, David Ketterer's New Worlds for Old, out this December from Doubleday-Anchor, in which his current "Winter-Journey" is to be a chapter.

Finally, my thanks are sent to the Saskatchewan Arts Board, whose donation enables me to print this (and the next) issue plus The Sasquatch Saskatchewanian enclosed with it. The Sasquatch still lives--and so does the RQ!




JEANNE DUFF