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TABLE OF CONTENTS

(Unsigned material is by the editor.)

Front Cover: REG Back Cover: Adrienne Fein

Robert Jennings....22, 25, 26
Rudy der Hagopian..33
Gretchen Schwenn...36, 42
Cy Chauvin.....64
Erik Nillson.....67
Kevin MacDonnell...76
Jan Jonsson.....81
Harry Habblitz.....65, 83

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Illiteracy, Inc.

To replace the customary announcements, etc., I wish to list some misusages of languages in current books and magazines. Since these errors were committed by presumably educated professional authors, I infer that grammar, syntax, etc., are no longer taught in school --so this listing is an indirect plea that their study be resumed.

Dangling Participles

Certain verb forms that end in -ed and -ing are supposed to modify something--and in such a way that the sentence means what the writer intended. Two classic examples are: "If stewed, the patients will enjoy the prunes" and (to quote, from memory, an old Rhodomagnetic Digest) "Being an English teacher, my time is very limited these days." I refrained from sending this last writer a note--"Your time doesn't teach English: you do--and not very well!"--so these remarks are an Open Letter type of substitute.

> Looking over Heinlein's early stories, it is possible to see an increasing grasp of technique.
>
> (Alexei Panshin, Heinlein in Dimension, Chicago, 1968, p.7)

> Looking back, now, to the sixties, a number of assumptions about our experiences are very firm...
>
> (James Gilbert, "American Dreams," Partisan Review, vol. 38, no. 4 (1970), p. 580)

> Glorified out of all proportion, it was inevitable that our scientists would fail to live up to popular expectation.
>
> (David Lang, "Ex-Oracles," Harpers, Dec. '72, p. 38)

(For the last read, "It was inevitable that our scientists, glorified out of all proportion, would fail..." The other two are left as an exercise for the student.)

"Schizophrenia" ----------

Vulgar usage is exemplified by Time (6 July 1970) under the heading "Schizophrenia at the AMA": "The American Medical Association... displayed a split personality at its annual convention in Chicago." To quote a pamphlet from the Canadian Schizophrenia Foundation (200A Brent Bldg., Regina), "Schizophrenia is not a split personality. It is a biochemical disease which can affect a person physically."(Split personality, whose medical designation is hysteria, is comparatively rare.) In the words of the Foundation's president(plus a co-worker):

> The meaning of schizophrenia, as popularly used by journalists... is...wrong. The adjective..."schizophrenic" is becoming a part of our language to mean separateness, as in "schizophrenic nation," "schizophrenic attitudes..." As used in this way it may impart some vague meaning to the reader, but it actually has no meaning in relationship to the disease from which it comes.
>
> (Abram Hoffer and Humphry Osmond, How to Live with Schizophrenia, London: Morrison & Gibb, Ltd., 1971, p. 11)

It suffices to list one such misusage:

> The result of this division was...an irreparable split between thought and action...This schizophrenia of the psyche has remained characteristic of bourgeois consciousness to the present time.
>
> (David Gross, "Toward a Radical Theory of Culture," Radical America, Nov.-Dec. 1968, p. 2)

continued on page 95

The Prudish Prurience of H. Rider Haggard and Edgar Rice Burroughs

by

Richard Dale Mullen

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While Victorian prudery was a real enough phenomenon, its extent and effects on both serious and popular literature have been widely misunderstood--as, for example, in the following words by Kingsley Amis:

> Space-opera...is in its earlier Edgar Rice Burroughs form as cold-blooded as a fairy story: a George Eliot love scene suddenly interpolated would seem dangerously modern and in questionable taste. Later space opera of the galactic-hoodlum sort does, on occasion, borrow a bit of sadism from its private-eye analogue, but for the most part it remains hardly less decorous than Superman. (New Maps of Hell, 65)

The historical development suggested here is the reverse of the truth. From the standpoint of their success with the general public, we might well call Burroughs the Mickey Spillane of science-fiction, but from the standpoint of history we might call Spillane the Edgar Rice Burroughs of the crime story, for his mixture of sex, sadism, and self-righteous violence is remarkably similar to Burroughs'.

But Burroughs was not original in these respects, for he was following a tradition of popular romance that goes back at least as far as Bulwer-Lytton and The Last Days of Pompeii (1834)--a tradition in which increasing prudery seems to have been a concomitant of an ever more intense concern with the more violent aspects of sexuality, a tradition which Burroughs presumably knew through such late Victorian romancers as H. Rider Haggard.

If popular fiction is correctly defined as fiction in which the author attempts to exploit rather than examine the interests, sentiments, and prejudices of his audience, it follows that we cannot know whether Haggard and Burroughs shared the prudish prurience of their respective audiences: we can only know that each sought to exploit the abiding interest in sex without violating the taboos of his time and place.

In the ten sections of this essay we shall see that the two audiences were alike in that both were prepared to be titillated by the nudity of heroine or temptress (##1-2), to be thrilled by the heroine's hair-breadth escape from the fate worse than death (#3), and to be morally edified by the redemption of the fallen woman (#4), but that Haggard's audience was in some respects the less prudish of the two in that it was prepared, while Burroughs' audience evidently was not, to grant that a heroine might yield to temptation under extreme circumstances (#5) or that the hero might succumb to the wiles of a temptress (#6), to accept such traditional themes as the bridal bed (#7), as spiritual love completed by physical union (#8), or as post coitum triste (#9), and to view the wickedness of wicked people or customs with casual disapproval rather than self-righteous indignation (#10).

#1--CONVENTIONAL NUDITY: FROM BARE BREASTS TO GOLDEN BREASTPLATES

When you are suddenly whisked from Earth to Mars or Poloda, you arrive naked; at least, that is what happens to John Carter in both A Princess of Mars and The Gods of Mars, to Ulysses Paxton in The Master Mind of Mars, and to Tangor in Beyond the Farthest Star, which was written in 1940 and so about thirty years later than the first Mars books.

When our Polodan heroine finds the naked Tangor in her garden, she does what we would expect any nice American girl to do: she screams and runs away (Part 1, I). But things are different on Mars--or at least used to be. In Princess John Carter is completely naked from Chapter III to Chapter IX, when he is permitted by his captors to don the harness of a warrior; in Gods he is without harness until the end of Chapter IV. During these periods no one expresses any surprise, much less any shock, at his nakedness, not even the two virtuous heroines, Dejah Thoris and Thuvia. But why should they? Dejah Thoris, "save for her highly wrought ornaments" is "entirely naked" (Princess: VIII), and Thuvia, at this time a slave, is "entirely unadorned" (Gods: IV).

The explanation for their strange behavior is simply that the Martians represent the nudist ideal: they not only go naked, they also remain completely unconscious of each other's nakedness. Their unconsciousness presumably derives in part from the weakness of "that brute passion which the waning demands for procreation upon their dying planet has almost stilled in the Martian breast" (Princess: XII), which also seems to explain a number of other things: first, the existence of "the Martian custom which allows female slaves to Martian men, whose high and chivalrous honor is always ample protection for every woman in his household"(Gods: XIV); second, the fact that the women captured by the Black Martians--despite Phaidor's fear that "the fate of the girls they steal is worse than death" (ibid., VIII) -- seem to be used only as attendants on the Goddess Issus, household help, and food animals (ibid., IX-XI); third, the fact that Mattai Shang and Thurid, despite having sworn to avenge themselves on John Carter by "defiling" Dejah Thoris (Warlord:I), never get around to doing so in the several weeks they have her in their power; fourth, the fact that Thuvia is still a maiden after being "for fifteen years a plaything and a slave" of the White Therns (Gods: VIII) as well as the captive, along with Dejah Thoris, of Mattai Shang and Thurid.

Since the Martians are nearly always armed (the men with long sword, short sword, and pistol; the women with at least a jeweled dagger), and since, like Earthmen, they carry such impedimentia as coins and tools, they obviously need to wear belts and straps--or, to use the given word, harness. But in the first four volumes of the series we are never given any reason to believe that this harness ever covers the pudenda, except perhaps sometimes by accident, and are given every reason, short of explicit statement, not to believe it.

Despite the lack of explicit statement (in the first four volumes there is not one reference to the breasts of the female), all this is perfectly obvious, and I have laboured the point only because a change takes place in the fifth volume and continues through the series. In the opening scene of The Chessmen of Mars we find the heroine with "a scarf of silken gossamer...wrapped around her body" and then watch her as she removes the scarf, steps into the scented water of her marble bath, emerges from the bath, and dons her "leathern trappings, encrusted with gold and jewels" (Chapt. I). In a later chapter we find her entranced with the "almost naked body" of the hero (VIII) not long after she had almost been raped by "a beautiful male rykor" who was "without harness or other trappings" (VI). And in this volume we are at last expressly told that Barsoomian women do have breasts (XV, XX).

In A Fighting Man of Mars, first the hero (Chapt.IV) and later a villain have trouble in deciding whether Tavia is a man or a girl:

> At first, I think, the fellow facing Tavia did not realize she was a woman, but he must have soon, as the scant harness of Barsoom hides little and certainly did not hide the rounded contours of Tavia's girlish body. (Chapt. XV)

And whereas the Old Man of Princess wore only "a small collar of gold from which depended upon his chest a great ornament as large as a dinner plate," his counterpart in A Fighting Man (Chapt.IX) wears "harness so scant as to leave him almost nude."

I find all this rather puzzling. Why did Burroughs create a nudist society for Barsoom and then present it only in negative and rather ambiguous ways? Why is there no discussion of nudism as a philosophy, other than Dejah Thoris' rather cryptic remarks in Princess, Chapt. XI ? Why is there no defense of nudism such as those to be cited in the following paragraph? And above all, having created a nudist society and used it in the first four volumes of the series, how could he have for his readers the contempt implied in his abandoning it in the fifth volume?

The nudist ideal is of course an anti-sexual ideal; that is, nudism has always been advocated as a means of making people more virtuous. The naked savage is often held to be sexually innocent, as in an episode in which Tarzan and a certain motion picture actress, having escaped from a band of naked white wild men with the aid of a wild girl, decide to take her back to civilization:

> Rhonda glanced at Balza and cleared her throat. "Of course, we're all from Hollywood," she said, "but don't you think we ought to rig up some sort of skirt for Balza before we take her into camp?"
>
> Tarzan laughed. "Poor Balza," he said, "she will have to eat of the apple soon enough now that she is coming into contact with civilized men. Let her keep her naturalness and purity of mind as long as she may."
>
> (Tarzan and the Lion Man, XXXI)

Without going so far as to advocate nudism, romancers can still both titillate their readers and make them feel superior to narrow mindedness by presenting arguments to the effect that there is no necessary connexion between partial nudity and sexual wickedness, as Haggard does in a scene in which the Empress Irene finds her rival for the hero's love, Heliodore, in a costume that leaves "her arms and bosom bare":

> "When you walk abroad in our garden, which is open to you, be pleased to array yourself in the dress of our country, and not in that of a courtezan of Egypt." ...
>
> "Madame, I thank you for permission to walk in your garden. If ever I should do so again as your guest, be sure that I shall not wear garments which, before Byzantium was a village, were sacred to the gods of my country and those of my ancestors the Queens of Egypt."
>
> (Wanderer's Necklace: Book 2, VI)

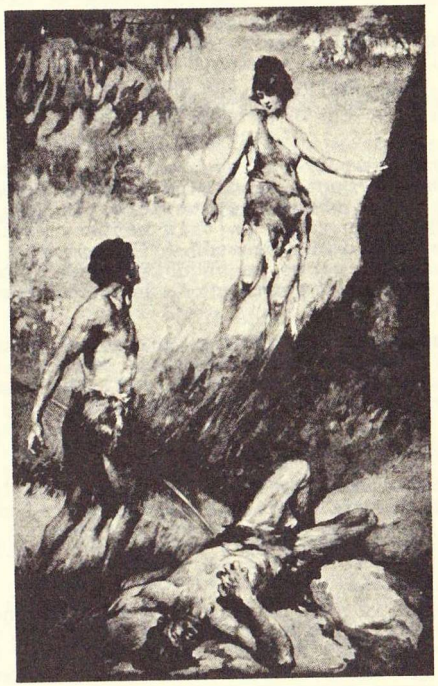
In Victorian and post-Victorian romance up to about 1920, the girls of savage and barbaric lands are usually depicted as wearing costumes that leave their breasts bare. In King Solomon's Mines (1885), Haggard is vague in this matter, saying only that Kukuana girls are "not over-dressed" (XII); in She (1887) he is clear but so roundabout as to be unquotable (VI); but in Allan Quatermain (also 1887) and in many of the later romances he is quite clear and direct:

> A single long strip of cloth...was wound around the body in graceful folds and finally flung over the left shoulder so that the end...hung down in front, the right arm and breast being, however, left quite bare.
>
> (Allan Quatermain: XI)
>
> In one hand she held the holy cross of life fashioned of crystal; and in the other the golden rod of royalty. Her breast was bare, but under it was a garment that glistened like the scaly covering of a snake, everywhere sewn with gems. (Cleopatra: Book 1, I)

In a story published in 1922 Haggard has a rather neat series of scenes in this respect. Cast away on an island off the shore of Peru, the hero dreams that a woman is standing over him "with upon her naked breast the emblem of the moon"; when he awakes, the woman of his dreams is there "only now her breast was covered": a little later, while they are paddling toward the mainland, our royal heroine has "put off her fine robes" and is again "attired as a fishing-girl, as I had seen her in my dream, and with her two tall girls in the same scanty garments" (Virgin of the Sun: Book 2, III)

In the twenty books written by Burroughs before 1920, there are only two direct statements on the breasts as bare or covered:

> Gron stood with her hands clutching her naked breasts.
>
> (Eternal Lover: Part 2, XIV)
>
> Her single garment appeared to be nothing more than a filmy scarf...wound tightly around the body from below her naked breasts.
>
> (Tarzan the Untamed: XVIII)



Dian standing not ten paces behind me!

But from negative statements like the following it is clear that in all these books the native girls are, to use an old-fashioned word, half-naked:

> And she with only a scanty garment of skin about her waist.
>
> (Cave Girl: Part 1, III)

> As garmenture the women / of Pellucidar / possessed a single robe...supported either entirely about the waist by a leather thong, so that it hung partially below the knee on one side, or possibly looped gracefully across one shoulder.
>
> (At the Earth's Core: III)

Among these women is our heroine, Dian the Beautiful. Since we are told in a later volume that she has never worn "more than a sketchy loin cloth" (Savage Pellucidar: Part 2, V) we are perhaps justified, despite J. Allen St. John, in placing her among the women who exposed both breasts rather than only one.

In Haggard the only woman who wears golden breastplates is the high priestess of The Yellow God (1908), and she takes them off when she feels like dancing (X, XIII). In Burroughs they appear first in Tarzan the Terrible (1921), where our heroine, Pan-at-lee, uses them (Chapt. III) to brain the would-be rapist who surprises her in the nude.

In the first two books in which she appears, La, the high priestess of Opar, seems to be topless (Return of Tarzan: XX, Tarzan and the Jewels of Opar: XII); in the third (Tarzan and the Golden Lion: VI) she is certainly so, but in the fourth (Tarzan the Invincible: VII) "two golden discs covered her firm breasts." Golden breastplates are also worn by Nemone (Tarzan and the City of Gold: VII), Kali (Tarzan and the Leopard Men: VII), Gonfala (Tarzan the Magnificent: VIII), and Sandra (John Carter of Mars: XII). One is moved to wonder where they come from. Did any woman in any land at any time ever wear these surely uncomfortable devices? Where they went and where they are is of course quite clear: the comics, the movies, and the covers of a thousand science-fiction paperbacks.

In the last of Burroughs' series, the Venus novels (1934-46), the female costume is scanty but modest: a "long sash" which "confines the breasts" and passes "between the legs from behind and up through the sash in front, after the manner of a g-string" (Pirates of Venus: IV).

#2--OCCASIONAL NUDITY

We have already spoken of one use by Burroughs of a De Millish bathroom scene. There is a similar scene, featuring La, in Golden Lion: VI. Haggard, born too early to be influenced much by the movies, has no scenes of this kind. For bathing of a more primitive kind, Burroughs has two virtually identical scenes in which a prudish American hero, already bothered by the scanty attire of the native heroine, is flabbergasted by the casualness with which she prepares for her bath:

> At the bank she paused, removed her belt and dagger, dropping them to the ground at her side; then unfastening the lower edge of the garment from the metal leg-band to which it was attached, slipped it off her left shoulder and let it drop to the ground around her feet. It was done so naturally, so simply and so quickly, that it left me gasping like a fish out of water.[1]

On Polada, where our naked American hero was first greeted by a scream of fright, young men and women bathe together naked, nudity being regarded as decent under such circumstances (Beyond the Farthest Star: Part 1, IV-V)

When white girls get bounced around in savage territory, their clothing becomes scantier and scantier, which they usually find somewhat embarrassing. More interesting is the reaction of the white heroine who is forced to adopt savage or barbaric dress for one reason or another. In Haggard's Swallow, our heroine, in order to escape from captivity, paints her skin black and doffs her own clothing for the girdle and blanket of a Zulu girl. She attempts to shield her breasts with the blanket, but her native protector advises against it, and she reluctantly allows it to hang open (XXXI).

The girl who is captured for a royal harem or to serve as a white goddess may have rather special problems. In the standard scene she is attended by a bevy of slave girls who strip her of her own clothing, bathe her, arrange her hair, douse her with perfume, and finally put her into the barbaric costume:

> The material of the robe was a gauzy fabric which accentuated the rounded beauty of the girlish form.
>
> "There," said the old woman, as she gave a final pat to one of the folds of the garment, "you are a queen indeed!"
>
> The girl looked down at her naked breasts and but half-concealed limbs in horror.
>
> "They are going to lead me into the presence of men in this half-nude condition!" she exclaimed.
>
> (Tarzan the Untamed: XIX)

With the single exception of the English heroine of The Ivory Child, who is garbed in the transparent robes traditional to the Lady Isis (XVII), the girls who serve as white goddesses in Haggard are all modestly costumed, the natives being concerned with magical powers rather than sex.

Strangely enough, there are no slave-block scenes, with female slaves, anywhere in Burroughs, and of the two in Haggard only one involves nudity. When our English heroine proves recalcitrant, the auctioneer acts with dispatch: " 'Here, let men see what they are going to buy,' and gripping the breast of her white robe he rent it open" (People of the Mist: XII).

A standard occasion for nudity occurs when our heroine has some reason to display herself in all her splendour. In Wisdom's Daughter, two thousand years before the events of She, the youthful Ayesha, heavily veiled, has been ironically pretending to be a wrinkled old woman:

> During this play I had loosened the fastenings of my veil and hood and now of a sudden I cast them from me, revealing myself clad as Isis, that is in little save a transparent, clinging robe fastened about my middle.
>
> (Wisdom's Daughter: VI)

In The Wizard (Chapt. XVII) we have a young woman who refuses to accept the conversion to Christianity of the old husband by whom she is passionately loved:

> "I am free from you, O dark and accursed man; but herein lies my triumph and revenge--you are not free from me.... I go straight to another man. Now look your last on me; for you love me, do you not?" And she slipped the mantle from her shoulders and except for her girdle stood before him naked, and smiled.

During the investigation of a murder (Child of Storm: X), when the King has ordered that she be searched, Mameena, the Zulu Helen, seizes the occasion for purposes of her own:

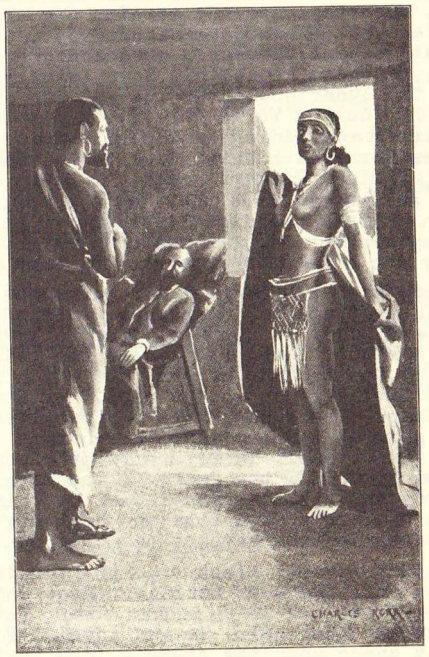
> Rising, she stepped forward to the center of the ring. Here with a few swift motions of her hands, she flung off first the cloak she wore, then the moocha round her middle, and lastly the fillet that bound her long hair, and stood before the audience in all her naked beauty--a wondrous and lovely sight.

There is also the occasion that arises when the heroine has been disguised as a boy. In the earlier of two such scenes in Burroughs, modesty is preserved. When the hero and heroine are about to be lynched, the hero proclaims what he has just figured out, that his partner is a girl; one of the lynchers thereupon reaches for the collar of the heroine's shirt, but the hero knocks him down (Wanderer's Necklace: Book 3, IV). In the other scene, two lustful Jap officers have been hunting for months, during World War II, in Sumatra, for a young Dutch girl rumoured to be hiding in the hills in boy's clothing: "Sokabe tore open Corrie's blouse. Then he grinned" (Tarzan and the "Foreign Legion":I). In a Haggard scene, an enemy captain behaves with unexpected gallantry:"Bare that lad's bosom, soldiers. Nay 'tis needless; snatch off that headdress"(Wanderer's Necklace: Book3,IV). But his gallantry was wasted, for the heroine involved, Heliodore, would presumably not have been embarrassed, as we have seen in #1.

Of all the nude scenes in Haggard and Burroughs, two stand out as perhaps best illustrating the importance of the effect of nudity in the worlds they envision. In The Girl from Hollywood, the villain, a director, has a rather elaborate scheme for seducing such virtuous girls as aspire to an acting career, one which involves a screen test in the nude. Having taken such a test, our heroine gets her contract, but (Chapt. X) she has "left behind all her self-respect and part of her natural modesty" and thus is ripe for plucking. In Dawn, Haggard's first novel, in return for the promise to sell him certain lands for $500,000, the father of the heroine has agreed to force her to marry the villain. They conclude this agreement while sitting on the banks of a lake one dark night just as a storm is coming up. Meanwhile, the heroine has come out for a swim:

> At that instant a vivid flash from the thunder-cloud turned the darkness into the most brilliant day, and revealed a woman standing up to her knees in the water, with her arms lifted, knotting her long hair. It was Angela. For one moment the fierce light shone upon the stately form that gleamed whiter than ivory--white as snow against the dense background of the brushwood, and, as it passed, they heard her sink into the water softly as a swan, and strike out with steady strokes toward the center of the lake. (Chapt. XXXVII)

The father now demands that the price of the land be reduced to $250,000, and the villain agrees.



"Look your last on me"
—The Wizard

#3--THE FATE WORSE THAN DEATH

> He threw her roughly across his broad hairy shoulders and leaped into the trees, bearing Jane Porter away toward a fate a thousand times worse than death. (Tarzan of the Apes: XIX)
>
> "Lead me to this maiden who has been snatched from the claws of Rezu and a fate that is worse than death." (She and Allan:XIX)

In Haggard and Burroughs there are 277 occasions on which a heroine escapes from the fate worse than death. When we look at these escapes with respect to the imminence of the heroine's peril, we find three possibilities. First, there are those situations in which she is within minutes or seconds of being defiled:

> He crept toward me like a wolf upon a sleeping lamb. There I lay in the golden bed illumined by the moon, and watched through the web of my outstretched hair, my hand upon the dagger that was buckled to my girdle. He drew near, he bent over me breathing heavily, and his eyes devoured my beauty. (Wisdom's Daughter: VIII)
>
> Meriem struggled to free herself. Hanson encircled her arms and body in a powerful grip and bore her slowly backward toward the pile of blankets at the far end of the tent. (Son of Tarzan: XX)

Second, there are those situations in which the defilement of the heroine, though apparently inevitable, is still hours or days away. If the villain has captured her in the wilderness, he may wish to do the deed in the familiar comfort of his own home or cave. In some cases, especially in Haggard, whose villains have more complex motives than those of Burroughs, she is allowed to choose whether she will be the villain's wife willingly or one of his women perforce:

> "You seem to forget that I am only asking for what I can take. No one can see or hear you here except my women. You are in my power at last, Rachel Dove...So I will give you three days." (Ghost Kings: XV)

In other cases there may be a legal or political need for some kind of wedding ceremony, either one in which the consent of the bride is not required, as on Barsoom (Warlord of Mars:XIV, Chessmen of Mars: XXII) or Venus (Carson of Venus: XIII), or one performed, with the connivance of a corrupted priest, on the basis that silence gives consent, with the bride drugged (Red Eve: VII-VIII) or bound and gagged (Lysbeth: XXVI). Even when no ceremony is desired, the elegant tastes of the rapist may move him to have his victim bathed and costumed (above, #2). The dreadful hour is somewhat more remote, but apparently no less inevitable, when the heroine is the captive of slavers (Tarzan and the Jewels of Opar: XVIII) or of the soldiers of the Emperor of Abyssinia (ibid., XXIII). Finally, there is what may be called the captivity of honour, when the heroine is betrothed to a man she does not love but who is determined to hold her to her word: "It is too late, John Carter; my promise is given, and on Barsoom that is final" (Princess of Mars: XXII).

We have the third degree of imminence when the heroine is the object of attempted capture--or even when she just happens to be with a party of whites attacked by savages:

> "Likely as not we'll pull through; but if we don't, why remember what I said, don't let 'em get you--save one shot. You understand?"
>
> "I understand, Dad." (Bandit of Hell's Bend: VI)

There are of course many non-physical varieties of attempted capture: the money-lender's threat to foreclose on the family estate, which in the works studied here is evaded by the hero's discovery of buried treasure (Tarzan of the Apes:XXVIII;Haggard's Colonel Quaritch: XLIII), the employer's making the heroine's job depend on her compliance (The Girl from Farris's: V), the threat to cut off an addict's drug supply (Girl from Hollywood: XI), and so on.

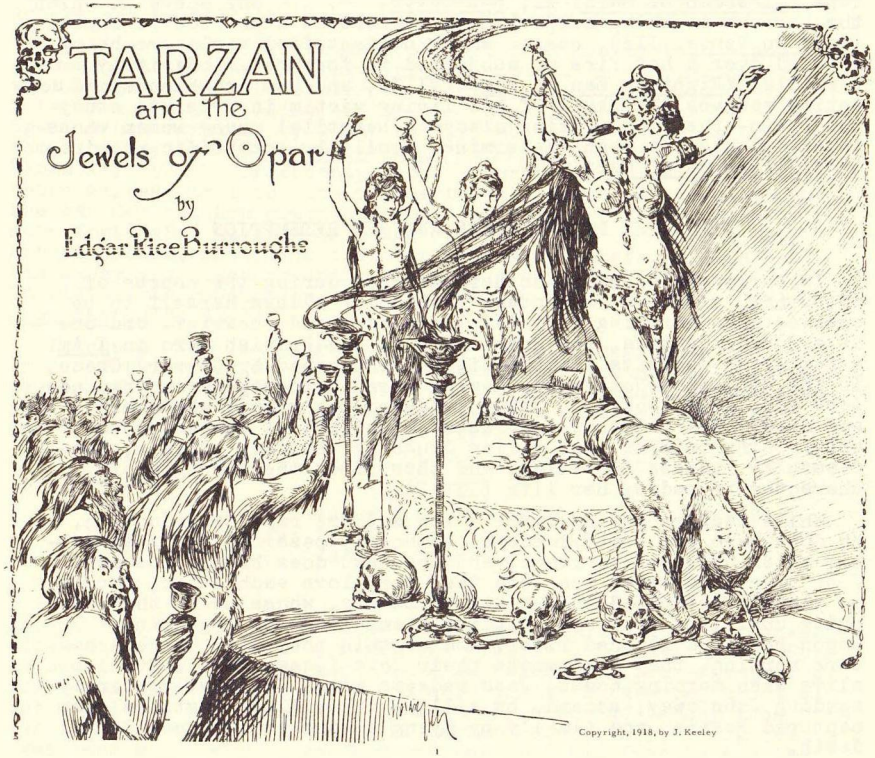
With these distinctions established, the results of our research can be tabulated in the following way:

	HAGGARD	BURROUGHS
First Degree	4	104
Second Degree	19	87
Third Degree	29	34
	52	225

The more horrible the villain, the more dreadful the plight of the imperiled heroine. While the racial attitudes of Haggard and Burroughs must wait for a later paper, we can take note here of the rapists in Burroughs who belong to some other species of Homo Monstrosus.

In ten instances he is a "great ape," gorilla,[4] or orangutan,[3] and in six he is some variety of the missing link. Six are gigantic creatures: Martian Green Men, 15 feet tall but massing only 400 pounds,[5] a Martian White Ape, of about the same size (John Carter of Mars: Part 1, VI), and a Moon man, nine feet tall and broad in proportion (Moon Maid: Part 3, IX). Two are man-animal combinations: a bison-man (Back to the Stone Age: XX) and a fish-man (Escape on Venus: XVI).

The nicest of the lot are the tailed men of Pal-ul-don (Tarzan the Terrible: XIV, XVII, XXIV) and among the most horrible are the winged men of Caspak (Land that Time Forgot: Part 3, III). There are the creations of mad scientists: a Monster-man, a Gorilla-man, and a sexless[6] Synthetic-man who has by brain-transplant got into a sexed body. Another is a mad scientist who has taken on some of the properties of the gorilla (Tarzan and the Lion Man: XXV). There is also an Amoebic Neuter who wants to do something to our heroine, although he doesn't know quite what (Escape on Venus: XXXVII-XLI). The nastiest of all is a headless body under the telepathic control of a bodiless head (Chessmen of Mars: VI).



We also have two members of insane races, one called a "rational maniac"(Tarzan the Untamed: XXIII) and the other simply a "Madman" (Land of Terror: X), as well as a shuffling, slobbering creature called The Brute, who turns out to be a rather good-hearted moron (Jungle Girl: X), and a Leper King who turns out not to be a leper (ibid., VIII).

Finally we may take note of two instances of attempted gang rape (Chessmen of Mars: XI; Man-Eater: V) , one scene in which the heroine is being subjected to torture as a prelude to rape (Lost on Venus: III), one in which unidentified girls are being grilled over a hot fire or subjected to tortures "infinitely more terrible" (Fighting Man of Mars: VIII), and one in which a mad scientist removes the skull of his living victim in order to study the brain--the victim being always a beautiful young woman whose selection has not been "determined wholly by scientific requirements" (Swords of Mars: II).

#4--THE FALLEN WOMAN AND HER REDEMPTION

In Burroughs there is no heroine who, during the course of the story, yields to momentary passion or allows herself to be coerced into marrying a villain; one is raped, however, and one is seduced. Attica, the Roman wife of the British hero in I Am a Barbarian, commits suicide after being raped by Caesar. Grace, in The Girl from Hollywood, having been photographed in the nude (see #2), gets hooked on drugs, seduced, pregnant, abandoned, and dead. Her story is contrasted with that of Shannon, who, after being tricked into taking drugs by the same villain, successfully resists seduction, and thus finds the strength of character to redeem her life (XXVII).

While Haggard has no heroine who suffers rape or seduction, he does have one that yields to momentary passion, two that submit to an unwanted marriage, and one that does both. Jess and John have discovered too late that they love each other, for he is already betrothed to her sister Bessie, whose heart they are quite unwilling to break. Finding themselves one night in a wagon-bed in a flooded river, and certain they will be dead before morning, they consummate their love (Jess: XXIV). Still alive when morning comes, Jess redeems herself, first by firmly sending John away; second, by killing the villain that has just captured Bessie; and finally by dying a more or less accidental death.

About Eva all we need to say is that she does allow herself to be deceived into doubting the good faith of the hero and then harrassed into marrying another man (Witch's Head). The case of Lysbeth is more to the point. She marries the villain in order to save the life of the hero, only to discover, after he has squandered all her money, that the marriage is not valid, since he already has a wife--a development that Haggard treats as fortunate, both because it frees her from the villain ("never again would she be forced to endure the contamination of his touch") and because it makes possible her union with the hero, who does not regard her as having been defiled and who is quite willing to adopt and love her bastard son (Lysbeth: Part 1, VI-VIII).

Believing their marriage to be impossible for a number of reasons, and having firmly decided that they will never see each other again, Joan Haste and her hero fall into bed for the fondest of farewells (Joan Haste: XIV). When she finds herself pregnant, she resolves not to allow the hero to ruin his own life by saving hers, and so marries the villain, having first told him all. As if this were not enough to pay for her sin, she later puts herself into man's clothing so that her insanely jealous husband, now determined to kill the hero, will mistakenly kill her instead.

In five stories Burroughs deals sympathetically with women who are unchaste at the beginning of the action. In two early serials the heroines are prostitutes who attempt to escape from their life of shame by finding and keeping honest jobs. Each is encouraged in her struggle by a man who proves his goodness by not attempting her bed (Girl from Farris's: IV; Efficiency Expert: XXI). Since for Eva the friendship cannot result in marriage, our hero being already in love with a decent girl, she does the only thing she can do: catches pneumonia and dies(ibid., XXVIII). June is more fortunate: having begun and continued her redemption with honest labour, she finds that her erstwhile benefactor has lost his money and taken to drink, thereby giving her the opportunity to aid in his redemption and thus win him for a husband (Girl from Farris's: XI-XIV).

In one of the last Tarzan novels, Jeanette begins as the mistress of the villain, but when her finer instincts revolt at the degree of his villainy, she changes sides and fights with the heroes against her former protector, thereby winning from a good man a love that she at first nobly resists:

> "You know what I've been--kicking around Singapore, Saigon, Batavia."
>
> "I love you," said Hans de Groote, and then Jeanette Laon burst into tears; it had been long since she had cried except in anger or disappointment.
>
> (Tarzan and the Castaways: XVI)

Sarina also begins as the mistress of a villain and then changes sides to join Tarzan in a righteous mission (the killing of Japs in Sumatra during World War II). A Eurasian of thirty-five and a convicted murderer who has spent most of her life among bandits, she completes her redemption by marrying a boy of twenty from Chicago who has heretofore hated all women, his mother having been a "gangland moll" who "never had any use for" him (Tarzan and the "Foreign Legion": III, IV, XXIV, XXX).

In #1 we spoke of the strange case of Thuvia, who was still a maiden after being "for fifteen years a plaything and a slave" of the White Therns of Barsoom (Gods of Mars: VIII). In a later Martian novel, the captive Phao has evidently not been so fortunate, if we may judge by what she says while leading our hero to the room in which our heroine is imprisoned:

> "When I was a prisoner in that room, Yo Seno came...to visit me. He is a beast. I hope he has not visited this girl--I hope it for your sake, if you love her."
>
> (Fighting Man of Mars: VI)

Phao's heroic endeavours on behalf of our hero and heroine presumably make her worthy of redemption, and our hero's best friend seems to be in love with her, but whether or not he actually makes her an honest woman is not clearly evident at the end of the story.

#5--HERO AND HEROINE

As we have seen in #4, two of Haggard's heroes are guilty of taking advantage of a moment's weakness on the part of the heroine. In this they contrast with Tarzan (Tarzan of the Apes: XX), Billy Byrne (The Mucker: Part 1, XIV), Old Timer (Tarzan and the Leopard Men: XX), and Turan, each of whom backs off when he sees how sweet, and pure, and trusting the heroine is:

> Again he crushed her to him and then as suddenly released her, and rising, strode rapidly to and fro across the chamber as though he endeavored by violent exercise to master and subdue some evil spirit that had laid hold upon him.
>
> (The Chessmen of Mars: XIX)

They also contrast, though less directly, with Hodon, who, big strong man that he is, backs off when O-aa slashes him with her knife (Savage Pellucidar: Part 1, IV), and with Norman of Torn, who nobly foregoes taking advantage of the yielding Joan de Tany after remembering first that he is an outlaw and second that he loves another, and having thereby learned "the difference between friendship and love, and love and passion" (Outlaw of Torn: XIII)

As for whether Tarzan would have taken advantage of Olga if her husband had not come home unexpectedly (Return of Tarzan: V), or Korak of Meriem if he had not been interrupted by a challenge to his kingship (Son of Tarzan: XI), or Billings of Ajor if he had not been called away (Land that Time Forgot: Part 2, VI), or Old Timer of Kali if she had not been abducted by natives while he was making up his mind to do the vile deed (Leopard Men: X) -- these things we will never know, for in each case the temptation was providentially removed. In Haggard, Providence does not intervene in this way to save heroine from hero.

There is another case in Burroughs where Providence intervenes to save the virtue of the hero, though here the girl involved can hardly be called a heroine. Seeking safety in the city of Rational Maniacs, Harold Percy Smith-Oldwick finds himself in the bedroom of a girl who wants to make love. Having heard that "one must humor the mentally deficient" and at the same time seeing in her a possible agency of escape, "he closed his eyes and returned her embraces." A moment later they are interrupted by her husband, whom Harold kills, much to her delight, and whose body they hide under the bed--the bed on which she wishes to complete the love-making. He feels that he would be "warranted in buying his life at almost any price, but there was a point at which his finer nature rebelled"; his finer nature, however, is not fully tested, for again they are interrupted, this time by her lover, from whom Harold escapes, having stumbled upon a secret passage (Tarzan the Untamed: XXI).

(to be continued)

FOOTNOTES

1) The Land that Time Forgot: Part 2, II; cf. The Cave Girl: Part 1, III.

2) The figures in this section for Burroughs come from studies by my late uncle and eponym, whose papers I am handling as literary executor: see Richard D. Mullen (the Elder), "Edgar Rice Burroughs and the Fate Worse than Death," RQ IV (1969-70), 186-191. Since my over-hasty submission of this article to RQ, I have discovered that my uncle later extended his "Table of Incidents" to cover the entire Burroughs corpus, and I have myself compiled a similar table for Haggard. These tables, too lengthy to be included here, are available for publication if there is any editor who believes that they would be a useful contribution to knowledge.

3) Tarzan of the Apes: XIX; Son of Tarzan: X; Tarzan and the Jewels of Opar: XIX; Eternal Lover: Part 2, VI; Tarzan, Lord of the Jungle: XXII; Monster Men: XII; Tarzan the Invincible: XII; Tarzan and the Forbidden City: XXXI; Tarzan and the "Foreign Legion": XVIII; Tarzan and the Madman: XXIV.

4) Tarzan the Terrible: V; The Land that Time Forgot: Part 1, VIII, X); Cave Girl: Part 1, II; Part 2, V.

5) Princess of Mars: XVII; Thuvia, Maid of Mars: V; Fighting Man of Mars: III.

6) Monster Men: III; Tarzan and the Lion Man: XXIII; Synthetic Men of Mars: IV.

7) Tarzan and the "Foreign Legion": III, IV, XXIV, XXX.

ILLUSTRATIONS

Page 8 From At the Earth's Core (Chicago, 1922) and typical of St. John's illustrations for this book, for Pellucidar, and for The Land that Time Forgot. The costume given Dian the Beautiful can be justified from the text--except for the illustrator's suggestion that her breasts are modestly concealed, for the text makes clear (see passage quoted on p. 9) that for the women of Pellucidar the covering of either breast is accidental rather than intentional.

Page 12 For The Wizard, by Haggard, 1896.

Page 15 To use a word common in the twenties, this is perhaps the most daring of all the illustrations made by J. Allen St. John for the Burroughs books. Notice the golden breastplates: they do not appear in this story, nor in any Burroughs story before Tarzan the Terrible (1921).

The Myth of Decent in Vincent King's "Light a Last Candle"

by

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Vincent King's Light a Last Candle (New York: Ballantine, 1969) owes much of both its narrative structure and its underlying irony to the author's exploitation of the mythological motif of "descent."[1] In this motif, a hero is separated from the world of the living, visits the Underworld, and there receives--from the ancestral dead or the gods of the nether world--a special knowledge of life and death, good and evil, past and future. The Underworld is therefore a place of heroic initiation and of spiritual enlightenment, and upon his return to the upper world of normal, everyday existence the hero should have been transformed by his experience into a leader who possesses higher powers and greater knowledge.[2] And this is why King's science-fiction novel must be said to exhibit an ironic[3] framework: since the initiatory motif of descent is both obvious and recurrent, yet in each instance the hero's quest proves abortive. The knowledge he gains from each of his ordeals--though indeed it is a fragment of the truth--misleads him and his initiation is betrayed. Step by step he is led, not to heroic action and leadership, but to further ignorance, confusion, miscalculated violence, and finally to apocalyptic fury as his last resort.

The protagonist of this first person narrative never reveals his real name, if indeed he has one at all, only the nickname, Ice Lover, by which the Mods (short for "Modifieds") address him. He is a blank figure without an identity or a past, but the nickname is symbolically suggestive, too, because Ice Lover is a lone wolf who haunts the empty tundra country in the North where the physical desolation is commensurate with his own ignorance about himself, the Mods, and the history of his planet. He possesses only one item of knowledge in his belief that he is the last known "Free Man," that is, a pure human being who has not been altered anatomically and genetically by the Aliens but is still in open rebellion against them. For this is a world suffering through a Dark Age, twelve generations after the great Defeat of mankind by the Aliens, who promoted their conquest by using a race of modified human beings to fight their normal fellows. Now the gene pool has been permanently damaged, so the average Mod is often of subhuman intelligence as well as physically mutated in horrible ways: the men sporting horny carapaces, four arms, directional ears, and infra-red vision; the women converted into Breeders with four breasts and open pelvises. This is a planet of cultural simplification, too, where the remnant of sophisticated weapons and inventions from earlier, civilized times are regarded with religious awe, not scientific understanding. Finally, it is a world filled with violence and brutality, with standards of human conduct and civilized behavior far short of "human":

> / The Mods / were more savage, poorer, more stupid than I'd thought possible...the whole thing was going downhill fast ...As I went there were more and more ruins. Ruins...ruins all the way. Broken buildings, rusting machines and vehicles, old weapons and men's bones stained with mud, skulls, flaky and hanging on brambles like deserted crowns. There were great scars in the land, charred, prostrate forests and broken things between the secondary growth. Old plastic sadly blew and fluttered in the wind. (pp. 37-38)

Properly enough, then, Ice Lover's first descent takes place against the background of this lost civilization. In trying to escape two Aliens in their dangerous hoverers he has to take refuge in some ruined and deserted buildings, once a city of men before the Defeat, now just a necropolis alive only with the past. So this is his first confrontation with the Underworld--with the past history of the human race on this planet,[4] in other words--and at this point he decides to travel South, to seek an answer to all the riddles provoked by his experience in the dead human city as well as to lose himself in the large populations of Mods and so avoid the hoverers that would be pursuing him in open country. From now on, Ice Lover's travels to the South will be a descent in the broadest sense, because he does regard the territory ruled by the Aliens and their Mod servants as a hellish land of corruption and death.

Very early in his travels, Ice Lover makes the acquaintance of "the Girl," a mysterious person (he refers to her "secret smile") who seems to be a typical Mod Breeder. Yet her role in Ice Lover's destiny is ambiguous, for she alternately rescues him from peril and endangers his life by testing his powers. Is she his special helpmate, someone chosen to guide him to herohood and make him worthy of being her consort? Or is she the spirit of deception and his ultimate betrayer? Ice Lover remains suspicious of her because she is far too clever and intelligent, far too influential with Mod rulers and politicians, for her to be a normal Mod female. Whatever the answer to the riddle she proposes, she is his companion throughout the rest of the story and will remain part of his destiny.

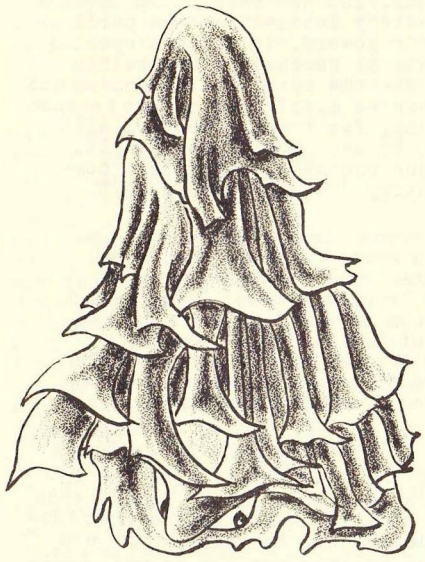
Soon Ice Lover's movements are given clearer direction because he hears of Raiders, led by a certain Craghead. They live in the Border Country, protected by a fortress known as the Enclosure, which in turn is built over a great Underground. Ice Lover immediately begins to dream of world liberation and of a revival of human greatness, but his fantasies are only too rudely interrupted. The group turn out to be not Free Men at all but a loathsome rabble of Mods; petty brigands in fact, who spend their time terrorizing the local Mod peasants.

Craghead's hideous subterranean castle is the site of Ice Lover's next descent, and the Raiders conduct him through the labyrinthine passageways to the king of the Underworld, with the intion of making him one of Craghead's henchmen. Yet as he descends lower and lower (Craghead's throne room is on the bottom-most level), his hopes are progressively diminished, for everywhere are strewn corpses, sewage, and mildewed relics from the Defeat. Craghead is no world-messiah, no harbinger of the future, just another symbol of the past; a foul, senescent tyrant, whose reign is founded on nothing but feudal principles of cruelty and repression:

> Old. The first thing about Craghead was that he was old. Ancient as some bleached, scoured bone washed up on some long-dead seashore...some long-dead tree up on the Tundra. He was absolutely hairless...the skin had a white translucent quality...but when you looked it was slightly blemished into small mosaic pieces of tiny variations of that old pale plastic color. (p. 73)

He wears mouldy, ragged clothes from the old times, and is never visible without a human skull in his hands. The charcoal braziers which are burning everywhere and filling the palace with stifling, hellish heat complete the picture: Ice Lover is face to face with Hades himself.

Craghead had chosen this site for his palace because it was a fortress and arsenal for the ancient humanity who once ruled the planet. To Craghead's mind, that makes it a religious grotto, full of sacred relics (live atom bombs!); it is a holy sanctuary where the corrupt old warlord can celebrate the myths of human tradition. There is neither science nor sanity in Craghead's dispensation, and once again Ice Lover has been misguided.



While in Craghead's subterranean chambers, Ice Lover reencounters his mentor from years earlier, a man he thought long dead, Old Rutherford. He is the only other Free Man Ice Lover had ever known, and this was also the man who had given him a high-powered rifle, another magical relic from the past and a unique weapon that turns Ice Lover into a lethal killer who exterminates countless Mods and Aliens. In the weapon, in fact, we have the mythological motif of the special object possessed by the hero that sets him apart from all other men.[5] And in Old Rutherford we find still another motif--an aged and wise benefactor who is often encountered in hero-tales.[6] Such a figure always possesses gifts and knowledge that are vital to the hero's quest, and this is the case with our old man, who is, of all things, Craghead's archaeologist. The king has given Old Rutherford the commission to dig down into ever lower levels of the fortress--to discover more relics, more religious symbols to bolster Craghead's hold on the local Mods--but the old man is out to solve the enigma of man and the other races on this planet. The answer, Old Rutherford insists, must be somewhere at the bottom of the Underground.

The subsequent course of events is Ice Lover's next descent, this time as a scout for Craghead to the land of the Aliens, beyond the no-man's land just to the South. In company with the mysterious Girl and Craghead's own son, Ice Lover enters another land of death (he mentions his "glimpse of hell" as he sizes up the Alien territory from the distance). Once again, too, he will return from his ordeal with the wrong interpretation of his experience.

Yet for a short while he feels he may have been wrong about the place, for all the Mods who live here under Alien direction are spontaneous and happy, and their land is well cultivated and fruitful, a beautiful if artificial Garden of Eden in fact. The first Mod they encounter, Christan, bids them welcome and introduces them to the wonders of Happy Land, where the atmosphere and soil are regulated by a massive crystal mountain which dominates the geometrically arranged landscape. Ice Lover is just on the verge of settling into the local life-style of peace and prosperity when the Girl tears him from his fantasies, showing him the place is really a land of Lotus Eaters: all the food, drinks, and smokes are soporiferous narcotics, and the flowers which the natives wear in their hair take root and become control units, plugged into the Alien mass mind. Christan and all the other inhabitants are really automatons;[7] all the suggestions of an idyllic Golden Age turn sour.

Now the trio--Ice Lover, the Girl, Young Craghead--are summoned through Christan to the Alien's residence in the crystal mountain; this journey, too, soon reverts to the pattern of a descent, for in order to reach the Alien presence the group must pass through some labyrinthine passageways which finally turn into a cavern.[8] To resist the power of the mass mind, the trio first kill its agent, Christan, then the Alien itself, which is a pulpy pink blob inhabiting the crystal walls of the mountain. Like everything else on this planet it too is suffering from senescence more than anything else, and we find it would have died soon even without Ice Lover's help. Yet before its death the Alien Pink projects a vision onto Ice Lover's mind of the evolution and history in the galaxy, from simple, quasi-molluscal origins to its domination of this present world far from its home planet.

The death of the Alien Pink should mean liberation for the planet, but on his return trip to Craghead's fortress, Ice Lover has an inkling that his ordeals and those of the planet are not yet over; something is still amiss:

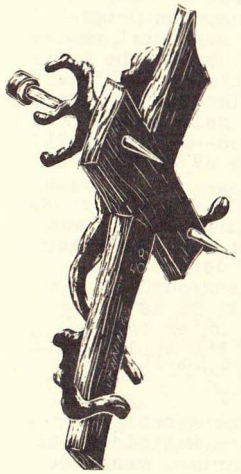
> It was uneasy...somehow wrong. An anticlimax...too easy. Even then I thought it was too easy. A premonition, maybe. (p. 143)

The battles with the hoverers, perplexedly enough, continue, even as the trio regain the Underground and find that every day Old Rutherford has been working into lower levels which have been flooded since the days of the Defeat. The answer--to introduce another mythological motif in this variant of the "antidiluvian" theme--[9] is hidden somewhere in those waters, and Old Rutherford is having them pumped just as fast as he can with the rudimentary technology available to him. At this moment in the narrative, the flood at the bottom of the Underground and the catastrophe brought on ages ago by the Defeat are synchronized temporally and thematically.

This archeological exploration must wait, however, for Old Rutherford and Ice Lover have a special visitation to make first, to the hulk of an ancient starship, buried nearby without any of the Mods having ever realized what it is. The ship--on the planet's surface only by mischance anyway, since it was meant only for deep space--is upside down; many of its passageways are flooded, too, and its intricacies give the impression that it is "built like a maze." The results of the investigation prove surprising because the ship's last crew member is still alive after all these centuries, surviving thanks to suspended animation and waiting for real human beings to come to his rescue. Young Craghead kills him, as Ice Lover had slain the Pink, but the parallelism goes still deeper: this last surviving "original" human is still another living anachronism on this planet. Like the Alien Pink, he is senescent and dies as much from the effects of coming out of his freeze as from a Mod bullet; but like Craghead himself, he is a white, pale, translucent figure, a ghost out of the past, who merely tantalizes Ice Lover with the notion that he had at least rediscovered the Free Men. This descent, then, repeats the pattern, for Ice Lover is far from knowing the complete story even now. What he does learn, however, is that the Free Men on this world were originally colonists from across the light years, and the planet belongs by natural right no more to them than to the Pink. After men had first conquered the world and made it over to their own, the colony ship had returned to the home planet; in the meantime, the Pink had moved in and brought on the Defeat. It was on the starship's second run to this world that the Pink had shot it down and rendered certain the savage era with its mutated race called the Mods. Only on this point, too, Ice Lover's knowledge remains fragmentary; there is more to learn, as he quickly discovers when he and Old Rutherford get back to the Underground.

At last Old Rutherford's excavations have been brought to fruition, and the diggings have broken through the flooded levels of the Underworld to discover a honeycomb of caverns underneath the entire surface of the planet, an Underworld beneath the Underworld! This is the long lost realm of the Originals, now secretive troglodytes, but once proud owners and inhabitants of the surface of the planet before the coming of the Alien invaders, human and Pink. One important revelation results from Ice Lover's descent to their world: these people, who once mated successfully with human colonists, are the true source of most of the Mod characteristics (the modifications imposed by the Pink were only a secondary elaboration): the four arms, infra-red vision, the carapaces on the men, Breeder capabilities in the women. There had been a treaty between men and Originals so they could share the planet on equal terms, but men soon violated it, drove the Originals underground, and enslaved the Mods for their servants. Now that the Pink is dead and now that it seems pure men are extinct, it is time for the Originals to reclaim their world. The plans include, predictably, enslavement of the Mods, the bastard race that is half of their own blood.

Of course the miserably degenerate Mods completely reverse their traditional behavior patterns by playing down their human characteristics and accenting those in which they resemble Originals. Instead of regarding themselves as ruined or corrupt human beings, they now view themselves as spoiled Originals and do their best to disguise their human ancestry with surgery or cosmetics.



Poor Ice Lover, to be sure, is left completely out in the cold by these developments, and beyond the necessity of his having to disguise his "Free Man" status more than ever, he is completely ignorant about his own future and that of the planet. It is at this moment that the Girl reveals herself to him as a human agent. The "Alien" hoverers really contain men from a scout ship that plans a total re-conquest of the world for humanity, including liquidation of both Mods and Originals. As the massacre begins--for men are technologically far superior and far better armed--Old Rutherford disappears forever down the shaft of Craghead's Underground; his last act, to help the Mods and not the true men, is an abortive attempt to set off the bombs in the subterranean arsenal. The Girl, however, manages to lead Ice Lover away to the human scout ship where he is indoctrinated and trained as a fighting unit in the Exploration Corps. Seemingly, his destiny is now fulfilled: he becomes the Girl's lover for the first time, and he has found his Free Men.

The Corps captures the Underground and makes it its headquarters and base of operations against the Originals' Underground. Symptomatic of man's barbarity is Craghead's fate: his body is stuffed and placed at the entrance to the Underground as an emblem of human victory over the Mods. Ultimately, however, Ice Lover grows to hate human cruelty, and once more he changes sides. Unfortunately, the character of the Girl has now become only too clear: his seducer, not his benefactor. Consequently, it is interesting to note in passing that in a novel where the motif of descent has been inverted to signify its opposite we also find that a second major motif--that of the female helpmate[10]--has been analagously inverted.

Ice Lover deserts the Corps, and in doing so, he is forced to kill both his former comrades in arms, the Girl and Young Craghead, and our story works its way back full circle to its beginnings in the desolate tundra country where Ice Lover is again a rebel against the "Aliens" who have enslaved his planet. And yet, after all his initiations, after all that he has learned about this planet and its past history, he remains thoroughly ignorant about his own origins, for he comes to realize that his twelve toes, webbed at that, may mean he is really a Mod after all--or is he the last scion of the original human colonists and is his minor anatomical difference due to a mutation induced by atomic radiation? Ice Lover hopes he is a Mod and not a member of the detested human race, but no answer will ever be provided for him.

From its inception Ice Lover's real quest has been one for self-identity, to solve the riddle of what species he belongs to. Since he fails to solve this problem, his initiatory experiences, his descents, fail to help him achieve heroic stature. His confrontations with the past in each of his descents have not been preparatory ordeals for the hero's glorious destiny and final legitimacy as savior and leader. No indeed, only in retrospect can Ice Lover realize his destiny is far from heroic:

> Ever since that first day up on the Tundra I've been falling into things...going into caves. Craghead's Underground for example, or the crystal Mountains, the Original's caves or that Charcoal Burner's hut, even that underpass I fell in when I dived from that house at the very beginning. That guy with the colored blocks and the smoke box that kept asking me about dark places and girls, he was interested in it too. Fool. I could tell him--it's my destiny. He asked me about dying too--I could tell him that too...I don't mind. That's destiny as well.
>
> (p. 215)

To the end Ice Lover remains unenlightened, "in the dark," and it is therefore significant that in an anti-heroic novel in which the entire plot is structured around the theme of descent the final irony is for Ice Lover to end up in the Underground as the last scene in the book. He has a wick in his hands; he is going to light it and try to set off the atomic arsenal under the human headquarters, perhaps in the process bringing the whole planet to an apocalpytic end.[11] To ignite this fuse is to "light a last candle."

Consequently, Ice Lover's desire to bring on the Apocalpyse suggests his need to find the enlightenment so long witheld from him. The title of the book therefore has an allegorical meaning, too, insofar as it refers to a hero who has failed, remained in the dark, who has never achieved the light of knowledge at the end of the cavern;[12] who in fact is destined never to return from his last descent.

FOOTNOTES

1) For the meanings of this myth and its more significant occurrences, see J.A. MacCulloch in Hastings' Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, vol. 4 (New York, 1961), "Descent to Hades (Ethnic)." The oldest known instance of the motif is the Sumerian myth (Third Millenium) of "Inanna's Descent to the Nether World," which may be read in James B. Pritchard (ed.), Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament (3rd ed., with Supplement, Princeton, 1969), 52-57, trans. S.N. Kramer. Our Graeco-Roman heritage attests to the popularity of the theme with a host of famous heroes who visited Hades on various missions: Orpheus, Heracles, Theseus, Odysseus, Aeneas, and even the historical Pythagoras. "Descent" is therefore often given its Greek name, katabasis.

2) For the specifically initiatory import of the hero's descent into the Underworld, see Mircea Eliade, Rites and Symbols of Initiation, trans. W.R. Trask (Harper Torchbooks, 1965), 61-64. For the pattern of separation, initiation, and return, consult Arnold Van Gennep, The Rites of Passage, trans. Vizedom and Caffee (Chicago, 1960). The end result of the process is a higher state of activity (whether social status, spiritual consciousness, or intellectual maturity) for the successful initiate; the "passage" lies between a passive, naive state like childhood and an active, sophisticated state like adulthood.

3) I use "irony" in two senses: first, with its classical meaning of a difference between what is literally asserted and what is really the case, even as the descent motif leads us to expect a successful heroic quest, while events result, on the contrary, in anti-heroic failure; second, in Northrop Frye's sense of "the ironic mode" of literature, "in which the characters exhibit a power of action inferior to the one assumed to be normal in the reader or audience"(The Anatomy of Criticism, 366); the world is here conceived as one of anti-heroism and frustration. For a complete study of the ironic mode, see Charles Glicksberg, The Ironic Vision in Modern Literature (The Hague, 1969).

4) Jungian critics regard the Underworld as a storage-house of racial memories. What the hero confronts (or rather "relives") in his descent is precisely all those events in the collective past that have led to his own individual make-up. The purpose of journeying to the Underworld is, in other words, for the hero to experience those things that belong to no individual's personal experience in life but only to the group collectively as its racial inheritance. The Underworld, in short, represents the Collective Unconscious itself; the hero, the "ontogeny," must recapitulate the "phylogeny" and become acquainted with his own origins. See Maud Bodkin, Archetypal Patterns in Poetry (Oxford Paperbacks, 1963), "The Archetype of Paradise--Hades, Or of Heaven and Hell," 90-152; and the Bollingen edition of Carl Jung, Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious (Princeton, 1968), especially part I, 3-72; and part III, 113-47.

5) For magical weapons as heroic talismans, see the extensive list in Stith Thompson, Motif-Index of Folk-Literature (Bloomington, 1933), "Magic Weapons," D1080; "Firearms" in D1096 specifically.

6) For this motif and the interpretation I suggest, see Joseph Campbell, The Hero With a Thousand Faces (New York, 1948), 69-77.

7) For a recent survey on this motif, see Harry Levin The Myth of The Golden Age in the Renaissance (Bloomington, 1969), especially 3-31. The oldest known examples are again Sumerian. For "Enki and Ninhursag: A Paradise Myth," see Kramer's translation, 37-41, in Pritchard's Ancient Near Eastern Texts; and also see S.N. Kramer, "Man's First Golden Age," a chapter in From the Tablets of Sumer (Indian Hills, Colorado, 1956), 259-62.

8) Labyrinths (like caverns) are stylized representatives of, hence equivalents of, the Underworld. For a complete study of the ritual and symbolic associations of labyrinths with the Underworld, see W.F. Jackson Knight, Cumaean Gates: A Reference of the Sixth Aeneid to the Initiation Pattern (Oxford, 1936).

9) The flood is a mythical event that articulates the history of mankind into two eras separated by a cataclysm; even as in King's novel the Defeat is just such a cataclysmic event. Its association with a primeval flood (even if a limited one) completes the suggestion of the flood-myth here. For a valuable survey on this myth, see the article by F.H.Woods in The Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, vol. 4, 545-57, "Deluge." Pre-Biblical examples (all of which may be read in Pritchard, Ancient Near Eastern Texts) are Ziusudra (Sumerian), Utnapishtim in the "Epic of Gilgamesh" (Akkadian), and Atra-hasis (Babylonian). For an archeological interpretation of the Mesopotamian origin of the flood motif, see Jack Finngan, Light from the Ancient Past (Princeton, 1959), vol 1, 28.

10) For Woman as special counterpart and promoter of the heroic quest (the successful end of the quest should mean that the hero acquires the Woman as his own mate), especially as a benign symbol of the hero's own future greatness, see Campbell, Hero, 116:

> She / Woman / lures, she guides, she bids him / the hero / burst his fetters. Woman is the guide to the sublime acme of sensuous adventure. The hero who can take her as she is...is potentially the king, the incarnate god, of her created world.

The fullest study of this theme remains Robert Graves' The White Goddess (New York, 1948).

11) Hence, King's novel falls into that category of ironic (or anti-heroic) literature that concludes on an apocalyptic note. The type is discussed, along with many examples from twentieth century Black Humour (and with very slight mention of examples from science-fiction), in R.W.B. Lewis, "Days of Wrath and Laughter," in Trials of the Word (New Haven, 1965), 184-235.

12) My ideas in this paragraph are based on some remarks of Mircea Eliade's, on "light" as knowledge and "dark" as ignorance, in "Experiences of the Mystic Light," in the first part of The Two and the One, trans. M.J. Cohen (Harper Torchbooks, 1969), 19-77.

between two moments

between two moments
time is a white shadow
on a sun-dial.

one moment she
breathes rainbows and
the sand joins hands
to catch her nude reflection.

she says hello and
the sun pauses.

the next moment
dissolves.

-- Norman Poole --

A Eulogy for the Dying Science-Fiction Magazines (being sprawling reminiscences)

by

Robert A. W. Lowndes

This Guest of Honour speech was given at Boskone X, March 11, 1973.

The reason why I consider the science-fiction magazines in a dying state is that the all-fiction magazine in itself is almost a thing of the past. Back in 1930, when I first managed to start following the science-fiction magazines, the newsstands were literally cluttered with all-fiction titles. There were dozens of western, detective, mystery, sports, and adventure titles, not to mention some rather odd specialized ones. Today these are all gone; there are three detective titles and six fantasy and science-fiction titles--exactly the same number of the latter that you found in 1930, except that all six were solid science-fiction; no fantasy. We had Weird Tales and Ghost Stories, too--but in those days the term "science-fiction" was defined more tightly than it is now. Weird Tales did run some semi-science-fiction; that was what initially attracted me to it, as was the case with many other science-fiction readers.

I do not have any positive proof that science-fiction magazines are all going to disappear before I pass on myself. It would take clairvoyance, not inferential prediction such as I am making, to put my finger on a date--even to name a year--and say sadly, "Here it ends." A couple of years ago, I named 1980 as the cut-off point in an article written for Science Fiction Review. That date is as good as any. But it isn't firm.

Why am I convinced that it's going to happen? To put it as succinctly as possible: Aside from Analog, all the titles are in a deplorable situation. I am not talking about contents; whatever I, myself, may feel about the merits of the contents of any present science-fiction magazine, I am no longer convinced that that is the key factor. The crux is that, with the exception noted above, magazine distributors do not consider science-fiction magazines a profitable enough venture to encourage. In his editorials in Amazing Stories and Fantastic, Ted White has spelled out the details. His two titles are being carried on the basis of little more than reluctant tolerance. The distributor tells the publisher how many copies of each issue may be printed, and that comes to a low figure. The distributor will not handle a larger print order. Under such circumstances there is no hope for any real growth in circulation. It matters nothing that thousands who are willing (or might be willing) to buy Ted's magazines cannot find them at the newsstands.

I'm not convinced that the distributors are deliberately out to kill the magazines. No, they'll handle them so long as there's a little profit for themselves in the deal--but they are convinced that these are small circulation ventures and they won't get involved in any extra effort to increase the circulation. The science-fiction magazines are dying because of that sort of benign neglect. And aside from Conde Nast, publisher of Analog, no other science-fiction magazine publisher has a club to use over the distributor--big circulation titles on which the distributor stands to make a lot of money, so that the publisher can say, "You want to handle X, Y, and Z? Very well; see to it that the science-fiction titles get your best services, too."

I hope that my eulogy is not only premature (as, of course it is) but totally unneeded. I would be delighted to see the situation change. But only some sort of change which neither I nor anyone else, so far as I know, has forseen can alter the doom I expect.

So much for the title of my talk. Even if I am right, science-fiction itself will continue in paperback and hardcovers. We actually have a science-fiction magazine in paperback: Perry Rhodan. Each number has an editorial, a feature novel, several short stories, articles, a serial, and even letters to the editor. It may be a start toward a substitute for the magazines, but it is too early to be sure; and it cannot be quite the same thing because (if for no other reason) the continuity of the issues is likely to be off at any particular softcover outlet. But now I want to ramble about the science-fiction magazine which has played such an important part in my life, and from this point on any trace of structure in my remarks can be considered coincidental.

First of all: how many of you who are under thirty first encountered science-fiction in an all-science-fiction magazine? Now, how many of you over thirty first did so? If I had been Guest of Honour back at the 1943 Boskone, and asked the same question, nearly all hands would have been up--and I would not have needed to make the under-over thirty distinction. Nearly all the fans in those days were introduced to science-fiction by the magazines, as I was myself. I saw the old Amazing Stories on the newsstands in 1926 and was instantly filled with desire for it. Alas, it wasn't just a matter of finding 25¢; such lurid publications could never be brought in to the house; and I did not have a secret place where I could hide them and withdraw to read them. So I looked through issue after issue longingly. That is why I used the word "encountered" rather than "read" in my question. Actually, the first science-fiction story I ever read was a hard cover book, Roy Rockwood's Five Thousand Miles Underground.

I grew up in a semi-Puritanical environment--I say "semi" because you did not find there the Calvinistic notions that all but a few chosen people were damned to hell in advance; but there were a lot of taboos that we call Puritanical. The more conservative members of the family considered fiction reading to be dangerous for young people. The more liberal felt that carefully selected fiction could beneficially broaden a young person's horizon. Both agreed that reading matter, fiction or non-fiction, should be "improving"--should inculcate positive, Protestant moral convictions and show the great benefits of leading a Godly life, as well as spurring one on toward worthy achievement, so that when one's life was finished one could be satisfied that he'd left the world somewhat better than he found it. Or, at least, some other people's lives had been fuller and happier because of him. Over and over it was drummed into me that ideas and attitudes have consequences, and that wrong or wicked ideas and attitudes will lead inevitably to wrong or wicked acts.

You can see why, for a long time, Amazing Stories, with its garish covers, was forbidden. Jules Verne was acceptable, perhaps--a little, that is. More than that would be dangerous for a young person who already showed too much tendency toward dreaming and reading, instead of getting out and exchanging proper violence in rough games with other boys--fighting, of course, was sinful. So it was not only my natural fascination with the wonders shown on those old covers, but the lure of the forbidden which led me to spend many hours in the newsstores. Thanks to Hugo Gernsback's title SCIENCE Wonder Stories, I finally got permission to subscribe to that magazine at the end of 1929. At least, that is what I thought was the reason; and I feared things would get hairy when, first the word "Science" was downgraded on the April 1930 issue--printed in yellow on white, which made it almost unreadable--and then dropped entirely two months later. Somehow I managed to sneak Air Wonder Stories, Amazing Stories, and the two quarterlies into the deal, but that cheap pulp, Astounding Stories of Super Science was not approved. Pulp magazines were regarded as debasing, because the stories were not written in the best English and tended to romanticize crime and otherwise concentrate on very worldly matters, even though you found no hint of sex. And that, of course, is what they were worried about as I entered my adolescence. My father had not forgotten the struggles he himself had had in his teens to maintain proper purity, both physical and mental; science-fiction would distract me, perhaps.

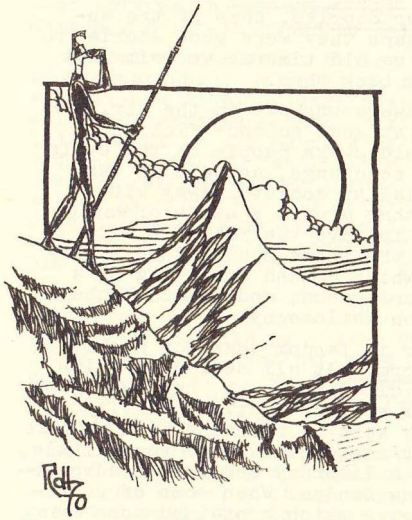
It did. I was thirteen going on fourteen in 1930 and did not experience passionate desire for a girl, and start entertaining sex fantasies, for almost a year after that. If my blonde had appeared in the newsstore just at the time when I was about to seize upon a new issue, would I have looked at her first--or instead? I can't answer--it never happened. Poverty and certain physical disabilities (and my negative feelings about them) held up my development far more than science-fiction. But there's no doubt that a lot of the libido got spilled over to the magazines.

And one of the things that was most exciting about the magazines in those days was the question of which of our authors would cop the cover of the next issue. If you were able to read all the magazines, you found that there was a rather small circle of authors and it did not take long to become acquainted with them. There were certain favourites whose stories contained good possibilities for an exciting and fantastic cover. In that period, when an artist read the story, or at least looked over it, and then painted the cover, Jack Williamson was the cover-copper. No one author ever had covers simultaneously on all three of the monthly titles, but Williamson and the (I'm afraid justly) forgotten Ed Earl Repp both managed to have covers on two during the same month, at different times.

One of the first things I encountered in the Readers' departments--which I always read first--was the reports from various readers that science-fiction isn't as good as it used to be. Where were the great authors of yore who did such wonderful stories for the Munsey magazines? Well, of course, some of them were still writing in the early 30's. Why didn't they appear in Amazing Stories and Wonder Stories? Apparently, they never sent any stories in--they were still writing for the Munsey magazines.

(At that time I did not realize that two of the three monthlies paid very low rates, on--or considerably after--publication.

Astounding was getting some of the "names," such as Ray Cummings or Victor Rousseau, because Clayton paid two cents a word on acceptance at that time. (Wonder Stories did run one short story by Cummings, and two more ran in the quarterly edition.) Later, I would be told by oldtime pulpsters like T.W. Ford that two cents a word was a considerable drop from the top rates paid by the pulps in the Golden Age of the 20's--up to five cents a word. He, and at least some other veterans, refused to write for Clayton if they could avoid it. Not because Clayton paid only two cents a word, but because he paid that rate to everyone. A dub whose barely acceptable manuscript was bought because the editor had some space that had to be filled, and no other story fitted, got just as much as the professionals who had gone through their apprenticeship. Ford considered a flat rate an insult to the writer who had learned his trade and put his blood into his stories. I think his point was and still is a valid one.)



And shortly after I started reading, the letter departments would occasionally run a missive from someone who was quitting science-fiction in disgust. The first letter I wrote that got published was in reply to one such, who had decided that magazines like Wonder Stories were for "wide-mouthed but not wide-awake youths." I raised the question of what science-fiction was for--what was its purpose? I don't recall that anyone took it up at the time, although the editor said it was a good question. But years later I found that a number of fans remembered that letter--and had forgotten that my name was mis-spelled--which just goes to show that some catastrophes aren't quite so bad as they seem at the time. After all, if I had not suffered the same, I might not have later felt so sympathetic toward Isaac Asimov.

Then I got on to fan magazines. The most successful early fan magazines were science-fiction oriented; that came after a short period of amateur science fan magazines wherein science-fiction was mentioned only incidentally. (The personal fan magazine, to which science-fiction was incidental, came later.) It was in the original Science Fiction Digest (later Fantasy Magazine) that I first read thumbnail profiles of various authors, learned about "cover-coppers," and bibliographic material and lists of contents of old magazines, etc. Science-fiction books hardly existed for me, outside of the few that could be found at the Stamford or the Darien Public Library--and I found later that their selection was much larger than to be found by many fans who lived in other small towns or cities. (I've forgotten entirely what crimes I committed in order to raise two dollars for the new Boni & Liveright edition of The Moon Pool, around 1923, and later The Dwellers in the Mirage.) The result was that science-fiction has always first meant science-fiction magazines to me--and if I think of a book first when science-fiction is mentioned, it is likely to be one which either first ran in a magazine or is by an author I became acquainted with in the magazines.

When I finally became acquainted with other fans in person--Don Wollheim and Frederik Pohl were the first two I met--that led to my writing for the fan magazines; and as I recall, most of what I wrote about was "What's wrong with the present-day magazines?" You see--it's almost a built-in tradition. It comes partly from the fact that most young science fictionists of my time came to science-fiction when they had not read an awful lot of classic literature. The standard of excellence was not mastery of English, not revelation of character, but the sheer excitement of other worlds, strange inventions, marvelous catastrophes, and so on. Eventually, the strangeness began to wear away; and in the magazines the dilation process set in. The Bates Astounding mostly ran stories in which already-familiar themes in science-fiction were poured into the pulp action formula mold. Some writers were rewriting stories they had written and sold to earlier magazines. A long novelette would be condensed to a short story, or a novel to a novelette--and the second time around was not an improvement. When Standard Publications took over Wonder Stories in 1936, changing the title to Thrilling Wonder Stories, some of the authors went in for a third round. Perhaps they were good stories to the new readers, but they weren't to us old timers: we felt that science-fiction had degenerated, even back then.

And those were times when social awareness was in the air. Some of us became enamoured of the idea that good science-fiction should have social significance, should awake people to the evils of present society and point the way to change, as well as describing the wonders of a mature, socialist society. Away with these stories which do nothing more than arouse a sense of wonder and dreaming. Science-fiction should improve the reader's understanding of social reality. That was the theme behind John B. Michel's speech, "Mutation or Death," which caused something of a sensation at the 1937 Philadelphia Conference, and led to Michelism, the first Marxian Science-Fiction Philosophy.

That led directly to the minor war in fandom that Sam Moskowitz describes so well in The Immortal Storm. It all seemed very important to those of us who were participating in it, but the truth is that most fans did not want to mix science-fiction activity with political activism, whether they were in sympathy with leftist or rightist philosophy. The Michelist movement came to very little, and the Futurian Society was more of a literary and mutual advancement club than a centre for converting fandom. When some of us became editors, we did try to find stories which contained some measure of right--I mean left--philosophy.

You can see, of course, that there is a vast difference between the Puritan idea that a young person's reading matter should be "improving" in nature, and what I've been describing above. (You can? Perhaps sometime you can explain it to me.)

The magazines did change. Campbell's Astounding did indeed start examining social problems and social philosophies; and in his own way, Campbell was as didactic as Gernsback. You might agree with his ideas or you might disagree--he really preferred that you disagreed and gave him an argument--but (again like Gernsback) he was out to stimulate you into thinking. He presented his own thoughts and hoped to see some of your own. And, despite the accusations you've often heard, the best way to sell Campbell was not to transform his editorials into a story. He rejected a lot of reasonably good stories which did just that--I know, because I later ran some of them in my own magazines.

I had my own ideas, and there's no question that I was attracted to, and sometimes purchased, stories which reaffirmed my current ones. But I don't recall rejecting any story simply on the grounds that I disagreed with the philosophy set forth. Campbell claimed he never did, either. I believe we're both telling the truth. But the truth may be misleading. Randall Garrett told me about some of his experiences with John; Campbell would bounce a story on the grounds that it had a "fundamental flaw." He could show you, almost geometrically, just what it was. But if you had the time and stamina to pursue the question far enough, might you not find that the root of the "fundamental flaw" was an idea that Campbell happened to disagree with? I suspect that, at times, you would. However, he could also find fundamental flaws in stories whose philosophy he accepted generally.

I never had the time to do such searching into the depths of stories submitted to me. But it is at least possible that an underlying philosophical repulsion lay behind my surface contention that this was a bad story--or badly written--at times. We all have our built-in capacity for self-deception.

Becoming an editor, having to read all kinds of bad pulp fiction constantly, mellowed my feeling about what's wrong with present science fiction (and "present" science-fiction hasn't stayed still for very long periods since the 50's) as well as making me indifferent to the purpose of science-fiction. Both the Puritan and the so-called "scientific" socialist attempt to define the purpose of reading matter leads to absurd censorships and suppressions. My conviction is this: Let the individual writer decide for himself; let him write as well as he can toward his chosen purpose; let him convince the reader if he can. But let him not try to make his own personal convictions the law for all writers.

I still have a tender spot in my heart for the science-fiction magazines, old and new, even if I read them very infrequently these days. I do not always admire them--but admiration is a different thing from love. You can give reasons why you admire something or someone, but you love something or someone without reasons. As Pascal said, the heart has its reasons that the brain just can't make intelligible to anyone else--or even understand itself.

I remember one day, talking to Tom Bouregy of Avalon Books, when I was working for him, about fiction. He said that when you come down to it, a story--any story--is about the struggle between good and evil, and the best stories are those which show good in some way triumphant. Now that certainly sounds like the old Puritan attitude, doesn't it? Yes, it does--but what was really wrong with that outlook: that there is no such thing as good or evil? Nonsense. In your hearts, you do not believe that any more than I do. Whether you were in favour of our participation in the war in Vietnam or opposed to it, you took your stand in favour of what seemed to you to be good. Even the silly person who claims he's for evil has actually made what other people call evil into what he calls good.

So what was wrong with the Puritan approach? Mainly that those who held it claimed that they could always tell the difference. It was clear and sharp like light and darkness. But in the world around us, we do not find only clear light and definite darkness. We can tell extremes; we can tell the difference between Adolf Hitler and Pope John, for example. But the majority of people are in more or less of a twilight zone, where the area of light seems always to be shifting.

That is where the art of fiction presents an opportunity. The actual world is very chaotic; so many lives seem to have no meaning; it is so easy to confuse effects with causes. For example, you read in the papers about some formerly promising person--perhaps someone you knew--who has become an unsavoury and pretty worthless character. The account says he became delinquent because he took to smoking pot constantly. Was that the reason? Or did the dope come later? Or was it a side issue and not determining at all? In the world we live in, you just can't always tie up A, B, and C, and say that because B and C followed A in time, B and C were caused by A. Sometimes that is the case, but not always. The old Puritan outlook was that it was always the case.

In fiction, we can structure things more clearly; we can bring order out of chaos and choose what sort of order we want to bring. The function of fiction is best employed to present not only what is--telling it as it is, which is the province of journalism--but to present pictures of what perhaps might be, and sometimes what the author believes ought to be.

Whatever "good" might be, we can say one thing about it: it expands outward in all directions, all dimensions, like light. Evil, on the other hand, collapses into itself; when it spreads, it spreads like glue. A great deal of fiction in our century has been a sort of glue-sniffing, and you find a fair amount of that in contemporary science-fiction. Very well; it has its interest, and can sometimes be useful in showing the differences.

But that is not what I want to read about in science-fiction. I'm going to let a couple of twentieth century authors speak for me in conclusion, because they put it both briefly and clearly. C.S. Lewis describes science-fiction as works in which "...the marvellous is the grain of the whole work. We are, throughout, in another world. What makes that world valuable is not mere multiplication of the marvellous...but its quality, its flavour... good stories of this sort...are actual additions to life; they give, like certain rare dreams, sensations we never had before, and enlarge our conception of the range of possible experience... The mythopoeic is...a mode of imagination which does something to us at a deep level."

And at the end of H.G. Wells's film version of Things to Come, Raymond Massey points out the fundamental challenge to the greatly improved future society we have seen arising: "All the stars or nothing--which shall it be?" The only sort of fiction which can deal adequately with some aspect of "all the stars" is science-fiction; and when I read science-fiction these days, that is what I want to read about. I can find more than enough fiction about the "nothing" choice elsewhere.

BUK/For the Party New Year's Eve

It was my intention to get drunk
only drunk mind you
but I puked my lunch.
So the world tightens its belt
a bit. There is a bust opposite;
ME. And all the beer, the scar-
tissue, the porno novel
on the floor. Bukowski?
They're not publishing that.

I've lived in this small court
for ten years; a paymaster of
words and any woman
that would have me. (So what can
you possibly know about
World War?
Me, I'm on the front every night.
Ears ringing.
A Flare-scorched face. And
if you want to know where
the enemy is, look in my bed
at the birdshit on my car
look at the floor

The rug was no good anyhow.

-- Lee Mallory --

Sprint

An Indian runner
clocked by a cavalry officer
ran the mile in the 1880's
(didn't everything happen
in the 1880's West?)
in less than four
minutes

(3:54) Good Lord!
So long before Bannister
started all this modern chasing
with oxygen, banked tracks, cinder,
light-weight shoes (Puma),
that Indian ran
on a cool evening

with a red disk sun
watched by a man
on horseback.
No trailing wind. Only small clouds
of dust on his heels --
come to earth with one
final message.

-- William McMillen --

The Fortune

I won't listen
if you don't lie.
exit from without
she answers,
within is guarded by well-wishers,
red the dimension
opens, encloses.

I fold my mouth over
the axis and
the truth falls out.

we circle back to avoic panic,
jealously
compare suicide attempts
while drowning.

I remove my telescope
from her blinded eye;
white, the peripheral
contracts slightly,
fainting with pleasure.

the coins begin to murmur.
the deck re-shuffles
warily.

-- Norman Poole --

Zamiatin's "We"
A Caricature of Utopian Symmetry

by

Camille R. La Bossière

(Royal Roads Military College – Victoria)

We is much more than a wry denunciation of a particular political state. Zamiatin's proleptic dystopia, among many things, is, it seems to me, a caricature of what Jacques Barzun has called "the classical temper." This frame of mind, Barzun writes, finds "one branch of science most congenial":

> I mean mathematics. For mathematics...abstracts and generalizes and yields simplicity and certainty while appearing to find these ready-made in nature. Seeing the beautiful demonstrations of Descartes and Newton as they explained the heavens with their co-ordinates, the great classical minds sought to rival this perfection and simplicity on earth; philosophers used the geometrical method to arrive at moral and religious truth; social scientists reduced government to mechanics; the tragic muse imitated the tight deductive gait of Euclid; and I am not merely playing upon words when I say that poetry itself adopted one common meter as if scientific accuracy depended upon it. In all the imponderables of life, conduct and art, the test was no longer the flexible, "Is it good, true, or beautiful for such and such a purpose?" but "Is it correct?"[1]

This esprit de géometrie led to what Arthur Lovejoy has called "uniformitatianism": "The reason, it is assumed to be evident, is identical in all men; and the life of reason, therefore, it is tacitly or explicitly inferred, must admit of no diversity."[2]

This emphasis on geometrical symmetry and uniformity which characterizes much of the philosophy of the Enlightenment, the period considered above by Barzun and Lovejoy, remained very much alive throughout the nineteenth century, gaining impetus from the discoveries of science, and finding expression in many blueprints of Utopia. Calvin Blanchard, for example, gives us the rationale for his "perfect" social system in The Art of Real Pleasure (1864): the design of society must correspond to the pattern revealed in "astro-physics," where "all revolves around a mathematical point." "The mass of mankind," he tells us,"follow leaders as inevitably as planets revolve around the sun" (ibid., 47, 50). T.K. Smith writes in Altruria (1895): "The aim of all education is the establishment, the enthroning, of a perfect reason that shall be kin with the very spirit of God, and rule the other faculties which are the representatives of the flesh" (p.7 et. passim). In Solaris Farm (1900) Milan C. Edson promises a "dream of perfect symmetry." Everything is described as "symmetrical"--fields, flowers, streets, houses, gardens, cities, even people. Living, as well as food, "is mathematically estimated" in Cosimo Noto's The Ideal City (1903).

Deism--belief in God as the transcendent Prime Mover, the Great Machanic, the Omniscient Watchmaker--and atheism are, significantly, the only religions allowed in Noto's Eden.[3] In a utopian romance written two years later, Life in a Thousand Worlds, W.S. Harris reserves greatest praise for the "symmetrical spirit-creatures" on Dubhe. The perfect society is achieved when humanity emulates "the symmetry of the Heavenly life" (195, 338).

This line of utopian thinking presents us with a very neat world. The universe is a great machine governed by laws that can be understood mathematically. If God is considered to exist at all, he exists as the Intelligentia superamundana, the author of these laws. Society, it is inferred, can become perfect, a well-oiled machine, to use a stock phrase from utopian literature of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, only if it is structured along parallel symmetrical lines. The realization of this goal, however, depends on men acting and thinking uniformly. D-503, the recorder-narrator in Zamiatin's We, is one such man.

> "In another hundred and twenty days the building of the Integral will be completed. The great historic hour is near, when the first Integral will rise into the limitless space of the universe. One thousand years ago our heroic ancestors subjected the whole earth to the power of the United State. A still more glorious task is before you: the integration of the indefinite equation of the Cosmos by the use of the glass, electric, fire-breathing Integral. Your mission is to subjugate to the grateful yoke of reason the unknown beings who live on other planets, and who[4] are perhaps still in the primitive state of freedom."

Thus begins We. D-503 records an announcement published in the United State Newspaper. He is the mathematician-philosopher in charge of constructing the Integral.[5] D-503 is fond of comparing himself and his society to a clock. He describes his mind as a "precise, clean, glittering mechanism"; it is like "a chronometer without a speck of dust on it." "I heard myself tick-tocking like a clock," "metallic tick-tock of thoughts," D-503 records on two other occasions.

D-503's life is guided at all times by the "Mathematical Norms" promulgated by the Well-Doer, philosopher-mathematician-dictator of the Land Within the Green Wall. Even sexual life is not exempt from regulation;[6] it is guided by the mathematically-derived Lex Sexualis: "A Number may obtain a license to use any other Number as a sexual product." Mechanical symmetry is the touchstone of all reality for D-503. The streets of his Eden are "impeccably straight," the buildings, "divine parallelepipeds"; the city has an "impeccable, most geometric beauty."

However, the utopian pattern is gradually disrupted as I-330 enters the narrator's life. One of the Mephi, a group dedicated to the overthrow of the United State and its tyrannical logic, she delights in the asymmetrical and the diverse. It is she who brings conflict and passion into D-503's life; and with her enters the Buddha:

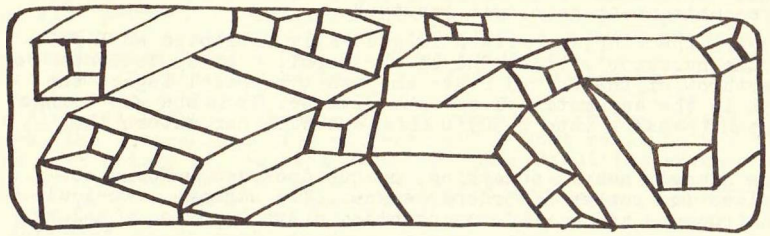
> She opened a heavy, squeaking, opaque door and we found ourselves in a somber disorderly space...The strange...musical instruments and a wild, unorganized crazy loudness of colors and forms like...ancient music. A white plane above, dark blue walls, red, green, orange bindings of ancients, yellow bronze candelabra, a statue of Buddha, furniture with lines distorted by epilepsy, impossible to reduce to any clear equation.

I-330 makes advances, but D-503 resists, and their first meeting ends. The sickness of desire remains, however, and he begins to find it increasingly difficult to concentrate on his duty to Reason and State. Later, he finds logic faltering. The charioteer is losing his grip on the reins: "My dream," he recalls,"...Yellow color...Buddha." He resolves to report his illness to the authorities, but fails to do so. Temptation proves too strong in the next encounter with I-330, and "the golden smile of the Buddha" blesses the triumph of passion. And again later, when emotionally bound to I-330, he is overcome with jealousy--S- has been visiting her chamber. The image of the "yellow Buddha" flashes across his mind.

Associated with "brass" and "yellow," the Buddha image functions as a leitmotif, a recurring symbol of freedom, passion, and conflict. Reliance on reason alone, reason divorced from the human condition, Zamiatin urges, can but lead to mechanical uniformity, robot-thinking, the reduction to absurdity of intellectual ecumenism.

The novel ends much as 1984. An effort to escape in the Integral proves futile. The revolutionaries, spawned of the devil of individualism, are captured and exquisitely executed by a machine. D-503, having been forced to undergo a "Removal-of-the-Fancy" treatment, watches disinterestedly as I-330 is tortured, then executed. His return to a conflict-free, mathematically harmonious, blue-gray world is complete. The image of the Buddha is forgotten, and the builder of the Integral is an obedient servant once more. The novel ends on a sardonic note: "The Reason must prevail."

So, by applying logic mechanically, Zamiatin has produced a reductio ad absurdum. When Sir Christopher Wren wrote,"Natural is from Geometry, consisting in Uniformity (that is, Equality)"[7]; when Leibniz wrote,[8]"Il y a de la géometrie partout, et de la morale partout"; when John Dennis wrote, "The Work of every reasonable Creature must derive its Beauty from Regularity, for Reason is Rule and Order, and nothing can be irregular either in our Conceptions or our Actions, any further than it swerves from Rule, that is, from Reason";[9]--these three contemporaries of the Enlightenment were presenting an ideal pattern for human activity and thought. Zamiatin has taken such an ideal pattern, has stripped it of its qualifications (as a satirist must), and has presented us with a hypothetical absurdity: D-503 recording, "It is unnatural for a thinking and seeing human being to live among irregularities."



FOOTNOTES

1) Classic, Romantic, and Modern (New York, 1961), 2nd rev. ed., pp. 39-40.

2) "The Parallel of Deism and Classicism," Essays in the History of Ideas (Baltimore, 1948), p. 79.

3) In Utopia: The Perennial Heresy (New York, 1967), Thomas Molnar identifies "utopianism"--"belief in an...attainable perfection"--with pantheism, belief in an immanent God (p. 235). This essay outlines another view of utopian thinking, a view that places "utopianism" in a context far removed from the religious mysticism which characterizes pantheism.

4) New York, 1952; translated by Gregory Zilboorg.

5) This was a common metaphor in Enlightenment philosophy, and one that remained current in nineteenth-century thought through such popular works as William Paley's Natural Theology and T.H. Huxley's Lay Sermons. See W.H. Mallock, The New Republic (Gainesville, 1950), pp. 44-45.

6) The term Lex Sexualis suggests a satirical extension of the Lex Naturalis.

7) Parentalia, cited by L. Weaver, Sir Christopher Wren (1923), p. 150; and by A.O. Lovejoy, "The Chinese Origin of a Romanticism," op. cit., p. 99.

8) Letter to Bossuet, 18 April 1692, Oeuvres, I, P. 349. Cited in The Note-Books of Matthew Arnold (New York, 1952), p. 260. It is interesting to note that Leibniz, like Zamiatin, "travelled" to the Orient, but for a much different purpose: Leibniz sought further demonstration of la loi de la nature. In a letter to A. Morell, Leibniz remarked that the Chinese tradition that all spirits are of the same kind, that they correspond to Ly, the universal substance of all created things, was clearly in harmony with the Western explanation of the Intelligentia superamundana. See Emilienne Naert, "L'Idée de Religion Naturelle Selon Leibniz," Aspects de l'Homme et de l'Oeuvre (Paris, 1968), pp. 102-103. Reason, asserts Leibniz, provides men with the principle of a universal religion. Also see Essais de Théodicée, Die philosophischen schriften (Berlin, 1885), Vol. VI, pp. 27-30; and Ancients Traitez de divers auteurs sur les céremonies de la Chine, avec des notes de Monsieur de Leibniz (Leipzig, 1734).

9) "The Grounds of Criticism in Poetry" (1704), The Critical Works of John Dennis (Baltimore, 1939), I, p. 335. Also cited by Lovejoy, op. cit., p. 99. Cf. Carl Becker, The Heavenly City of The Eighteenth-Century Philosophers (New Haven, 1932).

Rosedale Hotel

do you eat much fruit Gwen yes
she eats quite a lot I like apples
have you written your boys yet I
am just writing the post-cards
here are two and a half downtown
they are three on a large number
quite a saving do you write your
sisters I don't write them they
don't write me Doug's sister has
mellowed since her eldest died
I was in the army four years and
she never wrote me once so short
on spending money I had to play billiards
and she never sent a shilling here
is your chocolate for the gulls
they love it well are we going out

-- Edward Hagerman --

The Trap

The tight strutted legs
tip toe through the grass.
No marks for tomorrow's
scrutiny. Only the stripe
I can never, under the red moon
standing, know about, or understand.

Little Emily loved her geese.
Named each one.
Friend.
Found them gone or dead
in the din at three A.M.
Those claws can open pens.

High seriousness is Emily's grief.
Elegies can not undo
what Nature under a red moon
has done;
nor words emote how Emily,
inside, bled for her honking friends.

The raccoon, finally caught
in the experimental snare
the highschool interested in wildlife kid
made for his science 10a project,
wants to get out bad.
All that emotion trapped in language.

-- Morris Herman --

From a Corner Table at Rough House's

by

Bill Blackbeard

The Doom that Whirled toward Minnie or, Mickey Mouse and the Phantom Artist

Flat against the cold, mossy stones above the green-jawed depths of the crocodile pit, arms outstretched to either side of his wall-clinging body, edging cautiously along a narrow ledge away from the trapdoor entrance, the little guy calculated his chances of making it to the distant end of the ledge before one of the lunging saurians just below snapped its hungry jaws about an ankle and jerked him down into the black, threshing waters. It was 1933, and a hundred thousand readers had turned to the comic page to find out what would happen next in the crocodile pit episode of one of the great daily adventure strips of the thirties. Nothing in Tailspin Tommy, Dick Tracy, Wash Tubbs, Tarzan, or Buck Rogers was quite as gripping that week. In fact, few of the still-new adventure strips (it was only nine years since the first highly tentative serious action strips appeared) had been able to equal the narrative about the nervy guy now in the crocodile pit for day-to-day suspense and fascination.

Yet few comic page readers over eighteen in the year 1933 were aware of this. Those who would thumb through their freshly opened daily paper to find out if Junior Steele's father had been done in by Steve the Tramp in Dick Tracy, or whether the bleakly aged Captain Folly had thwarted his hook-handed mate's attempt to drown him in Wash Tubbs, dropped unseeing eyes past the equally grim hazards of the youth spread-eagled above the crocodiles.

After all, how much serious attention could a grown human being give to the impossible perils of a mouse?

For it was the Mickey Mouse of the 1930s newspaper strip who had lowered himself to the perilous edge, attempting to find the trapdoor through which the mad scientists of Blaggard Mansion, Professors Ecks, Doublex, and Triplex, had dropped their victims to the crocs. It was a tough, steel-gutted Mickey Mouse, quite unlike the mild, blandly benign Mickey of contemporary Disney Studio usage, who held the kids of 1933 rapt with his adventures on pirate dirigibles, cannibal islands, and bullet-tattered fighter planes--just as he would have held adult adventure strip readers were it not for their stereotyped reactions to an animal hero.

In the adults' remembered experience, animal narratives were for kids. Most had never even heard of such thoroughly mature works of fiction or poetry as Algernon Blackwood's Dudley and Gilderoy or Don Marquis' archy and mahitable. In strips, they were then familiar with the popular but juvenile Felix the Cat of Pat Sullivan from the '20s, the equally child-slanted Harrison Cady Peter Rabbit and Lang Campbell Uncle Wiggily of the same decade, and -- if their memories cast back far enough--Jimmy Swinnerton's kid-focussed Boner's Ark prototype of the 1910s, In the Good Old Days, and C.M. Payne's pre-Pogo swampland fantasy, The Possum Gang of the same period. There had simply not been many humanized animal strips before the mid-'30s, and virtually all of these--with the marked exception of Sidney Smith's sui generis innovation, Old Doc Yak of 1912-19--were aimed primarily at children.

The Mickey Mouse image on a theatrical poster of the '30s was something else, however. Like that of Felix the Cat ten years earlier, the cinematic symbol of the mouse was a beacon to adults. It drew them by the millions into movie theatres everywhere, kids in tow. Yet not even the vast enjoyment these people derived from the mouse's animated antics led many of them to give much time to his escapades in newsprint. An animated slapstick romp for five minutes was one thing. Even an animal gag strip built around a film character might be worth a glance, if the daily point could be picked up without concentration. But a serious, cliff-hanging continued daily strip devoted to a funny animal? Where was the relevance, the empathy? How, they wanted to know, can you care if a mouse gets bopped on the head or shot?

But for the kids of the time (as well as for a few perceptive adults, of course), there was plenty of relevance and empathy in the daily Mickey Mouse strip. The imaginative maturity of the art and story line, the sound, sustained characterization of the dramatis animalis, the unfailing wit of the dialogue, above all the episode-to-episode excitement and comedy of the graphic continuity riveted the reader of those days to the fast but superbly paced adventures of the strip's stunningly portrayed cast.

The refusal of so many adult strip readers to see what was right under their noses was not at all unusual. Many well-read individuals of education and intelligence have, after all, consistently ignored a number of prose works of wit and imagination because they had the look, subject matter, and imprimatur of "children's books." The Frank Baum Oz novels, the Finn Family Moomintroll series, the Jerry Todd and Sekatary Hawkins opera, and such fine individual works of fantasy and adventure as E. Nesbit's The Enchanted Castle, William Bowen's The Old Tobacco Shop, and Karle Wilson Baker's The Garden of the Plynck have lone been ignored by adults quite capable of enjoying them, because of their assumption that books focussing on children and fanciful creatures could not possess the same poetry, characterization, and narrative force as the finest "adult" fiction.

Above Mickey's speeding monoplane, an immense and menacing cloud moved to blot out the sky and sun--and moved against the strongly blowing tail wind that bouyed his craft forward. He remembered now what the crazed pilot had told him at the airport, and gulped. Perhaps what the terrified flyer had tried to tell them was true, after all. If so, in a minute there would be...and there it was! Dropping hideously down from the massed cloud into his flight path perhaps half a mile ahead was the thing he had already anticipated --the monster spider the pilot had raved about! Automatically, he tried to miss the bulbous, black-bodied horror--and realized with dismay that there would be no escape. For a ghastly web of glittering, thickly viscous cords had dropped from the cloud beyond the spider--a web a thousand feet across!

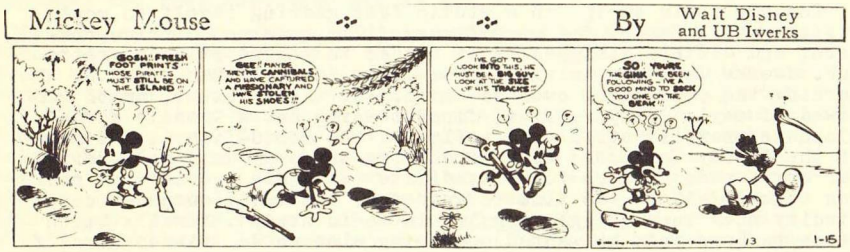
So it was that the daily Mickey Mouse became the only first rate comic page adventure strip to run virtually the whole of its creative course unappreciated by any sizable number of the adult readers of the medium. Not even the formal chroniclers in the field to date have indicated the least awareness of the status and character of the mouse strip; most, in fact--from Martin Sheridan in his 1944 Comics and their Creators to Gerard Blanchard with his La bande dessinée of 1973--pass blithely by the comic strip Mickey to discuss the mouse only as an animated figure, if at all.

The blade of chain-reaction blindness was unfortunately double-edged. If hundreds of thousands of strip fans have missed the Mickey Mouse daily strip, the same adamant disinterest, reflected in the attitudes of newspaper feature editors across the country (abetted by the prevailing economic depression, of course) curtailed distribution of the strip itself. In many large cities--San Francisco, New Orleans, Detroit, St. Louis, etc.--the daily Mickey never appeared at all; in several others--Los Angeles, Chicago, Oakland, New York, etc.--the strip ran only in the local afternoon race-result dailies, or in the most blatantly sensational morning tabloids: the sort of papers bought and thrown away by city workers, but not widely read by home subscribers. As a result, millions of potentially interested kids never had a chance to read the strip regularly. The only vestiges of the strip they ever saw were the sharply altered Big Little Book reprints of 1933 and later (all dialogue balloons and many crucial panels were omitted), the short-lived David McKay episodic selections of the early '30s (a single, fine Sunday-page collection was their only worthwhile publication), and the cut, often extensively altered continuity republished in Mickey Mouse Magazine and Walt Disney's Comics and Stories between 1938 and the early 1940s--all without a single hint that an independent daily strip source existed.

Among strip buffs, then, those of us who remember the daily Mickey Mouse in the newspapers of the time probably compose something of an exceedingly lucky elite. But what we remember!

There were the struggling, incohate beginnings of the strip (imagine the sheer nerve involved in launching so shapeless a comic feature on the nation's newspapers--even one based on a smash cinema hit--in January, 1930, amid the belt-tightening after-shocks of the 1929 Crash)...Mickey doing makeshift Mack Sennett things with cannibals on a desert island at the outset, antics almost as inept as the stuff in Charlie Chaplin's Comic Capers of the 1910s...yet becoming involved a bare month later with the first sinister machinations of his strip-long arch-enemies, Pegleg Pete and Sylvester Shyster (the latter an attorney, of course), and introducing us in the process to the earliest of the strip regulars, Horace Horsecollar, Clarabelle Cow, and Minnie Mouse herself already seen briefly in the first week of the strip ...blundering in short order through his first full suspense adventure, half-animated cartoon, half-serious strip continuity, in a gangster-haunted old mansion...extending the range of his escapades, with Minnie at his side, to a rattling passenger train where he meets Pete and Shyster for the second time (with his first rendition of the flabbergasted dismay that was to become his classic response in their subsequent encounters)...desperately combing the rural countryside trying to recover money stolen from a bank in order to save Minnie's father's farm...all this and much more before the end of 1930, drawn and narrated with an increasingly evident verve and zest found in only one other daily adventure strip of the year: Roy Crane's brilliant serio-comic thriller, Wash Tubbs. (The dull, plodding story-illustrations of the 1930 Tarzan; the silly, gymnastic tumbling-about of the early, juvenile Buck Rogers of that period; the gray, gritty art and obsession with aircraft technology which slowed the pace of the contemporary Tailspin Tommy to a shuddering konkout--to glance at the most popular adventure strips then on the nation's comic pages--seem forced and contrived against the inventive freshness and pace of the fast-developing Mickey Mouse strip of that first fine year.)

What Mickey had going from the very start was the conceptual image of the pint-sized hero himself. This was nothing less than simple genius on someone's part--although precisely who, among those early Disney studio employees of 1928, sketching the opening frames of the initial Mickey Mouse film, Plane Crazy, first pinned down all the essential elements of the sliced-pie black eyes, round black ears, uptilted jellybean-tipped nose, face-framing black carapace (borrowed, of course, from Felix), the widely grinning mouth, and compact, shorts-clad, tail-balanced black body with gloved hands and bulbous brogans at the ends of licorice-stick arms and legs--precisely who assembled this disparate array and said this is it--this is the mouse!, we don't actually know. (Recent published material suggests animator Ub Iwerks as central in shaping the classic mouse.)



Mickey's name we know a bit more about. Walt Disney, we learn from numerous sources, initially wanted to call his new film hero Mortimer the Mouse, unimaginatively echoing the nomenclature of several previous movie cartoon animal stars, such as Felix the Cat and Disney's own, now abandoned, Oswald the Rabbit (and later continued by Iwerks with his Flip the Frog). But his wife, Lillian, suggested the useless article be dropped and that a sprightlier name be used--like Mickey Mouse. She also suggested Minnie as the name of Mickey's girl friend. Mrs. Disney, it now appears, may not have been particularly inspired but may only have had a tenacious memory, since Johnny Gruelle, of Raggedy Ann and Andy fame, had featured an earlier Mickey and Minnie Mouse team as regular characters in a children's fiction series he wrote for Good Housekeeping (the most widely-read women's magazine of its time, and certainly seen by Mrs. Disney) in 1921. Both Gruelle characters (bought to my attention by writer Martin Williams) were cartoonized mice, traditionally rendered by Gruelle, while Mickey was Minnie's young son instead of her paramour, but the names may have stuck in Mrs. Disney's head, to re-emerge eight years later.

Her open mouth turned down in a black crescent moon of horror, Minnie Mouse screamed her fear as the heavy mass of the nether millstone to which she was tied shuddered with the grinding pulse of the old mill machinery which brought the upper millstone humming and spinning down to pulverize her. In a minute the slick, whirling stone surface would touch the tip of her upturned nose, and then it would be the end. At the lever that controlled the speeding mill mechanism, the black-bearded gypsy grinned his terrible delight at Minnie's peril, while outside, Mickey Mouse realized there was only one way to stop the doom that whirled toward Minnie. Seizing a saw that leaned against the mill wall...

The first Mickey Mouse daily strip episode, actually drawn in late 1929, appeared on January 13, 1930. According to Disney Studio records, this first, rather elaborately drawn episode (which opened with Mickey daydreaming on a barnyard haystack about becoming a great aviator like Lindbergh) was scripted by Disney himself, pencilled by a key studio animator, Ub Iwerks, and inked by another artist, Win Smith. Through some mixup in King Features' distribution of this and other early strip episodes, Iwerks received byline credit for the feature in several subscribing papers, probably to the surprise of mouse movie fans who had already come to associate their favourite with Disney and to the undoubted dismay of Disney himself. The correction was soon made, and the byline changed to a staid "Walter Disney" (which belied the less formal "Walt Disney" already being signed to the episodes).

The new comic strip, in a studio fast gearing itself to meet rising public demand for more Disney films, was not a prime concern, and artists assigned to it tended to regard it as a ghetto job. Iwerks left the initial triumvirate in less than a month, turning the pencilling over to Smith. For three months, Smith followed Disney's daily outline, first turning out a loosely formed, slapdash pratfall strip that reflected the rapid-fire visual gags of the Disney Cartoons; then he shifted abruptly into semi-serious narrative when King Features Syndicate (at whose request the strip was begun) felt it was time to introduce the daily suspense continuity then increasingly popular in comic strips. Finally Smith seems to have felt he wanted something else to do. Disney himself had reportedly become weary of having to guide the story details along from day to day (animation gags of the sort he was used to were one thing; an involved story line was something else again), and wanted out of the chore. So Disney apparently remembered a young cartoonist who had joined the studio a short time before, expressing interest in working on the new strip. At the time, since he obviously felt Smith was doing a good job, Disney had placed the new man in animation and temporarily forgotten his strip interest. Now he decided to see how the ambitious youngster would do with the strip, and he turned both pencilling and inking over to the 24-year-old Utah newcomer named Floyd Gottfredson.

In this quiet, almost happenstance way, comic strip history was made. A happy combination of factors had assigned a man with a still-undeveloped but fundamentally first-rate creative story imagination and graphic genius to a still-formless and ill-directed new comic strip. The enthusiastic Gottfredson (who, however, had reportedly come to enjoy his animation work and was a bit disgruntled to be handed the strip at last) found unexpected reserves of imagination and artistry within himself as he worked on the still-primitive but enormously potential Mickey Mouse adventure panels, and he cottened to the new job almost at once. Disney was clearly pleased with Gottfredson's fresh, ready flow of suggestions and innovations as well as with his obvious ability to handle the whole show, for after the new man had served a week's apprenticeship Disney gave him control of the strip narrative as well.

For the next two and a half years, from April 1930 until late 1932, Gottfredson was in full charge of Mickey Mouse, although his pencilling was now inked by a number of young artists, including Al Taliaferro (who later was to draw the famed Donald Duck newspaper strip) and the gifted Ted Thwaites, who painstakingly rendered Gottfredson's sketched action from the early '30s until the '40s. Aside from giving more point, spice, and prominence to the dialogue and firming up Win Smith's uncertain strip style, which hovered indecisively between the necessarily realistic consistency of newspaper strip art and the more free-floating animation frame techniques (in one early haunted-house sequence, Mickey is depicted in a suddenly dark room in an Al Jolson blackface pose, crying "Minnie!" instead of "Mammy!") Gottfredson make no immediately perceptible changes in the tenor of the strip. The big changes came, but they developed surely and subtly.

As soon as he had shaped a style capable of containing his own intense graphic visualization of the new, developing world of Mickey and his friends, Gottfredson gradually began to clothe the brazen, capering, one-dimensional movie mouse of those slapstick days with the close-woven fabric of consistent character, background, chronology, friends and enemies, etc. that was to make Mickey one of the great strip characters of all time. This substantive Mickey of circa 1932 and later, derived from and retaining the bouncy ebullience and inventiveness of the early screen figure (who is able, in a 1931 short, The Castaway, to wrap the tail of a swallowed lion around the engulfing jaws of the alligator who has devoured it, and so dispose of both adversaries),with his Gottfredson-detailed personal history and complex relationships with the multitude of characters who appeared and reappeared in the strip, has had a far greater reality as an individual creation, for those of us who followed him faithfully through the years, than the bland, stodgy, gelded studio personality known today to most people as the mouse. As one old Gottfredson fan remarked recently, in comparing the demeanor of the Disney screen character over the past three decades, "It's as if our Mickey had a lobectomy."

The difference between the screen and strip Mickey were by no means so marked in the early '30s. By mid-1932, when a cartoon called The Klondike Kid was released, the Disney animators had edged away from the almost total surrealism of the earlier mouse films into a realistic adventure framework approximating the Gottfredson strip work of the period. In The Klondike Kid, a humorous suspense chase film with overtones of Chaplin's The Gold Rush, Mickey pursued a heavily-bearded Pegleg Pete (named Pierre Jambedebois in this short) to rescue the mousenapped Minnie from a cliff-perched house crushed at the climax by a huge, snowballing avalanche gathered around a tumbling dog sled, Mickey, and Pluto (his strip pet being here utilized as a single sled dog). Subsequent films of the same semi-serious realistic action genre were The Mail Pilot (1933), Two-Gun Mickey (1934), Shanghaied (1934), and The Mad Doctor (1933: this last title was recently held by Disney executives to be so gruesome, according to a 1972 Variety report, that it has been permanently withdrawn from international release). Unfortunately for this promising development in the mouse films, it was cut short by a completely unexpected event, when a supporting actor in a 1934 Disney Silly Symphony, The Wise Little Hen, made such an overnight hit with the public that most studio energies were turned to promoting this new star. Who? Nobody else but Donald Duck!

In the course of this promotion, the studio Mickey was reshaped into a straight mouse for the comic duck, while films featuring Mickey alone were sharply reduced in number. In a surprisingly short time, the film mouse acquired the narrow dimensions of the mild-mannered, much-put-upon Mickey who generally represents the character for most people today, while the new Donald took over much of the ebullience and energetic inventiveness that had been integral to the mouse of the adventure films. Mickey's drab starring films of 1935, such as On Ice, Mickey's Kangaroo, and Mickey's Garden, reflect the staid, stay-at-home figure the movies were to feature from that time on.

This alteration in Mickey's film character was a sharp blow to the kids who were following the Gottfredson strip, of course, I can recall how a number of us strip fans of those days, catching one of the new, bland Mickey Mouse cartoons at a Saturday matinee, liked to pretend that our Mickey, the Mickey of the strip, was only an actor in those films, playing roles quite apart from his real character. We would joke a bit after the show about how Mickey had better start complaining to his agent about these stuffy character parts Disney kept giving him, a make-believe attitude that took some of the immediate edge off our irritation. We wanted Mickey exchanging potshots with Arabs from desert oases--a la Victor McLaglen in The Lost Patrol--not minding obnoxious twin nephews or acting as twittery straight man to a duck.

Flattening himself on the thick leather breadth of the conveyor belt, Mickey looked down at the brightly-lit figures of Pegleg Pete and the German scientist the thug had employed to make his desert fortress impregnable. Pete's narrowed, shaggy-browed eyes darted here and there around the machinery-crammed laboratory, looking for the intruder he knew was there. Inadvertantly, as he swung his huge posterior about in his irritated search, he bumped a switch--and the belt to which Mickey clung began to move--swiftly! Before the lean, bald scientist could turn off the door-raising machine Pete had jarred into action, Mickey was flying off a sharp curve on the speeding, vibrating belt, backwards, helpless, to land with terrible impact in the middle of a group of power coils! Electricity arced and flashed--and the lights suddenly dimmed as Mickey caromed off the coils into the laboratory's thermic infrequency cabinet, swinging the heavy metal door that sealed it shut after him. He was trapped!

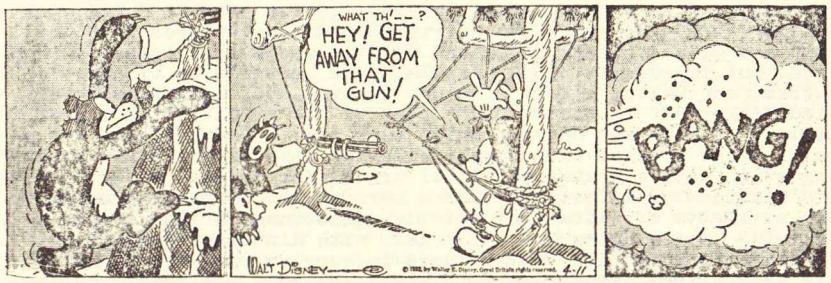
When serious adventure continuity entered the comic strips in 1925, via J.R. Williams' Out Our Way, Roy Crane's Wash Tubbs, and Harold Gray's Little Orphan Annie (the first corpse ever seen in a comic strip appeared in Out Our Way, December 4, 1925), stories rambled on without any particular time limit. Later, faced with the burgeoning popularity of suspense continuity in strips, syndicates decided common sense dictated the need for a uniform narrative length, and settled for three months as the time a strip story should normally run. This enabled newspapers ordering a new strip to open it with a fresh story within a reasonable time, and prevented duller readers from losing track of characters and point in overlong stories. (Nevertheless, some strips, such as Clarence Gray's Brick Bradford, spun out narratives of a year or more time and time again; others, such as Milton Caniff's Dickie Dare, wrapped up stories in a month or less.) Gottfredson's Mickey Mouse, under King Features' syndication, adopted the three-month story pattern from the outset (experimenting with a few shorter narratives along the way), and this length seemed ideal for the generality of mouse adventures, although some daily Gottfredson narratives of the late '30s, such as those in which Mickey became King of Medioka or made a movie based on Robinson Crusoe, ran much longer than three months.

Readily adapting his creative scope to the variety of backgrounds and experiences this allotment of story space permitted him, Gottfredson began to shape the hazardous comic adventures that would flex and develop the muscles and mind of the callow, easily frightened, but impudently plucky little mouse left him by Disney, Iwerks, and Smith. Almost at once, in mid-1930, Gottfredson hurried Mickey off to the grimiest part of the arid West in a frantic pursuit of Pete and Shyster which took him to Death Valley and several close brushes with doom, following this sufficiently exhausting stint with a brutal emotional crisis for Mickey caused by Minnie's alienated affections, which carried the distraught mouse to the extremity of attempted suicide. (Shotguns, bridge leaps, gas, drowning, and hanging are all tried, with distressing futility: Mickey's luck and deep-seated urge to survive were too much for his short-lived despair in this bleak sequence.) Already, during the first six months on the strip, Gottfredson had harrowed Mickey fearfully, toughening him for the rough times ahead, and already Mickey was nervier and more aggressive in confronting the problems posed for him. The seasoned, rough and ready adventurer of the Arabian desert, the Klondike, and the weird insides of a cloud-concealed pirate dirigible, was visibly shaping up.

Faced with repeated attempts to kill or cripple him by the burly, shaggy-pelted, tombstone-toothed Pegleg Pete (a thug endowed with a kind of criminal genius, an endless enthusiasm for new projects, and a miserable streak of bad luck that brings Mickey athwart his path repeatedly), the embattled mouse survived by nerve, fortune, quick thinking, and plain dogged endurance. Mickey encountered the boisterously murderous Pete at least eighteen times over the prime twenty years of the strip, in the course of which Pete--who is four times Mickey's size--tries to shoot, strangle, drown, blow up, crush, eviscerate, and otherwise destroy him. And Pete (with or without his two murderous and recurrent colleagues, Sylvester Shyster: a lean, grim, bespectacled rodent in courtroom black, and Eli Squinch: a gruff, whiskery New England miser determinedly after the main chance) was only one among many fearsome adversaries Mickey had to face down in his hectic career.

Even Pete might have boggled at the sight of the gaunt, hooded, rubbery-winged Bat Bandit who rode the night trails of the west or the tall, ebon-cloaked stalker of the city shadows called the Blot, both of whom--particularly the Blot--brought Mickey close to a bloody demise many times over. Then there were the criminally insane trio of professors who have developed a horrible hypnotic ray in the crocodile-pitted Blaggard Mansion, the madly ambitious Dr. Vultur and his seemingly invincible pirate submarine, the Einsteinian eccentric, Dr. Einmug, who has literally built an island in the sky, and the seven mocking ghosts who haunt the villa of the beleaguered Colonel Bassett. Beside such grim bogies as these, the petty counterfeiters who hide out in an abandoned house and give Mickey a brisk tussle, or the night-flitting jewel thief named the Gleam, provide only routine menaces.

It was in the fierce business of facing and defeating these schemers and killers that Mickey learned how to pilot a plane, skipper a ship, ride a camel, run a newspaper, deep-sea dive, hunt wales, manage a prizefighter, play a saloon piano, parachute jump, train an elephant, fly a blimp, rule a country, make a movie, control a genie, capture a dinosaur, and generally qualify as a mouse of all conceivable trades.



Even as he fought his way from peril to peril in the daily strip, Mickey was tumbled headlong into a fresh newspaper arena: the Sunday comic page. Toward the close of Gottfredson's second year, King Features suggested the Disney Studio prepare a Sunday Mickey Mouse page for distribution in January, 1932. An initial page was pencilled and inked by a studio artist named Earl Duvall, and appeared on January 10, 1932, after which the new Sunday feature was turned over to Gottfredson for story and pencilling, and to Taliaferro and Thwaites for inking. The Sunday Mickey page (which was divided between a lower two-thirds of sixteen panels devoted to Mickey himself and an upper third framing a new feature called Silly Symphonies, initially starring a bouncy little fellow named Bucky Bug was primarily a gag strip, which only occasionally turned to adventure continuity in the vein of the daily strip. The gags usually featured violent action and were often rib-crackingly funny: Mickey riding an automatic lawn-mower gone wild, Pluto pulling Mickey through a gallery of statues in pursuit of a cat (with a resultant "reconstruction" of the broken statues that is visually one of the funniest payoffs in strip history), Mickey trying to make out as a milkman with a horse (not imprecisely named Tanglefoot) who applies a newly learned ability to hand Mickey a bottle of milk from the wagon with his teeth at every stop--and similarly hands a bottle to any passerby who will stand still long enough to take it.

There was a nutty kind of happy-go-lucky gaiety in these early Sunday pages of Gottfredson that is perhaps best reflected in print by the songs that run through the gag sequences like a lyric thread; one of the best larruped along like this:

> Oh, th' old tom cat, with his meow, meow, meow,
> Old houn' dog, with his bow, wow, wow;
> The crow's caw caw, an' the mule's hee haw --
> Gosh! What a racket, like an old buzz saw!
>
> I have listened to th' cuckoo cuck his coo coo,
> An' I've heard th' rooster cock his doodle doo-ooo;
> But the cows an' th' chickens, they all sound like
> th' dickens
> When I hear my little Minnie's YOO-HOO

Rendition is by Mickey, of course, painting a backyard shed while his paint-sodden nephews, freshly scrubbed and dripping, are hung up by their pants on a clothes-line to dry--and keep them out of further mischief. (Donald Duck was the second Disney character to be plagued with noisome nephews; the first comic character of all to be beset with nephews--three of them, like Donald--was Happy Hooligan, back in the 1900s.)

The infrequent adventure continuity in the Sunday strip was as good as anything in Gottfredson's daily narratives. The best of all the Sunday stories was probably the first, from January 29 to June 13, 1933, involving cattle rustling on Minnie's Uncle Mortimer's ranch. This yarn, outlined for Gottfredson by studio story man Ted Osbourne, featured the full Mickey Mouse cast of the time, aside from Pete and Shyster (Pete appeared only once, later, in the Sunday strip; Shyster, never): Mickey, Minnie, Horace, Clarabelle, and--just added to the roster--the lean, gawky buffon with the matched buck teeth who was to be Mickey's closest buddy through dozens of later adventures: Dippy Dawg (later, Dippy the Goof, then just plain Goofy, all being awesomely appropriate names). Anyway, the cattle ranch story, soundly structured in both gag and suspense sequences, is a Mickey Mouse classic (the episode in which Mickey and other ranch hands disguise themselves as cattle inside old cowhides to trap the rustlers--a notion apparently borrowed by Osbourne from an identical Sol Hess Nebbs Sunday sequence of 1926--is particularly hilarious), and deserves full-colour reproduction in book form, together with the dozen or so other Sunday narratives spread over the run of the stip into the mid-'40s: the few drawn by studio artist Manual Gonzales after he relieved the overworked Gottfredson on the Sunday page in mid-1938--or by artist Bill Wright after he relieved Gonzales in turn by mid-1942--proving quite as entertaining as those handled by Gottfredson himself.

Seated at the giddily swaying junctures of the fronds of the great fern up which they had just shinnied a tailsbreadth ahead of the swiping claws and ripping fangs of a saber-tooth tiger, Mickey and Goofy looked worriedly down at the fern's furry green bole, where the great cat snarled and lunged upward at them. It was pleasantly obvious that the saber-tooth couldn't climb effectively--but that was suddenly a matter of no consequence. Goofy saw the new horror veering toward them out of the tropical sun. "Mickey!" he gasped, "L-look! Whut's--" "Omigosh!" cried Mickey, almost tumbling from his precarious perch as he looked in the direction Goofy pointed--looked at the wide and hungry beak, the tiny, gristly eyes fixed on them as the spread, leathery wings carried the creature on his determined path. It was a pterodactyl--and Mickey and Goofy were so much clustered fruit for its razor-toothed jaws!

There's no doubt that the comic strip Mickey--scrappy, touch, inquisitive, quixotic, enduring, at once heroic and hilarious (a kind of combination Jimmy Cagney and Harold Lloyd)--was a central figure in the imagination of those kinds in the '30 lucky enough to have run across the Gottfredson creation. So real was he to us that we invented wild and wonderful adventures of our own for him, flying him to Mars in rockets invented by a mad Professor Triplex (surviving the Blaggard Mansion blast); sending him in search of a surviving Chinese dragon in the hills beyond Peking; matching him against a terrible new Pegleg Pete who can appear in several places at once, committing crimes with simultaneous alibis; having him assigned by the Secret Service to a circus, where the only way he can get the needed confidence of a high wire man is by pretending to be a professional tight rope walker himself, ad delirium --and we devoured our clipped files of the strip over and over. There were plenty of other top-quality imaginative idols for kids in the entertainment media of those days--Doc Savage, The Spider, Conan, Kimball Kinnison, Laurel and Hardy, W.C. Fields, Humphrey Bogart, Popeye, Wash Tubbs, The Spirit, Poppy Ott--but the stip Mickey reigned paramount among those for many of us. (It is worth noting, too, that the extreme popularity of the screen mouse in the '30s made it possible for those of us fortunate enough to have parents with decently-paying jobs in that grim era to surround ourselves with Mickey's image: on wallpaper, rugs, lampshades, drinking glasses, watches, cereal boxes, nearly everything we used or touched at home--and on pencils, pencil-boxes, and writing pads at school, for that matter. There were even Mickey Mouse Cookies, in little animal-cracker boxes with white carrying cords, filled with crispy images of Mickey, Minnie, Horace, Clarabelle, Goofy, Donald, and the others. It was literally a Mickey Mouse world then.)

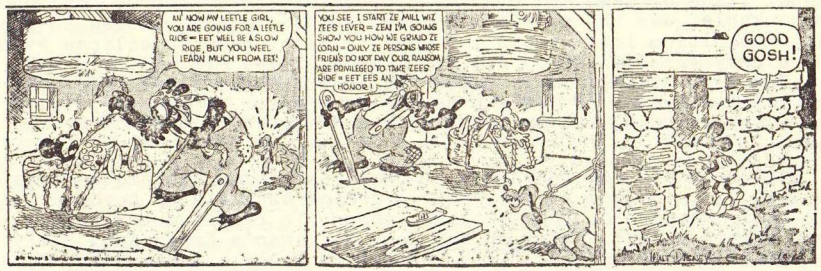
All this resulted, of course, from the compelling strength of Floyd Gottfredson's graphic and narrative imagination. Although shrouded in complete anonymity behind the bland "Walt Disney" signature affixed to each episode, he reached us kinds with as great a unique personality as Roy Crane, E.C. Segar, Cliff Sterrett, Warren Tufts, or any of those other top-echelon strip artists who, like Gottfredson, seemed to be born to express themselves in the panel medium. We knew Gottfredson, although we didn't know who he was, and we loved him as much as people ever loved Charles Dickens, Will Rogers, or Charlie Chaplin. It wasn't the plots or storylines of Mickey Mouse (some of which were pretty hackneyed in general structure, and prepared for Gottfredson in part by studio writers after mid-1932) that kindled and maintained this affection and fascination; it was, rather, the panel-by-panel manner in which Gottfredson's imspired pen picked out the characteristic responses of his figures to each fresh situation. They were his people; his art made them his, and he shared them superbly with us during those lush, lovely years of the adventure strip. (That the fine genius of the strip lay in its art is demonstrated by the result when another staff artist was assigned to redraw some of the Gottfredson stories for Walt Disney's Comics and Stories--Lord knows why--with the same dialogue and panel content. The second artist's work lay dead on the page from the outset, imbecile and unbelievable, where Gottfredson's had moved like lightning and shone like day from start to finish.)

It is hard to guess how much Gottfredson had to reshape the plots and story ideas tossed at him in the informal studio get-togethers, where such writers as Merrill de Maris, Ted Osbourne, Dick Shaw, Webb Smith, and Bill Walsh, contributed to the story's narrative structure. The intense unity of viewpoint, theme, and character from 1930 onward, despite the preparation of nominal scripts by different writers, suggests that Gottfredson simply organized such material as he received into a matrix that suited his creative attitude and took the story from there. It is, accordingly, all the sadder to realize that this brilliant artist was left so wholly unidentified to his readers. One wonders why the "problem" involved (of confusing a simple-minded public with another man's byline on a strip starring a character associated by them with Walt Disney's film cartoon) couldn't have been solved as Edgar Rice Burroughs, Inc. so thoughtfully handled it with that company Sunday and daily Tarzan strips of the same period: by maintaining Burroughs' commercially vital name on the printed byline of the strips, while allowing the individual artists who worked on the strips over the years to sign their names in the panels below. The general public never noticed this and so was not "confused," while the really interested readers knew a given artist's identity.

Of course, there was--and is--a further difficulty at Disney Studios, where a myth is maintained about the creative equality and replacability of all the artists on the payroll; apparently nothing is feared more than an individual artist of real worth being singled out for praise: such an artist might even--horrors!--get the idea that he was worth more than his brethern and ask for more money, as well as create dissatisfaction in the ranks by his individual slice of fame and credit, however diserved. (Worse, and most unthinkable, was the possibility that such a talent, rising to public recognition from within the studio, might come to eclipse even the mighty Walt himself.) No, the possibilities are too ugly and complex to be faced; it is better to be blatantly unfair and limit the identification of artists to screen credits. which very few of the public notice, and an industry award or two, heeded by even fewer.

Gottfredson's own knowledge of panel narrative technique seems to have been sparked by the classic comics of his Utah boyhood in the early decades of this century. Among his recalled favourites were Walter Hoben's Jerry on the Job, Herriman's Krazy Kat, Billy De Beck's Barney Google, Cliff Sterrett's Polly and Her Pals, Fontaine Fox's Toonerville Folks, the various works of Russell Patterson, and Roy Crane's Wash Tubbs. Of all these strips, interestingly, the only one with a strong, regular daily story line was Crane's rollicking, knockabout adventure strip, with its hand-to-mouth soldiers of fortune, Wash Tubbs and Gozy Gallup (and later, of course, Captain Easy). It is also the one strip, before or after, that bears any real resemblance to Gottfredson's own Mickey Mouse. The resemblance is considerable. Its cocky, trouble-ridden shrimp of an adventurer hero, Wash, often seems a ringer for Mickey in behavior, character, and even appearance, while Wash's taller, slightly loony sidekick of the '20s, Gozy, functions in Crane's strip much as Horace, and later Goofy, did in Gottfredson's. Wash and Gozy, too, were recurrently faced with a rough, tough, lowbrow arch enemy named Bull Dawson, whose behavior paralleled Pegleg Pete's in virtually every rotten detail. Even the exotic Treasure Island innocence so characteristic of Mickey's early strip adventures around the world is much the same as that to be found in Wash's and Gozy's 1920 escapades in the snowy and salty corners of the earth. But these similarities are as accidental as they are fortunate; both Mickey Mouse and Wash Tubbs are among the finest adventure thriller strips ever to blazon a comic page--equally extraordinary sets of magic casements opening daily on the foam of perilous seas, in faery lands newborn.

Gottfredson still draws the daily Mouse strip today, forty-three years after its inception and twenty years after the last vestige of adventure continuity was dropped from it: an incredible record of fine work. To see his skilled hand pencil in the action of the daily panels in his tiny office--the same office he has occupied since starting work on the strip in 1930--is a major pleasure; curiously, the pencilled work seems much more striking, more like the old, forceful graphic work of the 1930-1950 adventure strip, than the finely-inked and printed panels made of it for publication in the postage-stamp-sized strips prevailing in newspapers today. One hesitates to blame Gottfredson's present inker; possibly it is the marked reduction in size, as well as the generally poor reproduction of the strip in the source available to me, that makes the printed strip seem so alien, so different from the grand old strip of the past. More likely, however, a good part of this depressing difference lies in the content, for Mickey Mouse is today just another gag strip like so many, many others crowding the comic pages for attention. It is certainly far superior to the terrible Donald Duck gag strip the studio is currently fielding (in which Donald and his companions look like rejects from the cast of Ted Browning's Freaks), but it is not sufficiently different from the general competition to stand out. That this should be the present status of a strip that once pulled the eye away from everything else on the page--by virtue of the stunning adventure action in panel after panel, and graphic freshness with which it was limned--is a sad thing to see. It is not, I think, Gottfredson's choice.



The gag orientation is, of course, a fate shared by all humorously-styled strips distributed by King Features today, and apparently not much can be done about it. Any formal continuity beyond a thematic linking of gags seems to have been forbidden to the non-realistic strips in King Features' roster since the early '50s. Other major syndicates have generally followed suit, although a few maverick strips--Gordo, Pogo, Peanuts--still feature continuity a good bit of the time. The argument runs that modern newspaper readers have barely enough patience to tolerate continuity in "serious" strips (which are said themselves to be falling off in reader appeal), and that the simplest sort of one-glance gags are preferred. People who used to sit and read the paper now, it seems, skim through it in order to turn to the panacea of TV as soon as possible.

We cannot even, unfortunately, return ourselves to the original Gottfredson narratives in any extant printed version in this country, although the majority of his stories are kept regularly in print in fine editions for readers of all ages in many European countries, notably Italy and France. The logical source for such reprints, Western Publishing Company's series of Disney character feature books and magazines, has long had an incomprehensible policy of assigning staff artists to redraw the old Gottfredson stories when they are used at all, although the equally fine Carl Barks Duck strips are regularly reprinted in full as first published. This policy, at least in part, appears to derive from a notion that what the parents of today's children managed to enjoy with no apparent harm on the comic pages of the '30s and '40s is somehow too strong for today's delicate toddlers. Accordingly, the Pegleg Pete of the old newspaper strip is changed in the Disney comic books to "Black Pete," a softened and less menacing version of the Gottfredson villain, minus--of course--the wooden leg. Threats and dangers in the older newspaper strip are omitted or unrecognizably altered to creampuff equivalents in the redrawn versions (the most notable destruction of this sort was wrought by a Western artist on a comic book version of Gottfredson's "Phantom Blot" story of 1939, in which the whole point of the story--the recurrent deadly traps set by the Blot for Mickey--was reshaped to make it appear the Blot was just kidding around with the mouse, not really intending to hurt him or anything like that), while all the character, substance, and beauty in Gottfredson's original art are thrown out. Thus millions of comic book readers of the '50s and '60s who had never seen the Gottfredson strip were presented with a Mickey Mouse that had been redrawn by inept hands, matched against idiot perils, and generally made to conform with the present studio image of the priggish, proper Mouse: a pathetic figure whose handling contrasted with the brilliant Donald Duck stories then being turned out by Carl Barks in the pages of the same publisher.

Easily ranking with the half dozen finest new comic strip artists to emerge from the '30s--the other five being Milton Caniff, Al Capp, Will Eisner, Walt Kelly, and Alex Raymond--Gottfredson came close to being the forgotten genius of his most productive period. For decades from the '30s forward, many of us Mickey Mouse devotees wondered whose hand, or hands, worked with such superb and sustained strip magic behind the obviously meaningless "Walt Disney" signature present in the lower right-hand corner of every daily strip. No one was ever able to find out until a Hollywood book dealer, Malcolm Willits,* penetrated the veil of secrecy some six years ago, sought out and identified the extraordinary Floyd Gottfredson.

To Floyd Gottfredson, all of us owe the thanks of a lifetime for the wonder he wrought on those edge-yellowed comic pages of twenty and more years ago.

We will never be out of his debt.

Or his Mickey's.

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*Editor's note: Citation of this dealer's name does not imply RQ's endorsement of his questionable trade practices. For details see issue six, page 149 and issue seven, page 224.

Good Art

Because they were friends
They walked away from the city.
The man, was a man, of course;
The other was a giant spider.

No great man ever enjoys
Love in his own lifetime
And neither do his allies
Though they are less than great.
And this, of course, is more so of great spiders.
Misunderstood and ostracized
They go away to die.
The human comes with him
As a kind of disciple.
They have some rations and a little water.

Where they rest, the spinnerettes produce a small design

    A poem as small as a smile
    Becomes as wide as a grin
    During a difficult while
    That lets anything in

The man says something unnecessary
About how the problem of preserving the piece
Leads to questions of their own survival;
Like a mock-hero he accepts his damaged arm
(When I say they left the city, did you think it was that simple?
And the pious citizens throw no righteous bricks?)
And like the mediocrity he is
He offers to the spider--how ridiculous a gesture--
His own body for consumption.
And also, he has a fever, exhibitionist.

The spider refuses and suddenly produces
A new piece

    The cobweb's thousand
    Vicious angles
    Support the holes through which the little gnats
        fly back and forth

The man is drunk with triumph of the fever
And makes himself an ass and says "Profound!"
As if he thought that he could comprehend
The structure of the artist's understanding.
In sleep he eventually yields
His useless pretence to knowledge.
And the spider watches over the human form
And its superior guardship becomes contemplation
And an epic worms its prologue from the anus;
Soon, rations, water, consciousness, all
Are absorbed to manufacture silk for this piece;
The man mutters out of his illness, the spider

    Shut up, shut up

And then
To the need for silk it brings, eating
The sheaf of the man's own poems
And now, screaming, creating,

    You're a bad poet anyway

At the man, and then there is only
The spider shaking the corpse in its mandibles
And the silk, writing itself into an epic.

-- Harry J. Riley --

the Seasonal Fan

Jim Harmon

Notice: Potential contributors to Riverside Quarterly must avoid submissions in any way resembling the following. This is the sort of thing this magazine will never publish.

##########

"THE ULTIMATE"

Jets blasting, Lance Reardon fired a bolt of psychic energy across the bow of the Plutonian dreadnought. Reardon caught sight of his face reflected in the glass of the space-compass. "My sculptured good looks are showing the strain," he said to himself. Even his herculean neck muscles were taut. But the Earthship and the mind of the man who was somehow different from others (and better) were fused into a fighting force by a means the ignorant savages of Deneb IV would call "witchcraft" but which a select few on whom depended the future of civilization knew to be the art-skill of one who could set aside the laws of cause and effect.

The dreadnought ignored the psychic bolt across the bow. Reardon knew that they would, since he knew the future as well as most lesser beings know the present. But those aboard the dreadnought did not know that he knew what was to happen. Therefore he knew that he must act as if he did not know, or else they would know that he knew, and if they knew he knew, they would know too much.

"Reardon," a voice crackled through the static of the ether-wave radio, "I know that you are aboard the Earthship. Only one man in the universe can throw so terrific a bolt of psychic energy."

Reardon knew, of course, that they would know him, but in the subtle fashion that was a strange part of his difference, he did not let them know that he knew that they would know.

"Lance Reardon at your service, partner," Reardon drawled with a trace of ingratiating arrogance. "We could destroy this sector of the universe, Zixx Q_2, to settle this little dispute. Or we could handle it more personal-like."

"The personal way suits me," the voice on the loudspeaker intoned. "I am the Supreme Knowledge on my planet, programmed for pure logic. As such I will have the privilege to have the pleasure of killing you with my bare hands."

Running a hand through his unruly mass of black curls, Reardon grinned. "You'll have the chance, but I don't guarantee it will be a pleasure!"

##########

Spacesuited, hanging in the diamond-sprinkled black velvet of space, Reardon watched Zixx Q_2 emerge from his craft. Although Zixx now sold his allegiance to Pluto, Reardon knew that he had been born and raised on Jupiter. The heavy gravity of the giant planet had made the alien rather short of stature, broad-shouldered and thick-bodied. Still, Reardon mused, the man was not unattractive.

A realization came to Reardon at that moment. He had perfect knowledge of his own body. He knew for instance that the nail on his left big toe must be trimmed within 2.31 days (Earth standard) or it would become ingrown. Now Reardon realized that he wished to have sexual relations with the thick-bodied Jupiter-raised Plutonian.

There could be a number of reasons for this. Facts about the elusive enemy were incomplete. Perhaps the Plutonians went through a cyclic glandular upheaval in which the sex of each of the aliens was totally reversed. Since Reardon could see into the future (although imperfectly when he was contaminated with emotion) he was probably sensing the change in the alien male ahead of time.

Another reason for this desire might be the fact that he had been in space seven years (Earth Standard). Still another reason might be the same as the one that had gotten him into trouble at the Space Cadet Academy.

Zixx floated closer in his all-black spacesuit. "This part of the universe isn't big enough for the two of us!"

"You have your choice of weapons," Reardon said into his space-o-phone. "I have selected mine."

Inside his space-glove, Reardon's hand tightened on the Colt .44 Peacemaker. It was an ancient weapon, in use way back in the nineteenth century. Inside it, a chemical explosion caused a metallic projectile to leave the barrel at a speed faster than sound. Primitive but effective.

"Fool," Zixx taunted, "I have a portable force-field protecting me from any energy beam fired by Earthling scum like you!" Reardon realized that Zixx was cute when he was mad. "Now we'll see whose gun goes off first!"

Fast as thought, Reardon fired matter, not energy, from the Colt six-shooter.

"Aaaaarrggghhh!" cried Zixx Q_2.

Since he knew all things, Reardon now knew that he had not only slain Zixx Q_2 but had killed reality as well.

##########

Blackness and bigness. Big blackness. Black bigness. Swirling nothingness. Nothing swirlingness. Wavery fears. Fearful waveryness. Knowingful nothingness. Nothing knowingness. Gibbering meaninglessness. Meaningless gibberishness...

##########

Reardon had always known that he was pretty damn good, but when he regained consciousness he knew he was even better.

He was lying on a grassy plain beneath a blue sky. Zixx was spread out a few feet away, now completely metamorphosized into a beautiful blond girl who looked exactly like Joey Heatherton, who had been a great actress way back in the twentieth century. (Somehow, Reardon was not sure he hadn't liked her earlier body better.)

"Quite a trip, huh?" the new blond Zixx said with a meaningful wink.

"Yes, quite a trip," Reardon said. He met the blond girl's gaze with the unashamed, open maturity that marked people of that time. "Let's screw."

That was all that needed to be said to an open, mature female of a liberated age. From there on it was one escalating grunt of maturely civilized rutting.

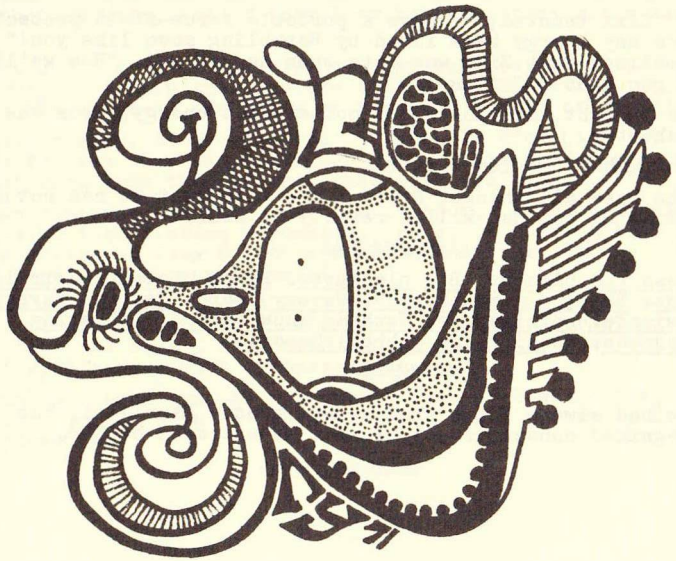
"I have a feeling," said Joey (formerly Zixx Q_2) "that we are being used by some force greater than us."

"That's a reasonable conclusion," Reardon agreed. Women's opinions were respected fully as much as men's in this age.

With the strange powers and abilities that made him different, Reardon brought his mind into action. As he concentrated, the blue sky seemed to dissolve and he saw a semi-circular expanse of transluscence reaching toward infinity. Instantly he recognized the side of a gigantic test-tube--the inside of a test-tube. He and Joey were nothing more than a couple of germs to Someone Greater.

"There have been lives before and there will be lives hence," Reardon said. "The shock of seeing the test-tube has unblocked my locked memories. I know that at another time, in another place, men called me Der Führer..."

"And men called me The Savior," Joey said, "but now we need new names...don't we, Adam?"



OPERE CITATO

BY HARRY WARNER JR.

If a Flying Dutchman is afloat on the sea of fanzines that threatens to inundate all of us, it is the contents of Fantasy Amateur Press Association mailings. It's a curious thing. FAPA is one of the best-known organizations in fandom, by reputation, and one of the least-known to non-members. Everyone has heard of it, but if you aren't a member, you probably couldn't name three regular FAPA publications or give a coherent account of what FAPA publications are like.

Like most of fandom's apas, FAPA has a limited membership, an official to whom FAPA publications are sent for distribution in bulk several times each year, and a requirement of a specified number of published or written pages as a minimum qualification for renewing membership each year. But it differs from other apas in several important ways. It's fandom's oldest non-local organization, nearing the end of its 36th year. It's one of the two apas that have acquired a real mystique, and the Cult is a much smaller apa which has a wildly different aura composed mainly of terrible temper displays. FAPA has required the most patience to join most of the time in recent decades: the wait for admission has ranged from three to six years after application is filed.

But most important of all, FAPA is unparalleled for the astonishing assemblage of members. Where else can you find fanzines being published by Greg Benford, Marion Bradley, Terry Carr, Lee Hoffman, Sam Moskowitz, Bob Silverberg, and Ted White? Where else would you look for the fanac of such otherwise vanished superfans as Gregg Calkins, Dick Eney, Dean A. Grennell, Elmer Perdue, Boyd Raeburn, and Charles Wells? How could you get acquainted with the very special and unusual fanzines produced by people who are almost unknown outside FAPA, such as Charles Hansen, P. Howard Lyons, Helen Wesson, and Paul Wyszkowski? Can you believe in the existence of a FAPA member, Jack Speer, who has been publishing fanzines almost without extended interruption for 35 years or thereabouts and has never sold a copy of any of them? Or that anyone could possibly be in his 30th year of publishing a fanzine without deviating from its regular quarterly schedule or missing an issue? It's all happened in FAPA, and I can hardly believe in the last-mentioned phenomenon, either, although I'm responsible.

Hardly anything can survive a critical scrutiny without losing face, after it has become a living legend. FAPA suffers from this problem. Entirely too many fans who finally attain membership after that long wait express disappointment with their first mailings and drop out after a year or two. Like the Flying Dutchman, FAPA seems condemned by the age and special interests of many veteran members to remain forever cut off from fandom's mainlands. It would be nice if Redd Boggs's FAPA publications didn't betray some hardening of the critical arteries, if Speer didn't fill so much space in Synapse with nit-picking about grammatical habits of other members, if Silverberg published a fifty-page fanzine every three months instead of eight or ten pages once a year.

But FAPA has been the direct or indirect source of many traditions and customs in general fandom, and its recent mailings have been continuing to exert some influences. There's little doubt that Richard E. Geis's fanzines of the past 18 months are already influencing many fans to write more frankly about their personal lives and to speak more bluntly their opinions on touchy matters. There must be more than coincidence in the fact that the change came as Geis was attaining FAPA membership and decided to circulate his new publication both generally and in the organization, calling it first Richard E. Geis after himself, then The Alien Critic.

It was also in FAPA that bluntness of speech about worldcons was revived. After a few years in which grousing concerned mostly elevator service or art show prices, Milton F. Stevens wrote an eye-witness account of his experiences as an official at the LAcon. A new FAPA member at the time, he soared to fame and high ranking in the annual poll, mostly on the basis of that one article, and suddenly many worldcon problems like financial policies and site bid politics are being discussed in fanzines instead of in whispers in hotel lobbies.

Without FAPA, there wouldn't be much anthologizing left in fandom. Late last year, a plump anthology of the best fanzine articles of 1964 appeared. I doubt that Terry Carr would have had the ambition to run off those eight-year-old ditto masters if it weren't for his FAPA membership. It's harder to be sure how much influence FAPA had on the production of another big anthology, the first volume of The Incompleat Terry Carr, created by Rich Brown and Arnie Katz, but it's significant that all three are FAPA members and that they felt impelled to distribute it through a FAPA mailing.

FAPA publications cover a wide range of interests and formats. Some of them run heavily to mailing comments, like Calkin's The Rambling Fap and Synapse. This is appropriate, because FAPA was a major factor in spreading throughout fanzines the custom of discussing conversation-style in letter sections, instead of one-shot reactions to what the reader enjoyed and disliked. Recent mailings have contained such remarkable special items as a birthday present (Walter Breen's long article on the Darkover stories of his wife, Marion Bradley, originally written to commemorate a natal day); extensive instructions on how to live comfortably if you don't want to bother with staying in a conventional house or apartment, from Paul Doerr; another member's reminiscences of how his fanzine publishing entered formal court records when his wife used it as a basis for her divorce proceedings; and an incredible dissertation by Bruce Pelz on approximately 100 different variations on basic poker which have been played by Los Angeles fans under such subtitles as Follower the Mopsqueezer, Lingering Death, 2001 (A Spades Idiocy), and Low-Flying Outhouse.

It's occasionally possible to obtain copies of some FAPA publication if you aren't a member, by asking the editor nicely for them, but in many cases the FAPA publications are produced with little overrun and circulate outside the organization only to a few old friends. Just now the wait to become a member is a trifle shorter than it used to be, because only 35 persons are on the waiting list. The person to ask about membership is Bill Evans, 14100 Canterbury Lane, Rockville, Maryland 20853. It's limited to those who can prove recent activity either as publisher or writer or artist, both when applying for membership and when they finally reach the top of the waiting list.

Naked Realism versus the Magical Bunny Rabbit

by

Darrell Schweitzer

Pstalemate, Lester del Rey. Putnam, 1971, 190 pp. $4.95.

The early 1970's may go down in whatever histories of s-f are written in the years to come as a time when many of the major writers of the past--Heinlein, Asimov, Sturgeon, Clarke--reasserted themselves. Lester del Rey belongs on that list too. He is a Big Name, as may be seen by the printing of his name on the dustwrapper in enormous type, with the title dwarfed and hardly noticeable beneath it. Now perhaps this is partially due to the title itself being a pun, and many readers will not understand it; but this again shows del Rey's secure position: with a less famous writer the publisher would have almost certainly changed the title.

With the above-mentioned all-time greats, their return to active writing proved that some of them hadn't lost their touch, and some of them had. So is del Rey hiding behind his laurels, or is he producing the kind of stuff that put him where he is today?

Before answering this question I have to let you in on a little trade secret. Reviewers and critics don't like to let anyone find out that their writings are coloured by various human characteristics. Like biases for instance. Mine is that I've never been very impressed by del Rey's work. I find his realistic fiction of the Nerves variety dull because the characters are flat, and most of his "emotional" stories are merely puddles of sentimental goo. Why "Helen O'Loy" is revered as a classic I'll never know.

My own favourite del Rey stories are both obscure ones,"To Avenge Man" and "The Smallest God," and neither of them struck me as masterpieces. So there you have my bias, and if you're infuriated you have my permission to stop reading and turn to the next reviewer. He has his biases too, but he covers them up better.

Now, with all this in mind, let me say that del Rey's Pstalemate is as good as anything he's ever done. The novel, as the title might imply to those in the know, is about telepathy and the problems faced by telepaths in adjusting to their new-found powers and to the world around them. Harry Bronson, an inventor, discovers that he is endowed not only with telepathy, but an astonishing degree of clairvoyance and precognition. He may be the most powerful psi in the world, and this only makes things worse because to the best of anyone's knowledge all adult telepaths thus far have gone insane. Those few who have been "cured" by shock treatments have lost their powers and usually their personalities as well. However, Bronson is the kind of guy who sits down and solves problems rather than whimpering over them, so he attempts to find ways around this, despite his precognitive abilities having assured him that he will go mad in a few months. First he seeks to prove to himself that he really is what he thinks he is, and then he tries to unravel the secrets of his long past, since traumatic amnesia has wiped out everything that happened to him prior to the age of ten.

Now this is admittedly familiar ground, but the situation is quite workable. For about the first half of the book del Rey proceeds very well, with more realism than would have been possible when most of the classics of this type were being written. He is writing in his "hard" vein here, the kind he distinguished himself with in Nerves, Police Your Planet, The Eleventh Commandment, and the like. The characterizations and descriptions in this first half are among the best he has ever done. Bronson, unlike a pulp hero, has a body, and does the sort of physical things (all of which are essential to the story) that would have been unthinkable in Astounding in 1942. Most noteworthy is a bit of positively stark realism (a term I don't like to throw around, but here it fits) in which Bronson, in a state of shock, regresses to infancy. Ironic as it may seem, five years ago this would have been "New Wave," since it makes Bug Jack Barron look like Mother Goose.

The end result is that the reader comes to believe in the possibilities of the story. There are two kinds of s-f, I think, one in which anything can happen and you "suspend" your disbelief (which means you know it's ridiculous but you don't care) and another in which you don't have to suspend anything because the author makes you accept what he is saying. There are advantages and limitations in both forms. The secret of success is consistency. If it starts out fantastic, fine; but if it starts out realistic it has to stay that way. Thou shalt not pull rabbits out of hats in the last chapter only.

Unfortunately, in the second half Pstalemate turns into a magic bunny story. The author wants to have a happy ending, but he has written his storyline into a corner and there is no way for Bronson to save himself. (I recall when at about the age of 12 I first saw the movie of On the Beach. "The only thing that can save them now is alien intervention," I said naively. Everybody died in the end.) So we are confronted with some hocus-pocus about an "alien entity," which turns out to be a future Bronson who has already solved the problem and works telepathically through time to help out his former self. (Precognition is telepathy sent through time. It works both ways.) In other words Bronson is saved because Bronson is already saved. del Rey tries to justify this by pointing out that s-f is used to closed circles in time.(Bronson is an s-f fan you see, and this, and the explanation and the title of the book, all point to Pstalemate's being an ingroup novel.)

This just doesn't work. A harebrained excuse like that might come off in something by Doc Smith, but in a story that started out with gut-level contemporary realism it's just doubletalk designed to avoid the way the story should have ended. No, Lester. If you wanted things to turn out differently you should have written the story differently. The problem here is the same as Tom Disch's in Camp Concentration. Logic called for one ending, but the author wanted another. The only things to do are either follow the basic premises through to their conclusion, or change the premises.

Essentially what results here is a mediocre novel. The first half is very good, the second half is very bad. It has a lot of good ideas in it that it doesn't use, and in the end makes no significant contribution to the already existing body of telepathy stories. There is nothing here that hasn't been done better in John Brunner's The Whole Man or in Slan for that matter.

Another Einstein Express

by

Leon Taylor

Tau Zero, Poul Anderson. Doubleday & Co., 1970. $4.95.

Poul Anderson, weaver of countless fantastic tales, Merlin of many a marvel, is getting tired. There is nothing of the dragon-fire or zip n' zowie in his later opi, the irreplaceable void being filled by "restraint" and, uh, Truth. I don't object to the author's constitutional right to enlighten the public but in Poul's case I think it is somewhat of a rationalization. There is Truth in art, but not in diatribes. And much of Poul's recent work (dating since Sharing of Flesh) is carelessly prepared Harangue, with the bullbeef and hot-air and all the rest. Poul is still a gastrically concerned chef, and everything he prepares is ultimately edible, but when one compares the early gourmet dishes to the later . . . well, he gets a little bitter.

But surely it is worthwhile to suggest to the chef that the best way to break his slump is to go on a vacation. Take a trip, Poul; lay aside your starship-lacing needle for a while and turn to your mundane loves. I detect a hidden yearning for hard-core science in Tau Zero. Why not do a few popular science books à la Asimov a la moneymoneymoney? Or perhaps a sedate mystery, a garden you've recently been neglecting. Or you could follow Koontz's lead and produce a hard-hitting expose on today's decadent society, The Man from P.I.G.?

Tau Zero embraces an exciting, vivid, Stapledonian concept that stretches from infinity to eternity. That it's impossible to perceive infinity is perhaps inconsequential. The word has a wonder-invoking flavour, and dreamers should always reach beyond their grasp. That's what the future is all about.

Poul Anderson is a firm believer in that future. His critics may rant as they will, but Poul is no Establishment pig (or wild bore, even) intent upon the ultimate suppression of all mankind. No, Poul may have more faith than we in the prevailing system, but that simple political demurrment does not touch his supreme trust in The Future of Man. I recently read an article by Edmond Hamilton, local words-smasher, that reminisced as old-man memoirs are inclined to, about his heyday decades. The starvation pay, the neighborly contempt, the hours and days of isolated agony--was it all worth it? "Jesus, yes," he said, "They put a man on the moon, didn't they?" Ineffably corny, perhaps, but such things move man. And I think that it is precisely that sentiment that launches Anderson up the mountain.

But if Stapledonian fiction has all the glory of a Wagnerian opera, it also has many of the faults. And it seems to me that by eliminating the bad we may wind up with a higher percentage of good.

Tau Zero tackles the closed ship/harassed microsociety gimmick. There are fifty of Earth's top scientists aboard the Christine, a near-light starship headed for Beta Virginis to start a new colony and a new life. Like another enterprising star trek we all know, the mission would take five years.

Five years, that is, inside the ship. You and I may not have passed Physics, but it is gutter knowledge that Einstein's Relativity includes an escape clause about time--i.e., time passes more slowly inside a substance gaining mass than does time outside it. Thus while it may only take a little more than a Presidential term for the Christine to pierce her target, back home on Terra decades will have passed. The crew's home-bound friends, young and vital when last seen, will have become decomposed flesh--or ashes--should the ship ever return home. The moon is not so harsh a mistress as outer space, who severs all lovetwining and forges emotionless cords of her own.

This essentially is the theme of Tau Zero: to what extent can man be alienated by his environment? Conflicts arise aboard the Christine, particularly over the obsolete sex morality. I won't tell you whether or not the crew solves its problems, though if you have any intelligence at all...I do consider it cricket to inform you that technical difficulties arise in the usual melodramatic fashion, meteor storms and abortive mutinies and that sort of thing.

If you detect a lack of enthrallment in my droning tone, congratulate yourself. The truth is, Tau Zero didn't raise my blood pressure. With proper deference to Poul Anderson, who is generally a consummate craftsman, Tau Zero was a boring, plodding formula ditty. I was thoroughly embarrassed by the peeling paint and creaking planks of the story's scaffolding.

Why did the story fail? I think that Anderson's folly lies in a difficult clash of interests. As I mentioned, Poul's theme is man vs. environment, or more specifically, man's relationship to his fellow man when both are alienated by their environment. But his setting is restricted to one ship and fifty people: and that orders a definite limitation of the scope of action. What results is the impossible task of containing an explosion in a garbage can; sooner or later, the damned lid is going to blow off. So rather than risk out-and-out failure, Poul prudently dampens the fuse and exploits his theme rather exclusively through dialogue. Unfortunately, readers have a prejudiced feeling of emptiness about talky novels; worse, this is talk about bare emotion--and there you have a soap opera. The reader must have action to support emotive language, else he becomes disgusted with the do-nothing characters and throws the book aside.

Not only are they garrulous, but they are endless. I know that Poul wants to establish that there are fifty scientists aboard the ship, but I hardly think it necessary to introduce each one as a full-fledged character. Poul has problems enough condensing what is essentially a trilogy idea into a 206-page novel. Again, we have a conflict of interests that can not be successfully compromised.

Then there is the matter of hard science. I enjoy the cool creativity of freewheeling ideas, but I have to recognize that science monologues are not part of the story and can only serve as deadwood. Remember, Poul has little enough room as it is; so where should the Einsteinian speculation go? Into the wastebasket.

Finally, Anderson cripples himself by using a very lean bag of symbolic tricks. The Christine setting has all the sterility of an egg shell. An author is highly dependent on the setting for mood and colour. An example of this is Poul's own opening to Tau Zero, where he has his two main characters walking through a statue garden of timelessness; the cinematic effect of this look backward is a necessary fleshing out of the trip's aura of farewell sadness. When Poul invokes his spectrum of emotions against a dull canvas of blank-lit white--hell, who cares?

So Tau Zero is still more proof of Ted White's adage that not all literary experiments succeed but some get published anyway.

An Uncommon Collection

by

Wayne Connelly

(York University)

Robin Scott Wilson, ed: Clarion: An Anthology of Speculative Fiction and Criticism from the Clarion Writers' Workshop, Signet Science Fiction, 1971.

For many years science fiction anthologies have fostered the short story; now it appears they are doing the same for the essay. The prospect is clearly a pleasing one: not simply introductions and brief commentaries but--mingling on equal terms with the fiction--scholarly articles and personal essays. Still, it's an unfortunate irony that the non-fiction in Clarion should be consistently the more exciting and imaginative work.

Of the essays only two surprisingly are on the topic of the writers' workshop. "Something Happens" by Kate Wilhelm and "Reading Between the Words" by Samuel Delany are highly subjective accounts of just what went on at Clarion State College. Both are absorbing personal essays. They also afford rich insights into the "hows" of writing s-f, with Delany once more exhibiting his uncommon gift for simplifying without distorting.

Of course Robin Scott Wilson also writes an introduction to the workshop, but his main article, "The Terrific Play of Forces," is an attempt at a functional definition of science-fiction. It's a much more academic work than any of the others in the book. His suggestion is that s-f brings the paradox of teleology to science, and that it does so by being both mythopoetic and mythoclastic. Like the view of reality it replaced, the scientific attitude also has its mysteries which can only be made understandible through popular "romantic myths." Hence, writers of s-f are mythologizers --tellers of "tall tales characterized by peculiar complications of brilliant excitement, of terrific (i.e., 'astounding, exciting awe') play of forces natural and human." It's a considerably more sophisticated argument than I've presented here and in its entirety quite persuasive.

"Genre" by Joanna Russ can be seen as supporting Wilson's contention. It's a polemic against the viewing of s-f as a "genre." In such a condition, she argues, s-f is limited and constricted by outside barriers. She advocates instead "conventions," that is traditions and "rules" that operate internally. It's really a rejection of formalism in favour of the kind of order implicit in romantic mythologizing. My one quibble with the essay is that she ignores the more interesting and positive side of her argument, harping rather upon the necessity of destroying s-f as a genre.

"Fantasy: Many Mansions and Hovels" is Fritz Leiber's conducted tour of the numerous dwellings of imaginative narrative. It concludes with a most interesting and pertinent metaphor. Story and Myth are seen as mid-ocean islands between the shores of outer and inner space--objective and subjective reality, science and imagination. Naturalistic fiction lies just off the objective shore, while fantasy rides midway, braving the rougher and deeper waters of the open sea and so enjoying closer ties with those mid-ocean islands.

Another pair of essays--Frederic Pohl's "The Game-Playing Literature" and Harlan Ellison's "Dreamers on the Barricades"-- lend themselves to joint consideration, for both speak of s-f as propaganda literature. S-F-as-agitprop is for Pohl but a lesser aspect of s-f-as-analysis, however. No doubt, he argues, the analytic powers of science-fiction make it a forceful propaganda tool, but "the method of science fiction" is inherently parallelistic, universal, and anti-deterministic. It's necessarily inclusive of all possibilities. As I understand him, then, Pohl is saying that implicit in every tale of Black Power are also tales of the virtues of discrimination. It's a wise statement.

Ellison, not surprisingly, can only see s-f as a vehicle of Minitrue. Sounding increasingly like a would-be Robespierre, he once more repeats his "street literature for a time of dissent and revolution" line. No clearer indictment against this limiting doctrine can be found than in the fiction of Clarion.

The overriding impression is of earnest commitment; everyone (almost) seems struggling hard to say something. The result is certain boredom: soap-box fiction makes the feet grow numb.

In themselves, most of the stories are by no means unreadable. It's when they're taken together that they become monotonous. A couple of the more mundane tales actually gain in vitality simply by being different, varying somewhat from the Party Line. "The Secret" by Maggie Nadler is one, presenting the other side to the overpopulation theme. Glen Cook's "Song from a Forgotten Hill" is another. A race-relations story, it succeeds by being naively told and by its unexpected sentimentality.

Yet a further problem with the Clarion fiction is the preponderance of one-scene stories. The precis quality that is all but inevitable in such stories soon grows tiresome. The better ones, Geo. Alec Effinger's "A Free Pass to the Carnival" and Joe Wehrle's "The Bandemar," are characterized by their ability to suggest larger elements beyond their limited scene. The Wehrle piece, by the way, is the only story in the collection that seems to be without a trace of social significance. It comes as a welcome relief.

Perhaps earnestness and impatience are to be expected in young writers, and these are of course novices. In any event, I suspect the proper thing to do is to try and spot the most likely professional. I can't stray very far from the consensus opinion in this respect. "Wheels," Robert Thurston's story of a 1967 Mustang, won the NAL first prize; it's probably the best story in the collection. It's a simple tale of the hate/love relations of counter-cultures to the culture they oppose. Barred from the privilege of a driver's license, Thurston's narrator is finally able to acquire an illegal set of "wheels," but he has to go into the Black ghetto to make the buy. It's only a question of time if he tries to run the streets of the city, so he escapes to the country and the other modern highwaymen who race their illegal vehicles. There his only danger is the "insane" patrolman, the only one who'll risk pursuit. It's a well told story in which Thurston demonstrates a controlled and economic style as well as narrative maturity. But my choice of Thurston is also based upon his versatility. His short-short, "The Last Desperate Hours," is a movie cliché extended to its ultimate idiocy--raductio ad absurdum.

The interesting point about this collection is of course the union on equal terms of non-fiction with fiction. Unhappily, though, it proves to be a morganatic marriage: while the essays are of a high, if not exalted, rank, the short stories are largely of an inferior caste.

"Asylum" and the Fantasy Element

by

Tom Greeniones

Asylum is a mundane picture. Yes, it has a screenplay by Robert Bloch, reputable acting by familiar faces, a lovely score, and pleasingly active camera work, but the elements don't come together to take one anywhere new or leave one with any memories.

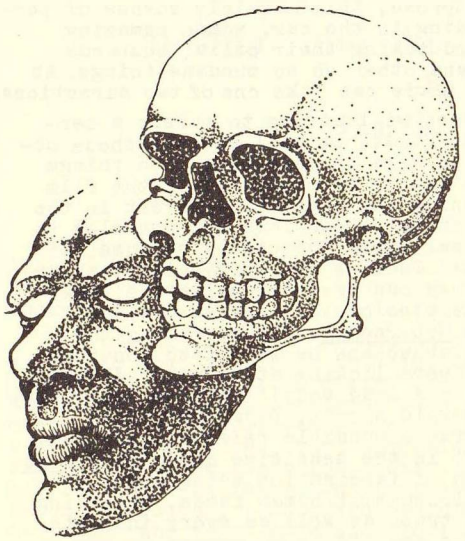
The visual landscape of Asylum is borrowed from the same workaday world that you and I inhabit. In large part this is due to the commercial necessity of making movies accessible to the public. Naturally, the public relates best to cinematic environments that most closely approximate their own, and/or their ideal environment. As we will see, this intention initiates an entire level of behind the scenes decision making. But let's go back a few steps and see how this intent is programmed into the movie and how it relates to fantasy. A standard practice with horror-thriller films is to narrate three separate stories, complete with plots and climax, within a larger framing story that in turn has its own resolution at the end of the film. In Dead of Night, the framing scene is a group of strangers stranded in a winter resort hotel telling each other scary stories. In Asylum, we follow a protagonist who plays a kind of quiz game. He is a young doctor come to the asylum to see if he can secure a job on the staff. The head of the place makes a bargain with him. Above them is a ward of incurables. One of the patients was formerly a surgeon on the staff. He had a breakdown and took on an entirely new name and personality structure, evidently. All our hero must do to land a job is to visit with the patients in the ward and determine who was the former surgeon. What interests us here is that a narrative framework is being set up where we must listen to the stories of three different people. Once this framework is laid, we are committed to a rather fragmented presentation. Readily obvious to anyone who has tried to analyze horror/fantasy in the realm of literature is the difficulty of sustaining a horrific atmosphere of any length with words alone. In the business world of film studios, this task is thought to be nearly impossible using celluloid. The advantage of the three-in-one method for films is that the technicians can deal with smaller segmented portions and rely on telling the straightforward plot of the episodes--a much less demanding effort but in no way considerate of the quality of the fantasy. Seeming to promise more horrific climaxes per film than a single narrative, the segmented film usually provides fewer and less intense climaxes because we have to endure the groundwork laid for them four separate times. From the fantasist's viewpoint, this is unconducive to fantasy.

So what we are left with in Asylum for the bulk of the time is a lot of buildup. As you would suppose, this is mainly scenes of people talking on the phone and riding in the car, women rumaging through boxes of hair curlers and taking their pills, husbands giving the wife a new freezer, and other oh so mundane things. At this point a contemporary horror movie can take one of two directions.

The fantasy film of distinction will strive to pursue a certain tactic toward its material. First, it will embrace those objects of our daily lives and find ways to make them into things of fascination and horror. This can be accomplished in the film by subtly manipulating what meaning the characters invest in the objects and the timing with which these meanings are revealed to us. The horrific impact can be very great precisely because of our familiarity with the objects. Once we are convincingly shown the potential horror of them, they can never be quite the same for us again. Two successful examples of this method are Carl Dryer's Vampyr and Val Lewton's Cat People. Dryer, during the filming, spoke to his cameraman about how he wanted to convince the audience that although they were looking at ordinary domestic scenes, "...behund every door lay a dead body!" Avoiding many easy thrills from the trappings of gothic horror, Dryer preferred rather to lead us into the unforseen possible relationships common objects and scenery can have in the sensitive mind. In Jeanne D'Arc, Dryer bears out the truth of fascination being equal to horror in his long protracted closeups of human faces, revealing thereby startling psychological truth as well as every intimate crack and pore. Cat People is too far off in my memory to sum up easily.

The direction films of less ambition usually take at this point is to promise us fantasy by the subject matter and theme but actually abdicate responsibility to carry the promise out. The film usually becomes a matter of a team of technicians unimaginatively exercising their craft. Ordinary folk for the most part, movie technicians are satisfied to make the movie "real" by conveying an accurate analogy between the props, sets, and actors filmed with our own world. But this intent doesn't logically lead towards fantasy.

This second tactic usually turns horror/thriller movies into a wasteland of objects devoid of feeling. There is no other purpose to give them. This lack of substance quickly lends the film a two dimensional feeling. We view a procession of objects and handlers of objects who seem to have no more continuity between them than that. The actors become two dimensional themselves and revert to types; their disinterest becomes ours. There are scenes that are turning points in the short stories and potential emotional dynamite whose impact is irreparably damaged by technical faults such as careless or prepackaged sounding dialogue, or a needed and neglected new camera angle. But this is symptomatic of a film robbed of its real substance of feeling.



The two dimensional tendency also colours other aspects of technique in Asylum. The treatment of space is unrelievingly flat. Only once in the entire film is an interesting spatial configuration used to heighten the suspense. One shot of a man peering down into his dark basement from the top of the stairs as seen from below and slightly beneath the overhanging ceiling. The lack of a dynamic in the special element is characteristic of Asylum's wasteland where the impersonal object is king. The same comment goes for time. The first episode begins to conceive of some ticklish suspense with two characters investigating mysterious noises in the dark basement. But the handling is so becoliwobbled that our sense of pacing sets our teeth on edge rather than prickling the hair on our necks. And in the middle episode, to me the best, we see three dark trysts of a tailor instructed to work on a strange suit of clothes only from midnight to dawn, compressed together into one sitting in a scene not thirty seconds long without dialogue or montage. No consideration was made for us to enter emotionally into the feeling.

True, there are some things that Asylum does well, and I can report that in many ways the thriller flick is healthier today than in any time in the past fifteen years. While the camerawork lacked personality, it did its level best to keep feeding us closeups and modest depth of field effects: a doorknob looming gigantically before an approaching character in midshot. There seemed to be an awareness that closeups, particularly extreme closeups, have the power of compulsive fascination that easily transmutes into horror. But even this was inconsistently displayed. In the tale of the tailor, there are two objects that enter the story loaded with fantasy potential. One is a suit made from cloth that gives off light and reflects waves of colour from somewhere other than earthly surroundings. The other is a locked book of magic. It contains magic spells for tailoring this fabric into a device for reanimating the dead, a fine concept. But true to the idiom of the landscape, the film lets us marvel at these things for hardly a moment. Our imagination is allowed no opportunity to expand into the myriad of possibilities in these prizes.

As much as I'd like to go on and talk about guidelines for creating fantasy in films that I've learned from 2001, Cat People, Vampyr, Caligari, etc., it would require more input than Asylum gave me.

New Asimov/Old Zelazny

by

Douglas Barbour

The Gods Themselves, Isaac Asimov, Doubleday, 1972. $5.95

The Doors of His Face/ The Lamps of His Mouth/ and Other Stories, Roger Zelazny, Doubleday, 1971. $4.95.

Isaac Asimov's first novel in fifteen years is truly enjoyable science-fiction. Dr. Asimov has come up with a scientific problem of truly cosmic dimensions, and he has created a series of crises in two universes that he makes entirely credible to a layman like me. I read right through the book at one sitting, and I was genuinely interested in the scientific twists and turns of the plot, the beautifully generated suspense as to whether greed and stupidity on the part of humanity and para-humanity would finally lead to the destruction of humanity's universe.

Gods is not really a novel, though; rather it's three carefully connected novellas, with a more or less continuing basic plot movement throughout. That plot has to do with the Electron Pump, which generates specific kinds of energy in both the Universe and the para-Universe due to the two universes having very different natural laws. The Electron Pumps are a cheap and non-polluting energy source for the whole world, a world Asimov posits is still in a state of deep-seated fear based on the Pollution/Environmental Crisis of the late twentieth century. Mankind therefore sees the Electron Pumps (really invented by the para-humans) as a necessary salvation. Thus, when a young scientist suggests that their continued use might alter the basic physical situation of the galactic arm, causing it to implode, forming a quasar (Asimov's suggestion that quasars are in fact the results of other such energy exchanges between the two universes is one of his neater ideas here), no one, especially those within the scientific establishment, will listen to him. By the end of Part 1, Asimov has established the danger, and the fact that the lone wolf scientist can do nothing about it.

Part 2 takes place in the para-Universe, and concerns a lone individual there who also finally sees how dangerous the Pumps are for the other universe (ours). For, if the sun does go nova in the Universe it merely means the para-Universe will have unlimited amounts of energy to draw on for billions of years without any worry about the people at the other end possibly not cooperating. But this Part also ends in stalemate: nothing, it seems can be done about this distressing fact.

Part 3 returns to our Universe, to the Moon colony, and to a solution that is well thought out, though it transcends the problem rather than solving it directly. This is not a cop-out on Asimov's part: I think he correctly sees how, given human nature, such new solutions have to come about. One doesn't stop a process everybody depends upon unless one can improve upon it. That is what happens on the Moon, when an Earth scientist and a Moon Intuitionist become friends and work together on the problem.

But Gods is not speculative fiction in the sense that Asimov does not really speculate outside purely scientific boundaries. In Part 1 the characters are only seen in their labs, and they act very like scientists today would (although Asimov brilliantly captures the kinds of deep emotional conflicts, the envies and jealousies that drive scientists as surely as they do the rest of us).

In Part 2, Asimov's creation of a truly alien species is biologically, biophysically, etc., truly speculative, yet these creatures think just like his human characters in the novels of fifteen years past. In Part 3, the Moon's environment, etc., has caused the creation of a new and different society, and Asimov indicates how its mores differ from those of the home planet, but one feels he's a bit embarrassed by it all. Nevertheless, it is here that he creates two interesting characters and places them together in a believable emotional situation. However, Joanna Russ's strictures in "The Image of Woman in Science Fiction" (Entropy Negative #5, p.4; originally published in Red Clay Reader 8) still hold: "In general, the authors who write reasonably sophisticated and literate science fiction (Clarke, Asimov, for choice) see the relations between the sexes as those of present day, white, middle-class suburbia." And if this is true of Part 3, it is, strangely, even more true of his really fascinating, triple-sexed, inhabitants of the para-Universe.

Nevertheless, Gods is enjoyable s-f. My one other complaint is really a compliment of sorts: I wanted to know more about the creatures of the para-Universe and about what continues to happen to them, especially to the character who had fought against the establishment there (and against, as it turns out, a character who, in a startling turn of events, turns out to be...well, read it and find out for yourself). As in the Foundation series, Asimov drops this story just as we're getting really interested in its possible further developments. But enough of this carping: Isaac Asimov, writing with a greater sense of style than he ever achieved fifteen years ago, has given us an enjoyable book.

If there's one thing Roger Zelazny has always had it's a sense of style. Often that's all he's had, but there's no doubt he made his mark early in the sixties (long after Asimov had stopped writing novels) partly on the basis of it. The Door of His Face is a collection of short stories from 1963 to 1968, but it's a strange collection to say the least.

Oh, a few of the big ones are here: the now famous title story and the equally famous "A Rose for Ecclesiastes" especially (but both have appeared in book form many times, e.g., in Zelazny's own Four for Tomorrow). Other good stories include "The Keys to December"" (a story that owes much to Cordwainer Smith), "The Man Who Loved the Faioli," "This Moment of the Storm," and possibly "This Mortal Mountain" (I must say Zelazny has a knack for good titles) all of which generate a real sense of involvement on the reader's part. The rest, however, is filler: short shorts, many of which just don't deserve re-publication.

Many of the short shorts, such as "The Great Slow Kings," "A Museum Piece" (which proves to be an atrocious pun), and "The Monster and the Maiden," for starters, could have been dropped without regret and replaced, say, by the early "King Solomon's Ring" (recently anthologized by Terry Carr) and "For a Breath I Tarry," which I consider one of Zelazny's best ever. What kind of editorial policy kept these stories out?

If you're a true Zelazny fan this is a must, for it collects some of his better stories in hardcover, but if you're not, wait for the paperback--and hope he'll bring out a collection some day that will continually show him at his best. The man often is superficial (even "For a Breath I Tarry" could be considered all surface, but what a sparkling, moving, surface!) but he can write. In this collection, the longer, the true stories, reveal this to even the most sceptical reader; it's just that the shorter ones, the fluffy games, re-enforce that scepticism in all its force. Both Zelazny and his publisher should have known better.

Two New (and major) Works of Speculative Fiction

by

Douglas Barbour

(University of Alberta)

The Fifth Head of Cerberus, Gene Wolfe. Charles Scribner's Sons, 1972. $5.95.

Beyond Apollo, Barry N. Malzberg. Random House, 1972. $6.95.

It's my suspicion that 1972 will be remembered as the year when, among other things, Barry Malzberg and Gene Wolfe achieved recognition as major new writers in the field of speculative fiction. Both have been around for a while but the publication of books that certainly deserved to at least be award-contenders (at least the Nebula folk should have the perspicacity to recognize their talents, even if the fans are not so aware of literary quality) marked them out for our interest.

Barry Malzberg has, in his disguises as Barry Malzberg and K.M. O'Donnell, been publishing stories and novels for some time now. Last year, with The Falling Astronauts and Overlay, he began to reveal the real quality of his talent. Both books were much better than mere pulp s-f, yet neither book quite escaped the aura of quick-writing-for-money that hangs over most paperback s-f (Samuel R. Delany and Joanna Russ are among the few writers published consistently in paperback whose work gives any evidence of careful re/vision). Beyond Apollo carried Malzberg's particular obsessions to new heights, and is obviously crafted, constructed, and revised, with great care.

Malzberg's work, even the light stuff like Gather in the Hall of the Planets, is all based on a simple axiom: mankind is mad. Everything follows from that, including an awareness of a broad range of madnesses, all equally interesting, but some more dangerous than others, which allows for the normal literary development of internal conflict and complexity in his work. Another aspect of Malzberg's working belief (at any rate) in this axiom is his style. It is beautifully understated, a style where apparent simplicity often allows for very complex, even multiplex, effects. As well, the axiom plus the style have further allowed the development of one of the most brilliant if perverse senses of humour in s-f. Naturally, based as it is on an almost Swiftian vision of man, the humour is black. Indeed, if R.A. Lafferty's humour in his best novel, Past Master, is, as Delany suggested, "ultra-violet", Malzberg's is deep magenta shot through with lightning thrusts of pure darkness throughout. Many people will not find him funny, perhaps, but I must admit that to my (admittedly perverse) sense of humour his best work is often funniest when most black. Apocalyptic comedy: Malzberg has ended the world more than once with neither a bang nor a whimper, just an insane giggle.

The other thing Malzberg handles well and believably (within his chosen limits: by which I mean his comprehension of the dehumanization of the people he writes about) is sex. Joanna Russ, in one of her dependably brilliant reviews in F&SF of this book, pointed out how he demonstrates the way in which NASA (which Malzberg truly and wonderfully hates) has dehumanized its astronauts by showing how various characters, including the protagonist of Beyond Apollo, continually think of sex in terms of machinery; as in this passage:

> "Yes," she murmurs, fluttering her eyes at me, her mouth distending into response or agony, it is hard to tell which, "that is absolutely true, but can't you come?" and I realize she is right: she does indeed have a point there, although the dream distorts chronology at the edges and also seems to telescope time, it seems that I have been fucking her for a very long time, perhaps half an hour in the same rhythm, and am no closer to coming than I was at the time of insertion. My skin distends with desire, my prick is as hard and surging as a rocket, but there is no movement outward, no descent into orgasm, and I say, "All right then, bitch, you want me to come, then I'll come," and in my mind depress certain levers and indicators, open up pressure points all up and down the line, command valve locks to retract, and urge from the most hidden part of me my come to ooze forth like blood . . . but it is not easy: something they have done to us in the gravity simulators (or maybe again it was the centrifugal force orbit simulator into which we were placed) has fucked up my machinery and I am unable to come upon command as I always was before; I am in fact unable to come at all, the levers jam at the crucial instant, the pressure points allow backfill, and suspended above her, my eyes now closed, squeezed against the come that is not there, I begin to feel embarrassment: . . (pp. 45 - 46)

This passage reveals a great deal about Malzberg's style: the black humour is there, plus the compassion (as usual, deeply hidden, but there) for the character, the understatement and levelness of the writing.

In Beyond Apollo Barry Malzberg has taken on an old s-f standard theme: the awefulness of outer space and how it can drive men mad. The book is in fact written by the survivor of the disasterous manned expedition to Venus of 1981 (which was secretly attempted by NASA so they could publicly proclaim its success afterwards and regain ground lost by the totally disasterous manned Mars expedition of 1976). What makes it so much better than earlier such stories is Malzberg's command of his medium: language. Where earlier writers never really succeeded in rendering the madnesses of their characters, Malzberg creates an idiom of mechanically-induced madness, a modern American idiom of mechanical breakdown that in itself renders insanity clearly, not just the protagonist's, but all the other characters' as well. The very first paragraph (and chapter) of the novel completely captures that tone and idiom as it will occur throughout:

> I loved the Captain in my own way, although I knew that he was insane, the poor bastard. This was only partly his fault: one must consider the conditions. The conditions were intolerable. This will never work out. (p. 3)

This is Harry Evans speaking. Malzberg's other major artistic coup in this novel is to have created a truly Borgesian fiction by making the whole book (notes, plans for a novel, etc.) Evans's work.

As a fiction which is really concerned with how such a fiction can come to be, Beyond Apollo is truly speculative in more ways than one. As well it is excitingly mysterious: like many of the characters in it, including Evans, we want to find out what really happened: there are so many possibilities, but which one is real? Big questions, but all superbly contained within the basic fiction of the novel. This is compulsively readable speculative fiction of a very high order.

Although he cannot boast of Malzberg's mad humour (and do we really want more than one writer with that particular vision?) Gene Wolfe is an equally conscientious craftsman. His work in the Orbit series over the past six or seven years has shown a consistent growth in the understanding of his art. The three interconnecting novellas of The Fifth Head of Cerberus are his most multiplex work yet.

The title novella concerns a man's search for his selfhood. Like Malzberg, Wolfe is fully aware of the many possibilities true speculative fiction offers. All three novellas are connected by their relationships to each other and to the twin planets of St. Anne and St. Croix where they occur. Yet all three are forms of documentation and not ordinary stories at all. The character who seeks some truth about his own life by writing it down is both protagonist and storyteller in "The Fifth Head of Cerberus"; Gene Wolfe is hidden behind him (is, in fact, well hidden behind all the fictional 'documents' that are all three novellas). This character is a cloned immortal (immortal insofar as the fact of his being a clone means he is in some fashion the same man as his father, grandfather, etc.). But is he quite the same person, or is he not? Wolfe uses the story to raise the deepest questions about identity. There is a dark heart of mystery to this story which is chilling in its integrity. By finding a new speculative approach to age old questions concerning selfhood and inheritence, Wolfe has created a truly gripping, if entirely open-ended story here.

Nevertheless, the other two stories move further into dark areas of human knowledge, and self-knowledge. St. Anne and St. Croix were originally settled by the French and then, after some war, an English garrison took over, in very different ways on the two planets (there are certain subtle parallels with the conquest of North America implied). The social consequences of the double settlement are explored, but Wolfe is after something more important: there were (possibly) aboriginal inhabitants on St. Anne, but there appear to be none now. The two novellas concern an Earth anthropologist's attempts to discover proof of their existence. This anthropologist, John V. Marsch, first appears peripherally in the first novella. The second one, titled "'A Story' by John V. Marsch", is a brilliant re-construction by him (creation by Wolfe) of the aliens' way of life before the first French arrived. There were many different kinds of abos it appears, and the possibility of earlier settlements by space travelling humanoids is suggested. Alexei and Cory Panshin have recently suggested that the 60's saw the re-introduction of mystery into s-f. Wolfe revels in mystery, for he recognizes that in the mystery, accepted as such, the most interesting and arresting fiction finds its life. "'A Story'" is a marvelously mysterious creation of a whole alien world.

"V.R.T.", the final novella, is a collection of Marsch's documents, most of which concern his work on St. Anne, some of which are his writings in prison on St. Croix where he has been interned for some putative political crime. They are under examination by an officer who must decide whether or not to free him, and who is obviously as confused by them as we are. From these documents we begin to learn how Marsch could have written "'A Story'", but there are hints of even stranger developments and changes. The question, Who is John V. Marsch? arises. Even he is no longer sure, for his isolation in prison has obviously affected his memory and his mind.

Wolfe uses the various documents of "V.R.T." to make many subtle and profound comments on politics, on the destruction of aliens or aborigines, on the ways in which people use each other, and on the strengths individuals can find to help them survive. Despite its harsh ending, it is a story of deep, if often only probable, hope.

One of the really good things about The Fifth Head of Cerberus is that although each novella can stand alone as a powerfully wrought work of fiction, the whole is far and subtly greater than the mere sum of its parts. The book will repay many readings with a growing sense of the depth of its art, yet it is, like Malzberg's, compulsively readable the first time through; which is one reason I praise it so highly.

Both these books could, I am sure, appeal to many readers of the new fiction of Barth, Coover, Pynchon, et.al., if they could only get over their hang up on the label "science fiction". O yes, these are speculative fictions all right, theyre s-f; but they both do what all good fiction does: they reveal the human heart and mind, the deeply human desire to know one's self; and they do it with verve and style. We cant ask much more of a writer. These are good books; if you havent read them yet, you should; you owe yourself at least that much.

Selected Letters

935 S. Irwin
Green Bay, WI 54301

Dear Leland:

re: "Over the Transom and Far Away." It is obvious that RQ is not a "story magazine." Frankly, I don't see how it could be! After having virtually dismissed every conceivable plot and/or theme as redundant, cliché, naive, outdated or misplaced, you are not left with much to print are you! Your indignation suggests that your own fiction requirements and recommendations must be truly unique! Perhaps you would state them? I can only assume that any manuscript that could have survived the critical evaluation of such a diligent editor must be one hell of an original story!

Or is it that you really don't like science fiction! It must be horribly boring to have "read it all before" everytime you pick up copy. Perhaps in fact, you secretly hate s-f? Is this the hidden explanation for the existence of your "critical review"!

A suggestion: perhaps you might hire Vonnegut to "read" manuscripts for you! Liven things up a bit.

best!
Gerald Lange

With respect to my having "...dismissed every conceivable plot ...as redundant, cliché...or misplaced," see Jim Harmon's story this issue -- my personal nomination for the Hugo, the Nebula, and any other award you wish to mention.

Box 68
Liberty, MO 64068

Dear Leland,

"Over the Transom and Far Away" got the biggest rise out of me. (I got enough plots now to last me forever.) I thought it was all very funny: 'Old plots never die: They rise again and again and again...' I do wish you'd noted more definitely that it is always possible to do something astoundingly new with the most hackneyed plot. The example that comes most clearly to mind is Richard Wilson's "Mother to the World." Adam-and-Eve revisited. Still, I guess you were trying to warn off beginners, not old hands at writing. I will note, however, that such hackneyed plots and bad writing as you cite are necessary, in a way. It is a cliché that writing must be learned by doing, or at least by reading what has been done and building on that...These kids who start out with "Once there was a mad doctor who..." are learning the hard way, but some of them will eventually learn.

The main example of the Counter-Earth that I think of is John Norman's use of it in the Gor series. Gor occupies the position of "Counter-Earth" because it was flown there, and its course has to be adjusted every now and then because its orbit isn't stable. (In a multiple-planet system could two planets occupy antipodal positions in the same orbit, naturally?) However, this particular use of the C-E idea is acceptable, to me. Gor had to be put somewhere in order for the stories to have a viable basis, and its placement where it is supposed to be is logical: the natives of Gor (the Sardar) wanted to hide it from Earthmen. But the idea of a Counter-Earth isn't the story, just a simple answer to a minor problem.

In / this issue of / RQ, p. 307, was a statement that The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress was down on women. that overall it regarded them as naught but walking vaginas... This book happens to be my favorite Heinlein, and I am compelled to disagree with Mr. Bernhardt's statement. On Heinlein's Luna, men happen to outnumber women by 2 or 3 to 1. Women are anything but chattels. Rather they are treated with extreme care and consideration. For instance, in one scene a tourist who violates Lunar mores--he puts his arm around a girl who wasn't used to such treatment--is very nearly lynched (i.e., shoved out an airlock). In this particular society Heinlein has invented the woman has acquired the position of initiator as far as sexual contacts and the situations related to them--"dating," marriage, etc.--are concerned. And if Mr. Bernhardt thinks this is unrealistic, let him compare the situation in the mining towns of the west and north: When a woman came to town, men sometimes traveled for miles, just to see her from a distance. Where the devil did Peter Bernhardt ever get that "chattels and humanoid chunks of genitalia" line?

Best,
Jeffrey May

But contrast Mistress with Beyond this Horizon, where the "hero" is about to hit a girl who has assumed various male prerogatives.// I think it's impossible to make plausible a society that has developed interplanetary travel and yet uses female slaves for towing carts, so the question is: why should Gor be located anywhere?

1179 Central Ave.
Dunkirk, NY 14048

Dear Leland,

...I'm in complete agreement with Douglas Barbour's letter about Heinlein. Heinlein is a bad writer...not for his content so much, though I am offended by what strike me as arch-conservative (what we called "fascist" back when I was young and marching) attitudes, but for his style or lack of it. I tried to read "Stranger" but got only about half way through. Then because all of my students (and everybody /else's/ I guess) think it's so wonderful, I began to doubt myself, so I tried to read his new book, I Will Fear No Evil. It's simply unreadable: you can't for a moment believe that any real person would speak the cornball way his characters always do. Enough, but I've never understood how he built such a reputation.

Best,
David Lunde

Perhaps Heinlein's later stories are as bad as critics say, but his early ones, "Lifeline," "Goldfish Bowl," etc., are considerably better than they say. (The first, e.g., is characterized by Alexei Panshin as "not unified" and the second as "readable...but no more.") And these early stories are what I like to think of as sources for this author's present reputation.

1022 Victoria Drive
Port Coquitlam, B.C.

Dear Mr. Sapiro,

I found RQ no. 20 a pleasant surprise, and was prompted to remark on it.

/ Your / list of "things to avoid" in writing an s-f story is much too limiting! Nothing is left to write about! Here are some examples of "dud" stories according to / you /.

1) Hypnotic (subliminal) crime prevention--"The Malley System" --M.A. de Ford,

2) Human alienation in mechanized world--"I Have No Mouth and I Must Scream"--Harlan Ellison

3) Ecological disaster--"Stand on Zanzibar"--J. Brunner, "Make Room, Make Room"--H. Harrison,

4) Aliens among us--"Mars is Heaven,"--Ray Bradbury,

5) Reversion to savagery--"Go, Go, Go, Said the Bird"--S. Dorman,

6) Man Who Knows Better--"Slow Sculpture"--T. Sturgeon,

7) Preliminary assurance of veracity--"Twilight"--J.W. Campbell,

8) Passé science stories--"A Rose for Ecclesiastes" and "The Doors of His Face, the Lamps of His Mouth"--R. Zelazny.

It's interesting to note that in that same book, Where Do We Go from Here? Isaac Asimov says: "It is sometimes said that a good science fiction writer makes one assumption--even if an impossible one--to start his story and then, no more." That seems to be, to me, the whole point of Asimov's book.

...The issue also informed me that I was snobbish or had bad taste because I have no interest in the funnies. Sorry, but I'm interested in science-fiction...

Best,
Jim Maloan

With the hope that Mr. Maloan continues such criticism, I think I can answer his first. Pollution--one of its many topics--no more makes Zanzibar an ecology story than witchery and duelling turn Macbeth into Sword & Sorcery. In (4) it's not aliens among us but "us among the aliens," who prior to the human landing party were quietly tending their own affairs. And remember, the science of (8) wasn't passé at the time of writing. About (7), Campbell's story-in-a-story technique wasn't used for veracity--in the didactic heresy sense--but as a quick way to convey information. Jim Bendell is incoherent at the start, so his emotional stress isn't expressed by himself--which'd be tedious--but by a second narrator: "Jim Bendell's usually pretty careful about his English...When he slips that means he's disturbed. Like the time he thought the rattlesnake was a stick of wood and wanted to put it on the fire." As to the other titles, I must quote Transom: "The antiquity of a theme doesn't mean it can't be used again--but a writer must add something to it or...see a familiar situation from a new viewpoint."// On comics, I didn't say that anybody who ignores them is a snob--merely anybody who derides RQ for not ignoring them!

3208 Claremont Ave
Berkeley, CA 94705

Dear Leland,

I found some of the contents of RQ 20 too pedantically dull to be of much interest. This is unfortunate: they may very well have had something significant to say, and I may go back and try again to read them. But I'm afraid that with limited time for reading and in view of the vast amount of material that competes for that time, uncompelling academic essays stand little chance of getting read.

The most amusing item in the issue was your own "Over the Transom & Far Away." I can't say that it was awfully profound, but it was a good survey of clichés; enjoyable reading, and it may prove a sound warning next time I start a new story.

I am deliberately avoiding Vasbinder's piece on "Foma" as I'm currently reading Cat's Cradle...On the other hand, I have read both The Left Hand of Darkness and The Crystal World.

I enjoy LeGuin's works although I consider Darkness overrated and inferior to several of her less acclaimed books.

My regard for Ballard stops somewhere beyond reverence and very little short of worship.

And I admire Moorcock as editor and (sometimes) as writer. I despise the trash to which he lowers himself, although I sympathise with the economic situation in which he finds himself, which causes him to write such garbage. But I think his serious books are among the finest produced by recent years, at least among s-f authors.

Regarding Moorcock and Chauvin, I did find the latter's review interesting although I did not agree with his conclusion. It is a regrettable fact that for all the talk in recent years of the liberation of s-f, it is still far easier to sell a trashy, shallow adventure novel than a serious novel in this field...I can testify from direct experience.

What Moorcock tried to do with the large-size New Worlds was to break out the walls that hemmed in s-f, in fact that hemmed in commercial fiction in general, and say to his authors, in essence, "Literary quality alone matters to me; forget all the rules of the pulps, forget the rules of commercial fiction."

The result was some godawful botches, but it was also some very fine pieces of work. And more important than this or that particular story, Moorcock's policy permitted authors to concentrate on their art without worrying about a lot of commercial strictures. I think it did a lot of good, and I'd like to see Moorcock running a magazine with a good budget and a totally free hand.

Jim Harmon was, as always, well worth reading. Some of the things he says about publishers and the way they treat authors is unfortunately all too true. Strangely (or perhaps not so strangely), the best experiences I have had in dealing with publishers have been with small publishers. I've had nothing but the finest experiences with Canaveral Press, Arlington House, and regarding a current project, scheduled to appear late in 1973 or early '74, with Mirage.

I've had bad experiences with Ace, Ballantine, Berkley, and Dell. What this all means is subject to speculation.

Best Regards,
Dick Lupoff

I requested Jim Harmon to write an article on his experiences with certain big publishers--Ace, in particular--but he was reluctant to see RQ the subject of a libel suit. So for the nonce I'm restricted to "indefinite descriptions" like those accompanying the letter that follows.

2111 Sunset Crest Drive
Los Angeles, CA 90046

Dear Leland:

How gratifying to see RQ again!

I must say that I think the best work in the issue is to be found in your own "Over the Transom and Far Away." The style is clear and direct, the content cogent, the critical opinions supported by reference and example...You've really made a...contribution to s-f criticism, and I hope it is recognized and appreciated as it should be.

The Writers' Guild is on strike and I'm doing picket-duty --hence the brevity of this note. Between picketing and novelizing, there's all too little time for correspondence these days.

Best, as always,
Bob Bloch

For an earlier and less inhibited listing of plot clichés the reader should consult Bob Bloch's own "Credo for Fantasy Writers," The Eighth Stage of Fandom (Chicago: Advent, 1962). // This is the second picket-line missal flown in by Mr. Bloch, but if Hollywood studios treat their writers with the same indifference displayed by certain New York publishers (see Jim Harmon's remarks last issue), then these frequent Guild strikes are understandable.

17829 Peters
Roseville, MI 48066

Dear Leland,

/ With respect to / your comments in "synthetic s-f" (in "Over the Transom and Far Away") and later on Space Westerns "not being s-f" in the lettercol...I can't agree that Space Westerns aren't s-f; to me, they are simply bad s-f. Insisting that they aren't s-f seems like insisting that a car with a broken axle isn't a car: just because it doesn't function properly, as designed, doesn't necessarily mean it isn't a car. I think / Space Westerns/ are poor s-f because their authors have failed to integrate their stories' imaginative content (spaceships, outer space, etc.) with the other fictional elements / they / contain. The imaginative merely remains a sort of superficial frosting, a cardboard façade that is not really an essential part of the story. You might recall Ted Sturgeon's old dictum that a good s-f story is about human beings, with a human problem and a human resolution, that would be impossible without its scientific (or, for the sake of consistency, let's say imaginative) content. Space Westerns don't fulfill this requirement, since the imaginative content of such stories does not really cause the human problems in them...But Space Westerns are still s-f, because they still contain s-f's distinctive imaginative content...

I like David Ketterer's notion (in his essay on The Left Hand of Darkness) that s-f "is concerned with the creation of radically different and often visionary new worlds, which...destroy and take the place of /the/ 'real' world, at least for the duration of the reading experience." It is interesting to note that Ursula K. LeGuin...made a similar comment in Scythrop 22: "Fantasy's reward is the special complexity and difficulty of invention...The invention of Cration)" (p.2). I'm afraid I cannot agree, however, that the difference between fantastic literature and s-f (or "apocalyptic literature," as he calls it) is in the fact that the new worlds s-f creates have a "credible relationship to the world of the reader." I'm not sure how "credible" a relationship with our world alternate universe/ parallel world novels such as Philip K. Dick's Man in the High Castle have, and yet they are most definitely s-f.

While Darko Suvin's notion of myth may be antiquated, as you say, that doesn't necessarily mean that he can't criticise an s-f story for attempting "to explain once and for all the essence of phenomena"--which he (mistakenly, it would seem) thought was a philosophy derived from myth. What Suvin really seems to be refering to is a quality of fairy tales, certain legends, and the like. I don't think it has as much relationship with s-f as he seems to think, and as far as that goes, I am not sure that science doesn't also try to "explain once and for all the essence of phenomena." A legend, let us say, of a rain goddess attempts to explain once and for all the phenomena of rain, aptly fitting Suvin's so-called "mythic" philosophy (in fact, I believe he may have used a similar example in one or another version of his essay...): the common people accepted this explanation, and never bothered to look for anything beyond it. Today we know the truth: rain is caused by a cold air mass hitting a warm, damp air mass. But hasn't science also explained once and for all the essence of this phenomenon? Do we bother to look for anything further behind it?

Yours,
Cy Chauvin

S-F's imaginative content resides not with its external props (spaceships, etc.) but with the author's technique in presenting them--in his conveyance of attitudes, emotions, general relationships--which is why transposing Westerns to deep space fails to make them s-f.// Even Suvin's antiquarian view of myth is naive, being refuted in the 6th century BCE by Xenophanes, who characterized myths as "fables of men of old" -- and by Aristotle, who viewed myths as inventions of legislators "to persuade the many, and /for/ support of law." More recently, the Covent Garden anthropologists (Frazer, Harrison, Murray) viewed myth not in terms of primitive explanation--like a rain-goddess causing rain--but in terms of ritual magic, while Branislaw Malinowski (who notes that South Sea Islanders have a strictly pragmatic notion of causation) writes: "Myth...is not an intellectual explanation...but a pragmatic charter of primitive faith..."// Science doesn't try for essences--but only for systems of abstract generalization, as in the notion of Complementarity, by which either the corpuscular or wave character of electrons can be manifested, although not in the same experiment. There's no attempt to determine what electrons really are--waves or particles.

Dear Mr. Sapiro:

.../ To me / the most interesting article in the issue was your own "Over the Transom and Far Away." Do you realize what a goldmine of ideas you have published there? An author could keep his family fed and the rent paid for years just by going down the list and writing a story around each topic (or cliché, if you will). If Amazing will not take the stories, the comics might. All the author has to do is take the idea a little further than other writers, work out a new twist, and the story is done. Take the very first motif, for example: the one of the last man and woman starting the race over again. Usually the story fades out right there. Yet, has anyone inquired into the problems just two people are going to have with repopulating the planet? For the first few generations, incest is going to be a biological necessity and those nasty ol' recessive genes which have been lurking unnoticed in the background...are going to pop out with depressing frequency. Color-blindness and hemophilia might well be the order of the day. In fact, with just two people to start it off, the human race would be lucky indeed if / it / were to be finally re-established.

Sincerely,
Dwight R. Decker

Well, this just confirms my opinion of the Bible as a naughty book that ought to be banned from all respectable book stores.

2726 Castiglione Street
New Orleans, LA 70119

Dear Leland,

I was actually stunned by your remarks in "Over the Transom and Far Away" concerning "text without narrative." To say that "nowadays, the requisite information must be conveyed in the story itself" for a story to come up to the standards of literary technique is sheer balderdash. Certainly there are many different literary techniques with which any given thing can be accomplished and never is any one of them the good or acceptable technique. Some are good, and some are bad. Just because the technique of telling all in the story is the present fad, it's not necessarily the only good way of telling all. And it's not the only good way of providing the background to a story. I've read many good stories written with the other technique or a combination of both. Your statements, really, amount to a sort of literary closedmindedness that I don't find appealing at all to say the least.

Sincerely,
Lester G. Boutillier

I said naught about good or bad, but just stated, "The following examples simply do not represent current literary practices." Mayhap we shall reach a point on the next cosmic cycle when the old language and mannerisms are acceptable once again.

7512 Eastlake Terrace
Chicago, IL 60626

Dear Leland,

...on Wayne Connelly's floundering with "the sublime": /to judge/ first by the examples he quotes, he cannot discern between the fear reaction(which predominates in his quotations and is apparently the end-choice of his argument) and the sentimental-grandiosity reaction (which prevails in two examples: the preachifying from Shape of Things to Come and Bradbury's Americana-overkill). Neither one of these, of course, constitutes "sublimity" (of which I recall Longinus gave examples more to the point, though I haven't a copy by me to verify); but had the gentleman chosen vicarious fear and stuck with it, I would be more inclined to attribute this lapse to semantic difference instead of aesthetic density. Actually "sublimity" is more complicated than fear-in-the-face-of infinity; it is also a human triumph over same--and more the negative-positive complex of feeling that together (only) demonstrates reality (i.e., the "human condition," which is really too contradictory to be unified in less than a multi-emotional experience). "Sublimity" in this sense would more likely be found in the 18th century idea of "general nature" than /in/ the chosen snippets of Addison/ Burke et. al.--that is, if one feels the 18th century must have an answer for everything.

...All I can say about your own "comic relief" is, by god, sir, you must get the damnedest detritus of gimicky stories up there, and I'm sure glad I don't have to read them. (You should've printed the one with the "My arms were steel..." shenannigans, at least if it maintained that level of campery!)

Now for Mr. Ketterer's article and my pet peeve--the fallacy of reading through theoretical prejudice or missing the forest for the headfull of deadwood obstructing it.

I disagree with the theory, too--the unacceptibility of myth as a fictional basis--though that's my least relevant objection. (If myths disrupt the so-called "logic of plot development," how come mythic structures are co-opted, without "severe displacement," by so many of the best people--starting with the Greek tragedians--and most notably for drama, whose plot demands are far more stringent than fiction's? There must be something in myth, though of course it depends on how the artist illuminates the material emotionally. It's not enough to play "find the reference.")

Mr. Ketterer failed to notice, however, that The Left Hand of Darkness is about as mythological as Tom Jones; his "archetypal winter journey" is the inevitable growing-up quest all over again--if it's to be mythological because it's in every novel O.K., but the gentleman seems not to mean that. I would say Ms. LeGuin's work may be more justly described as an anthropological novel, a novel of cultures, and the "growing-up" experience involves mutual cultural accord (in microcosm, naturally). Ms. LeGuin uses Gethenian myth-tales within this anthropological framework to help illustrate Gethenian social attitudes, which themselves make beautiful sociological sense. In short, I cannot conceive the density that would construe this novel to be structurally committing mythology even if such were undesirable practice.

/Also/ Mr. Ketterer doesn't understand the concept of "shifgrethor," and his definition of it as a "...pattern of right behavior" is a description of any social custom. Indeed this is a hard concept to get at, so Ms. LeGuin gives no definitions, only examples (a stout blow to oversimplification!); but if Mr. Ketterer could say nothing more specific than he did, he should not have chosen this book for analysis, as "shifgrethor" is one of its primary ideas.

Joe Christopher's trackdown of bourgeois-reassurance tendencies in Poul Anderson is tolerably good prose and a justly-taken position. Kudos, also, to Cy Chauvin, who does those expository-historical approaches very skillfully. I'm not sure I agree with his differentiation of s-f from other literature (via "the imaginative criterion"), but I cannot at the moment oppose him with one of my own...I do agree that Moorcock the editor has his limitations which usually run to pages of typesetting gimmicks, mathematical formulae inserted as part of the storyline, and similar newfangled devices whose end result is more old-fashioned tedium. Of course he has chosen some good stories too, but on the whole, as an editor he should write more fantasies.

Steven Dimeo makes some good points about A Clockwork Orange but his overall method--his tendency to rate Kubrick's achievement by his fidelity to Burgess' novel--is not the way to go about it. Film is a different art form than fiction and its requirements are in no wise the same (and by the way, they do not include fiction's staples of a narrative and characterization, as Mr. Dimeo assumes, and I maintain that 2001 paid no "cost of clarity" in dispensing with them...). More than that, once a separate art-work is created it must be judged on its own merits, on the effectiveness of its own vision--in short, as an entity in itself, totally separate from its derivation, if any. Kubrick's Clockwork Orange is not Burgess' nor does it have to be....

With elaborate causticity,

Sheryl Smith

I disagree on movies adopted from novels. In those elements (montage, etc.) exclusive to the first the director may "create," but not in those shared by both. E.G., what should be the "point" of the film--that a "conditioned" person without freedom to choose is no longer human--is obscured because it's stated by the chaplain, whom Kubrick portrays as a dunce. From this (and other things) it's clear that the author was not consulted by the director (in Burgess' words, "I was not summoned into his presence") and that he should've been.// On Sublimity, it's dangerous to quote single passages, since the effect is achieved only by the story en toto. But surely one quotation--the description of Wells's Martians--fitted exactly the notion of the "commonplace horribly changed."

11a Graduate College
Princeton, NJ 08540

Dear Leland,

...let me confine myself to Joe Christopher's piece of pretentious quasi-vulgar Marxist analysis, "The Bourgeois Romance." While prevailing American ideology impels virtually everyone to identify himself as "middle-class" in the impossibly broad sense of the word current in the United States, it seems dubious in the extreme that the readership of F&SF, in which all the components of Operation Chaos except for the inept connecting bridges originally appeared, could be taken as typical representatives of the bourgeoisie in any meaningful sense. A cursory examination of the full range of Anderson's published work, fictional and non-fictional, would quickly satisfy the researcher with more initiative than Mr. Christopher seems to possess that Anderson himself cannot be taken as a repository of typical middle-class values. These considerations would seem to dispose of the "hypotheses of intention" which Mr. Christopher puts forward, leaving us with his somewhat quaint alternate suggestion that, intended or not, the work just came out middle-class.

(It is also worth noting that while on p.310 Mr. Christopher disclaims any intention of pursuing this matter further, and declares his intention of resting with the fact that the work itself is "middle-class," in his conclusion the work has again become "well aimed" at a middle-class audience (p.314).)

...Like the stereotypical pedant, Mr. Christopher lacks any notion of the concept of humor. Thus it is that when he oh, so carefully deletes fantasy elements from his first three quotations from Anderson's work in order not to introduce the fantasy prematurely for his argument, he never notices that he is thereby deleting the incongruity, the humor. It never seems to enter into Mr. Christopher's...mind that Anderson might be intentionally making use of plotlines easily recognizable to him and his audience as stereotypes in order to heighten the sense of incongruity produced by the introduction of fantasy elements. Instead ...Mr. Christopher goes on to compare the "plot" of the loosely connected segments of Operation Chaos (which segments were published separately over a course of thirteen years) to the standard for a romance as outlined by Northrop Frye, and never notices that the fantasy elements in Anderson's work turn out to be all but extraneous to this analysis. Mr. Christopher has "proven" (on his own terms) that all exemplifications of the stereotyped bourgeois plotlines which Anderson has playfully adopted are "bourgeois romances"! Surely even a competent minor work such as Operation Chaos deserves better treatment than this.

Sincerely,
Patrick McGuire

One example from the author's published work is the stink bomb attack on the peace demonstrators which, says Christopher (p.312), "seems to me an excellent mode of middle-class attack on what it considers the forces of evil."

---

26 Oakwood Avenue
White Plains, NY 10505

Dear Leland:

I never said that s-f's treatment of Women's Lib isn't badly retarded, only that Lundwall misses too many exceptions and subtleties for his evaluation to be complete.

Heat Rays & Hotdamns--Bernhardt's review confirms that Sturgeon's Law applies to s-f's treatment of women--but I fail to see the wittiness or sexual candour of Sheckley's stories. In "Love Incorporated" the hero is cheated of love. Instead of blaming the corporation or the Earth government--anyone who is in authority, supports the system, and thus might be able to change it--he blames the woman. She was "used" by the corporation just as he was; the corporation condemned her.("You wouldn't want to marry a girl like that") but rejected any notion of guilt for itself. The hero acts out his resentment by indulging in the kill-a-woman game provided by Earth authorities as an outlet for precisely that resentment, which otherwise might be directed against the government. Woman as scapegoat. Women are objects of hate--because they "let" themselves be exploited by men? In "Can You Feel Anything...?" Melisande is shown as an insatiable nymphomaniac who can't even appreciate good sex when she gets it, and betrays her "benefactor." The Man-Eating Monster is every bit as much a cliché as the Clinging Virtuous Heroine! Sheckley--and many other writers--have taken the standard "good" stereotypes of women and flipped them upside down. Bernhardt--and others--seem to think this is a real change. Actually, it is only the reverse of the same coin, one more example of Heads, I win--Tails, you lose. No difference to women between two stereotypes--they lose either way.

S-F & the Mundane Egg--Both "sense of wonder" and "sublimity" bear a striking resemblance to Prof. Tolkien's "eucastrophe"--and have some element of irony, as the term applies in Classical Greek drama. Anyway, that quality /in/ "The Light" by Poul Anderson, "Contraption" by Clifford Simak, "The Deserter" by William Tenn, "First Lesson" by Mildred Clingerman, "The Last Question" by Isaac Asimov /is/ the reason I kept reading s-f...

Over the Transom & Far Away--Thank you for including E-3b /"To turn upside-down our previous male-dominated society, so..only females are bosses, is to show no understanding of Women's Lib.." / There is a new book out called (by me) Aow, Gawd, Here We Go Again; the author calls it Regiment of Women. It is reviewed in Newsweek of May 21 and excerpted in Couples--a New Report by the Editors of New York Magazine. Honest-to-Lundwall...if that's what the mainstream is doing, maybe s-f is doing better than we realize. Once again, even when women take over, they do so by adopting "male" characteristics--women can only take over by becoming, in all but name, men!

The Left Hand of Darkness: Ursula LeGuin's Archetypal Winter Journey--Someone suggested that LHD is less than perfect without causing me to turn instantly into a homocidal maniac...very interesting. Incidentally, LHD and Venus Plus X have more in common than hermaphroditic beings. Both use an alternating-chapters structure. The energy generated by the tension caused...by this device is sufficient to enable a person to walk up one wall, across the ceiling, and down the other wall...

The Seasonal Fan--There are lots of tax deductions free-lance writers can take...One prof. was kind enough to teach a lesson on them in a journalism course I attended recently...

Sincerely, Adrienne Fein

Directly below, LeGuin is exonerated (if that's the word) by Doug Barbour, so our correspondent is hereby given permission to resume her homocidal activities with respect to anybody who implies that LHD is "less than perfect."// In LHD "alternating chapters" (a misleading phrase in this context) are used not--as by hack writers--to generate suspense, but to exhibit contrasting points of view, but there's no space to explain that here.

8824 90th Street
Edmonton, Alberta

Dear Leland,

I was especially interested in David Ketterer's article on Left Hand of Darkness...His basic thesis is very interesting, that s-f is a literature of apocalypse. I'm not sure I go all the way with his formulation of that, but it bears long thinking on. A couple of things: one petty, but of some importance: on p.292 he (or you?) has Genly approaching the shore of Orgoreyn /in/ LHD (78), but the person who thus approaches Orgoreyn, and observes that "Darkness lay behind my back, before the boat, and into darkness I must row" is Estraven (who is already entering dothe darkness although he doesn't know it). My other point, not so small, is that I don't quite follow Ketterer when he says that "the plot is unfortunately subordinate to the overly conscious use of mythic material"(RQ 297). First of all, as he appears to realize, she doesn't repeat myths (as say Zelazny does). She uses mythic patterns to create Gethen-myths, which isn't quite the same kind of use of mythic material as that (again Zelazny comes to mind) which I would call "overly conscious." But his criticism, and that of many other writers I've come across, has all tended to say. "Oh yes, it's a good novel, and deserved the awards, but it's really rather badly put together, don't you think?" No I don't think.

It's my feeling that LHD is very carefully constructed (it is beautifully functional) so that the story (or plot) is continually and specifically made more interesting and comprehensible by the chapters which appear at first glance to have little to do with the ongoing action (there are 5 of them if I remember correctly). Each hearth-tale, or "myth" appears just when it will be most informative in terms of the next part of the action. The same is true of Ong Tot's commentary on Gethen sexuality. Anyway, I hope to have more to say about this somewhere, but I've always felt that attacks on the construction of LHD have betrayed prejudiced expectations of plot-construction or poor reading. Obviously Ketterer has read the book carefully...but he doesn't want to see, despite his awareness (RQ 294) of Genly's statement on p. 7 that what follows is a group of documents by various hands, not a single person's narrative, that this collection of "documents" is the specific form LeGuin saw as most useful for her fiction.

...I enjoyed Wayne Connelly's article on the s-f "sublime." Not sure if that's the only way to talk about it. His afterword points towards another, which is certainly true to a lot of the best s-f (note Delany's comment of s-f as having "the stuff of mysticism" in his "About 5,175 Words"), and that's the sense of mystery, which is also close to what Tolkien is talking about in his "On Faery Stories": a door on "other time."

Also, I've just read Orphans of Space and Beyond this Horizon for the first time (How did I miss them?), and Heinlein did know how to do it pretty damned well, when he was on top if ideas in a story, as he was in those days. His big fault as I see it is that he stopped writing fiction to write lectures, and with lectures you've usually got to agree with the lecturer or you're not going to listen to him too much (and he's got to be a witty lecturer, which Heinlein often isn't when he's riding one of his pet ideas). With stories, it doesn't matter so much, especially if they're exciting as stories, and Heinlein sure used to know how to guarantee that they were that.

Best,
Doug Barbour

WE ALSO HEARD FROM...

Brian Aldiss (Jasamine House, Holton, Wheatley, Oxford, UK), who mentions his just completed history of s-f, Billion Year Spree, and then notes that:

> In England, it is possible to exist as a writer writing s-f that does not conform to all the clichés of pulp; I believe the job would be much harder in the States. The degradation of the Nebula Awards and the banality of the new Europa Awards will only contribute to an already bad scene. We hope...the new John W. Campbell Memorial Awards will do a little for the other side of the coin.

Richard Hodgens (25 Appleton Place, Glen Ridge, NJ 07028), who wants "to assure R. Bozzetto that I would have said the same things about Darko Suvin if he were not a Yugoslav and English were his native language."// A blow-by-blow recap is impossible here, so late-comers should see Hodgens' "Sleeping Beauty and Darko Suvin" in RQ #19 and Bozzetto's response to it in #20.

Jim Harmon (Box 38612, Hollywood, CA 90038), who reports that "The latest RQ was particularly interesting reading, especially your article, as witness the column." He continues:

> Robert Bloch points out that most fans who like comics prefer either the "beefcake" or the "whimsey-poo" types. By the same token, I note that Mr. Bloch has divided his time between writing spooky-wooky stories and crimesy-wimesy ones.

The following errors are also discussed by Edmund Wilson, "A Postscript to Fowler: Current Clichés and Solecisms," The Bit Between My Teeth, pp. 561-570.

"Protagonist"

The protagonist, according to the Oxford dictionary, is the "chief person in drama or plot of story"--so as Wilson remarks, "In referring to a single work, you cannot have more than one protagonist." I recall one reference, in a fanzine, to a "secondary main protagonist," a phrase that is not only redundant but self-contradictory --however, professional terminology is little better:

> They / modern science-fiction readers / want at least a piece of sufficient length for the author to...probe his protagonists.
>
> (Editorial, Amazing S-F Stories, Sept. '70, p. 128)

Again, this word often is confused with proponent, defined as a "person who puts forward a motion, theory, or proposal." Thus

> Henshaw, most outspoken of these, was vigorously attacked by American and some European protagonists of the finds.
>
> (Waldo Wendel, "Pipes and Tablets," Science, 23 Oct. '70, p. 430)
>
> The story of how Cubism happened in terms of...the leading protagonists has been told many times.
>
> (John Berger, The Moment of Cubism, New York, 1969, p. 4)

"Transpire"

This word means to emit or to "be emitted...pass off as in insensible perspiration"--as when Joanna Russ says: "...through her eye he saw himself steaming, transpiring, circulating, giving up atoms into the air" (When Chaos Died, p. 89). In the metaphorical sense of leaking out, i.e., becoming known, the word is also used correctly by H. Montgomery Hyde in the Penguin Famous Trials series: "...it had not transpired what was the full extent of the complaint ...to the landlady" (Oscar Wilde, London, 1962, p. 266)

Nevertheless, transpire is frequently misused as a synonym for happen. The first instance may be an error of the translator--

> Heaven knows what comical incident may have transpired in Jan's little head to make him start laughing.
>
> (Gunter Grass, The Tin Drum, p. 231)

--but our second author has no such excuse:

> The controversy has received such wide public notice that an accurate account of all that transpired seems desirable.
>
> (Science, 11 Dec. '70, p. 1177)

As Wilson points out, transpire "...belongs to a group of words that are...losing their original meaning." But here the new meaning is superfluous, since there already exist handy synonyms for happen --whereas there is no single word synonymous with leak out from secrecy. So the English language is not gaining a new word but losing an old one.

Readers are asked not to remind me that the Webster's Third and the Random House "dictionaries" approve errors like those just cited. As Dwight Macdonald explains ("The String Untuned," Against the American Grain, London, 1963), the Webster fails to distinguish between correct and incorrect usage--and so is a dictionary only in the trivial sense. Macdonald wrote his essay too early to discuss the Random House, but it's easy to see what his opinion would have been.