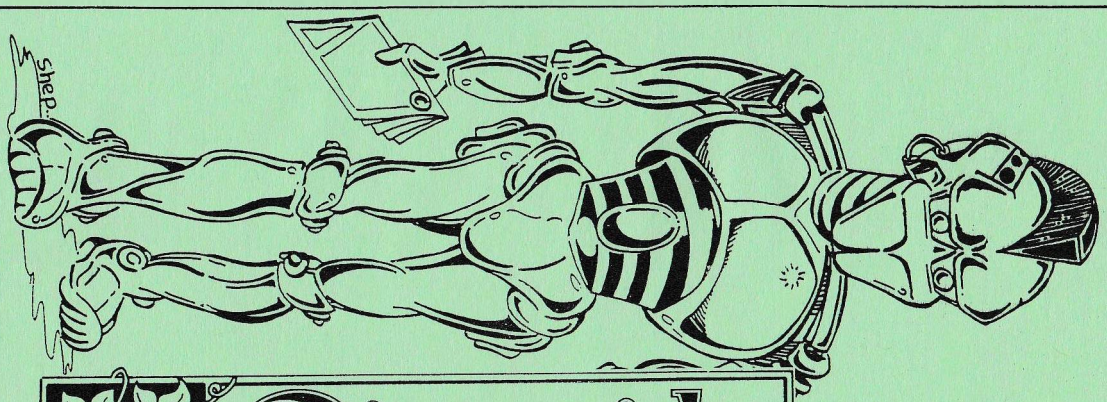

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RQ MISCELLANY

"BLURB HAPPY"

Bob Tucker's contribution to RQ#30 scored a maximum, being praised by all correspondents that mentioned it. To quote Robert Bloch, "It's great to see that Tucker's talents have in no way diminished since his earlier work on the Bill of Rights." Fanzine critics also were enthusiastic, but except for Fosfax's Joseph Major (who not only reads a lot but reads accurately), they were wrong on particulars. E.G. The Whole Fanzine Catalog termed BH a "verbal and visual treat," but also refers to it as a reprint (instead of an updating), credits all of Edd Vick's work (in setting type) to Dennis Virzi--and writes that its purpose was to show "how reviews are turned into book blurbs." Now, BH couldn't be a reprint, since two of the fanzines cited therein, Riverside Quarterly and Pirate Jenny, didn't exist when BH was originally printed by Inside in the middle 50s, at which time PJ's editor, Pat Mueller, had not even been born. I can only conjecture why Edd's name was replaced by Dennis's--perhaps because of Dennis's Fanthology notice right after BH or maybe because he's Pat's husband. Finally, the extraction of laudatory passages from caustic reviews is well within the capacity of any Frosh composition student. Tucker's opus was printed as a lesson in style, requiring a writer of professional skill--since it reproduces not only the acidity of a Damon Knight review but also the confident miscues of a daily newspaper journalist, the gosh-wow enthusiasm of a fan book-critic, the peppy exhortations of a fan movie-critic, and of course the cliché-ridden prose of the publisher's dustjacket writer.

A VOICE FROM OLYMPUS

RQ readers will be delighted to learn that Vladimir Nabokov --author of Lolita and other exemplary tales--once wrote an s-f story, "Lance," anthologized in Stories from the New Yorker. After expressing his contempt for all other s-f (some of his remarks being quoted on p. 289, this issue), the writer assures us that his story will contain none of s-f's stock characters, e.g., the "good guy [who] grins,"the "villain [who] sneers," the "cold scientist...usually found under names like Stein" (I assume the author means Einstein or Frankenstein), plus humanoids or other "mythic" creatures "whose intimate structure is never depicted."

Next we meet the title character, who's to go on the first space mission. It seems the date is irrelevant: "Let it be 2145 A.D. or 200 A.A., it does not matter." (In their Foreword the editors proudly explain that this "prophetic fantasy ...was originally published in 1952, some years before 'astronaut' became a household word.") After cautionary words to mother, Lance leaves for that "unmentionable and absolutely awful place of his zero-hour departure"--and returns to Earth after one month. Although the author claims no specific date, all this evidently occurs in the Victorian era, since the parents are notified of this "tremendous news" not by phone or telegram but by a "horseman [who] clappity-clap gallops up the cobbled street." There follows a trip to the hospital (Lance's temporary residence), Lance's spoken chronicle of events on the new planet (mercifully terminated before he can complete one sentence), the parents' forced exit, and an end to the story.

(continued on page 290)

CHIP SWIFT COCOONS
by
DAVE AUSTIN

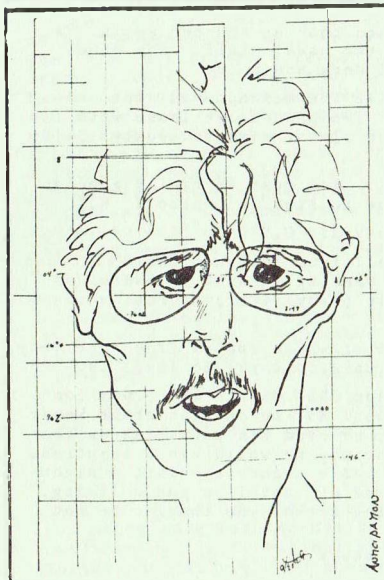
TrendTech Incorporated was having a bad day, and Chip Swift couldn't have been happier.

A Sudanese outfit was threatening to sue TTI for copyright infringement after seeing an "Entertainment Tonight" report on TTI's experimental SenseTech project. The white coats down in Research and Development were heating up all the lines, the gray suits up in Legal and Marketing were on the warpath as well, and, as usual, the folks in the Director's Office were not amused by the free publicity. All of this before ten o'clock coffee. Swift ate it up with his doughnut, the white sugar sticking to his moustache. All was well. This, after all, was the day he would hear from Wendy.

The FAX machines were going bulimic, white paper spewing everywhere, and all of his phone banks were lit up and blinking like crazy. Swift just slurped his too-hot coffee and breathed deeply. Composure was his key, the electronic hum of the machines his mantra.

Chip Swift was Assistant Vice-President of Incident Control at TTI, what they used to call a trouble-shooter. It was his job to put out fires when and wherever they might occur. He'd examine the problem, assign the correct personnel and/or resources, and watch the flames die down. If the smoky smell got into the upholstery, he'd figure out a way to get out the stench. His office was a telecommunications bedlam of video screens, satellite links, telephones, intercoms, terminals, and, of course, the FAX bank: three lovely new silver and black machines, each with its own special set of capabilities.

The only other thing in Chip Swift's office, besides all the electronic gear, his desk and chair, was a small framed photograph. It was an official publicity photo of Toshiro Noh, the ace relief pitcher for the New York Ronin. Chip had grown up in Baltimore, but was a life-long Yankee fan. He'd never forgiven the owner for selling the team to SONY, especially since they represented the competition, but he still loved his team, even if the damn name had been changed and even if he hadn't been to a game in years.



Noh, a Cy Young Award winner the previous two seasons, represented the ultimate in Cool Under Pressure. The sports writers all called him the Machine. He worked completely without expression, without emotion, even when the Ronin defeated the Phoenix Mariners for the Series two years ago. No jumping up and down: just a stately bow to the crowd. Awesomely cool, positively frigid. He too was a fireman, like Chip.

FAX One, the machine closest to him, started humming. Some mullahs had decided that the depletion of the ozone layer over the Persian Gulf was the work of The Great Satan. A price had been put on the heads of the top researchers in TTI's Plastics and Carbons Division. It was not the message he wanted. He wanted his weekly dispatch from Perth, where Wendy worked.

C. Derek Mandrill from R & D materialized at the door. He had on his usual fitted lab coat, Italian shoes, and pants creased so sharply, you could splice a gene on them. C. Derek was the most brilliant man at TTI, the hub of everything that happened there, and he looked like a one-man Esquire layout.

Their conversation was brief. Mandrill laid out the situation regarding SenseTech. They conference-called the boys in Legal and discussed the patent situation. TTI was months away from marketing the product, but already word was leaking out, and the competition was nervous. Most of what Mandrill and the lawyers said made no sense to Swift, but it seemed this fire was under control. Mandrill had a file disc on the project that Swift could study later.

The scientist left, Swift and a lawyer arranged to take a lunch together, and Number One started humming again. This time, it was from Perth. The FAX came out letter-head first, with the Southern Pacific Division's distinctive koala-in-a-spacesuit logo. Two pages, a report on a recent problem in the algae farming area. An extra message, handwritten at the end: "Hope to hear from you soon. Wendy."

Swift read the message over and over. So simple, yet to meaningful. He caught himself and grabbed a piece of stationery from his desk, along with a felt-tip pen, and wrote: "Message received. Thanks so much. Be reading you soon, ha-ha, Chip," as if she needed that last part. He punched in the right numbers and fed the message in, his pulse rising noticeably as the paper entered the machine and disappeared. His weekly interlude with a woman he'd never seen was over. Now he'd have to go back to work.

Swift was working on a satellite conference with Cairo when FAX One started up again. Again, the message was from Perth: "How are you feeling today? You must be up to your ears in work. W." The final initial was large and ornate. Swift's ears went warm. She wanted to interface.

He put his keyboard aside and took up the pen again. "A typical day. Nothing special: the usual stuff. How about you? C." He made his initial dark and bold.

There was a brief pause while the message was sent, received, examined. He waited. Two phones let loose with their loud, synthesized ringing almost simultaneously. Swift put them both on hold. A hum.

"I don't know how you do it. You must be really good at what you do. How do you manage to stay in control? W."

"I just work hard. Same as you. C."

Another short delay. Mitchell from International Relations was on the inter-office line, wanting to know if Swift was still interested in that little paramilitary operation in Costa Rica. He held him off.

"I'm very impressed." A lot of white space. "You have very nice handwriting. I must get back to work. So long! W."

He sent a simple good-bye and shut down. There was too much smoke coming under the door. But he thought about Wendy all day, and as he drove home, he eyed his porta-FAX on the passenger seat of his Honda the way he would eye a temptress at a nightclub, as if he ever had a chance to visit a nightclub. Somewhere on the other end of that line was a living, breathing woman with an exciting accent who thought he had nice handwriting.

*****

The SenseTech project was even more amazing than Swift could've believed. How C. Derek had ever thought the thing up was beyond Swift's ability to imagine. LeisureTronics, the home computer-sensory stimuli system, was remarkable enough. That was the system that gave a computer operator a full range of sensory stimulation to accompany computer games and simulations. Swift had a programme that effectively reproduced the sensation of dog-fighting in World War One aircraft, complete with wind effects, the deafening roar of the engine, even the smell of aircraft fuel. There were programmes for Tolkienesque adventure games, historical recreations, even pornographic games like one nasty programme Chip had used entitled "Arab Harem."

SenseTech went even further. It involved a programme created by the computer user, who provided as much information as possible in creating a personalized simulation. Pictures, sounds, music, whatever the user could insert with the new hardware Mandrill had devised, would be sorted, processed, and turned into whatever the user wanted in terms of computer-generated effects. And then there was the Cocoon. If Mandrill's new hardware could operate as stated in the report Swift was reading, the effects would be outrageous. The implications for the equipment in terms of home entertainment were staggering. No one would ever have to leave his or her home again, to lead a more exciting life than had ever been possible before. All kinds of dreams could literally come true.

Chip stayed up late reading Mandrill's report, then shut down his computer and tuned in his satellite dish. The BBC newscaster's mellow brogue made Chip think about similar accents. He'd always loved women with accents. He'd never known any personally, of course. All of his favourite actresses were those who were best at accents, or those who'd been born with them, like Vivian Leigh, whose films he collected on laser disc. He wondered how thick Wendy's accent was. He fell asleep thinking of an excuse to contact her the next day.

*****

If there had been smoke alarms in Chip Swift's office, they would have been screaming their loudest when he got in that morning. An Aboriginal rights group, the Non-Conformist Aboriginal Alliance, had announced threats against an Australian airline, co-owned by TTI. Unless they got what they wanted, the NCAA terrorists planned to blow up any Air Australia airliner they could get near, probably using the Syn-Trax bio-plastique they'd gotten from the CIA. Chip fired up the coffee-maker and went to work, giving Toshiro a quick wink in passing. This would be just what he needed. The office came to life with an electronic pulse rate all its own, the little fans on all of the machines exhaling together and warming the room with a collective sigh.

Wendy answered the telephone in Perth. She'd been expecting him to call, "anxiously awaiting" him, she said. They talked business for a while, deciding to redeploy that tactical response team bound for Central America to the Outback. There would be no more threats. They talked for a time about other business, whatever Swift could come up with to keep her on the line.

"You have a lovely voice," Swift said after a long pause. "I've been waiting for a long time to hear what you sound like."

"It's a pretty average voice, I'd say," Wendy answered.

"No. It's lovely." Chip wouldn't believe how forward he was being. He'd never talked to a woman in this way before. He squirmed and his simulated leather chair squeaked.

"Could you do something for me?" she asked.

"Sure. Anything. Name it."

"FAX me a picture. I'd really like to know what you look like."

He wasn't sure he wanted to do that. Swift wasn't exactly the best looking man he'd ever seen. Oh, he kept himself in decent enough shape all right. The job helped him to do that. He'd always thought of himself as being rather short, and certainly pretty plain. But he knew an opportunity when he heard one.

"Only if you send me one back."

"Oh, absolutely!" she said, apparently delighted. "I'll be waiting. Have to go. G'day, Chip." And she was gone.

Swift toyed for a moment with the idea of sending Wendy a picture of Mandrill, but he laid that one aside in a hurry. There was an increasing probability that he was going to meet Wendy, and he wanted to be up front with her from the outset. He'd failed to do this in the past. Like when he'd first started at TTI, he'd carried a cellular phone everywhere he went, all day and all night, so his business would be close at hand at all times. He took it with him the first two times had gone out with Linda from Accounting. He'd promised to leave it home after the second time. There hadn't been a third date, or many others with anyone else since then. This thought made him squirm more. Swift turned off the miniature recorder that was built into the phone.

He called Personnel and had them send him a glossy photo from his file, the one they'd used in the company's annual report the previous year. He didn't look too bad, just too serious. His moustache stuck up on one side, but there was no fixing it now. He punched Wendy's number on FAX One and fed the photo in, after signing it in marker: "To Wendy, with love, Chip."

He waited. Nothing. The alarm went up again. A famous actress was going on "Geraldo" that morning to condemn TTI's Selective Breeding Experimentation programme. She'd somehow gotten the addresses of some of the programme's recent failures, and had videotape. Mandrill showed up, wanting to know how Chip had felt about his report. No word from Perth. He had to get back to work.

After lunching with Mandrill, his salmon overcooked and the wine all wrong, Swift returned to the office. Sitting in the little wire basket attached to FAX One was the photo of Wendy. Her skin was pale, her long, wavy hair a brilliant red, her eyes blue, her cheekbones model-high, with a warm, sweet, smile. She was sitting outside someplace, wearing a blue polka-dotted dress. It was the kind of picture a husband would put on his desk. Underneath the photo in the basket was a note: "Your photo was lovely. We must meet! Love, W." Swift stared at the picture, his ears feeling warm again. He rewound the tape in the cassette deck and listened to their conversation from the morning, over and over again. She wanted to meet him. Something would have to be arranged.

The guys from Shipping were finished unloading the stuff much later than Swift had expected, but since Mandrill was there, watching every move they made, he wasn't surprised. They'd carried each piece of Mandrill's pet hardware into Swift's apartment like it was a newborn infant. Little did they realize, Swift knew, that this stuff was more precious to Mandrill than any mere child could ever be.

Mandrill went to work silently, hooking the equipment for the SenseTech experiment into Swift's existing home computer setup. Mandrill had been pleased with the response Swift had given him on his report, and had asked him if he wanted to be part of a consumer research project, within the company, to sort some of the bugs out of the system. C. Derek and his assistants had obviously tried the thing out before, but he wanted someone apart from the lab crew to "fire it up and give it a go." Mandrill finished with his installation, showed Swift how to boot up the programme, along with instructions on where and how all the possible input could be inserted, and then left. Other projects called him back to work, he said. Chip couldn't dream of what those might be.

Swift wasn't in the mood to try the SenseTech gear out that evening. He spent some time attempting to contact Wendy over the telephone, then through the company's satellite network, then via her FAX at home. He couldn't get any response, so he sat back in his huge conversation pit and looked at her picture, listening again to their little chat--even the business part--over his sound system, pumping her lilting voice over twelve huge speakers through each room of his condo. SenseTech hummed along.

*****

One of those little koalas was waiting for Swift the next morning, smiling up at him from the paper catch on FAX Three. "How are you today?" read the flowing script. "Call when you can, no matter what the time. Don't work too hard! Love, W."

An order had to be zapped out to the commander of the response team now mopping up in the Outback, and a meeting had to be set up with the movie star who wanted to pander her video propaganda, before Chip could get back to Perth. He took his time. Swift was tired, having spent a fiftul night, the tape recording from the previous day now permanently recorded on his memory. His call was finally shuttled through to Wendy's car phone.

"G'day, Chip," she sang cheerily. "How are things in New York?"

"Crazy, as usual," he answered, trying to sound happy.

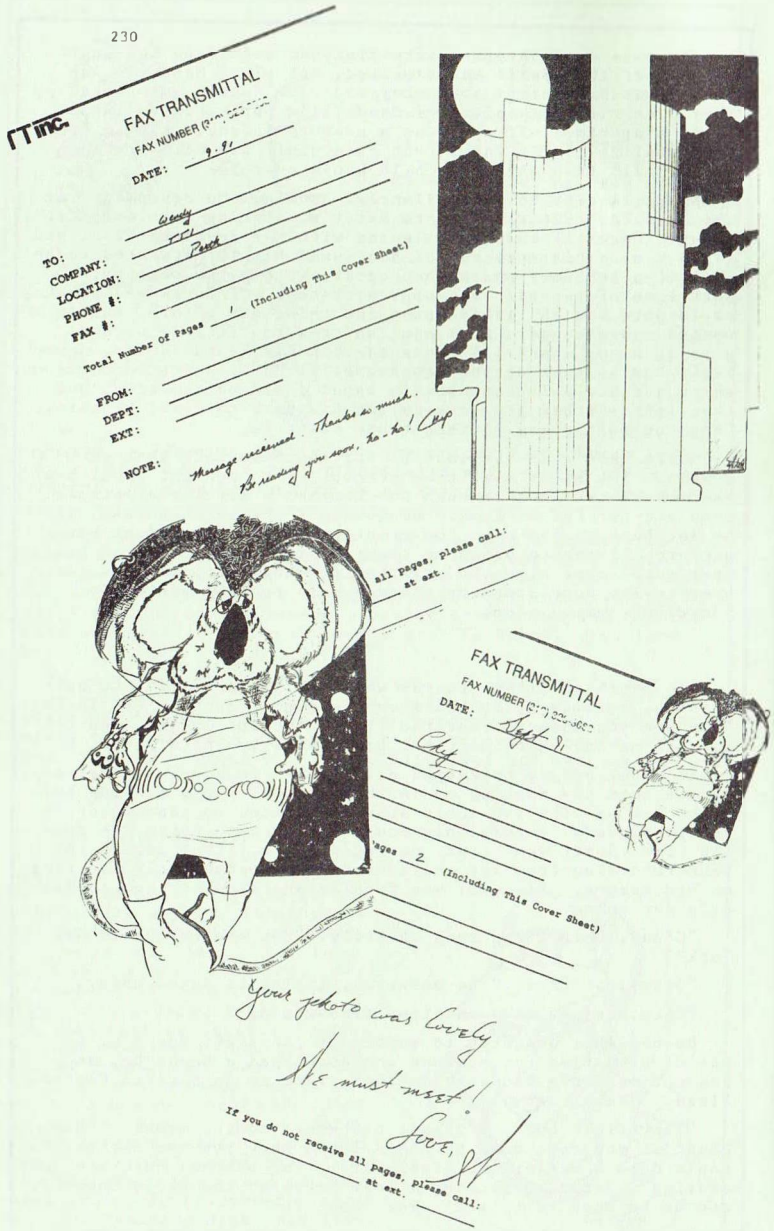
"Chip, do you have vacation time coming?"

He had what amounted to months of the stuff due him, by way of sick time for someone who never had a headache, and leave time for a man with no real place to go but TTI Central Plaza. "Well, actually--"

"Terrific! Look, I've got two weeks coming myself. How about if you come down here and I can show you the sights. We could have a marvellous time, Chip. The beaches here are just amazing. You'd be getting a real bargain: the whole country, and me to show it to you! How 'bout it?"

He swallowed hard. "I'm not sure now is the best time. There's an awful lot breaking here just now."

"Chip, there's always an awful lot breaking in your bloody office. Can't someone else fix it for fourteen days?"



Swift could be on a supersonic in half an hour. Nobody would say a word, except to ask why he'd never gotten away before this. He could pack his cellular phone, his laptop, and his porta-FAX, realizing, of course, that these were precisely the things which would, in the end, drive her away from him. It had always been that way for him, and there didn't seem to be any reason why now should be any different. He wanted her, but he wasn't ready to deal with the frustration all over again It wasn't worth it.

"It wouldn't work out. Not just now." The earpiece ground into the side of his head.

There was a short silence, save for the whooshing of traffic in the background and the slight whine of the satellite transmission.

"When might be good?" She didn't sound quite so excited as before. "Anytime soon?"

"I'll have to get back to you." Another line buzzed, another bulb blinked, and Swift sighed. "I've got to go. I'll call you soon, okay?"

Quiet. "Are you married?" she asked flatly. "Is that it?"

"No. Of course not." The question seemed ridiculous to him.

"Right. 'Bye, Chip." And the line died.

Mandrill was on the other line, wanting some feedback on SenseTech. Swift told him he still needed some time with it, that he'd call him soon. Then, he went back to work. The Daily Reminder window on his computer screen was packed to near melt-down. There were still lots of important things to do.

*****

Swift stood naked in front of the steel and Plexi-glass hatch of the Cocoon. The dose of SensaMed he'd had earlier that evening now wormed his way warmly through his veins. All of the equipment in the condo had been shut down, save for the SenseTech system. He wasn't sure about this, but at that moment, it seemed like the only thing worth doing.

He tossed what he held in his hands into the chamber, clasped the silver bar above the hatch, pulled himself up, drawing his knees to his chest, and inserted himself into the Cocoon. He closed the hatch, and instantly, the sensors within took control of his environment. The Cocoon was upholstered with something like a liquid-filled sleeping bag. The Envelope, Mandrill called it. The stuff inside was closer to a gelatin than water. It was sort of like a water bed with a billowy, rolling quilt.

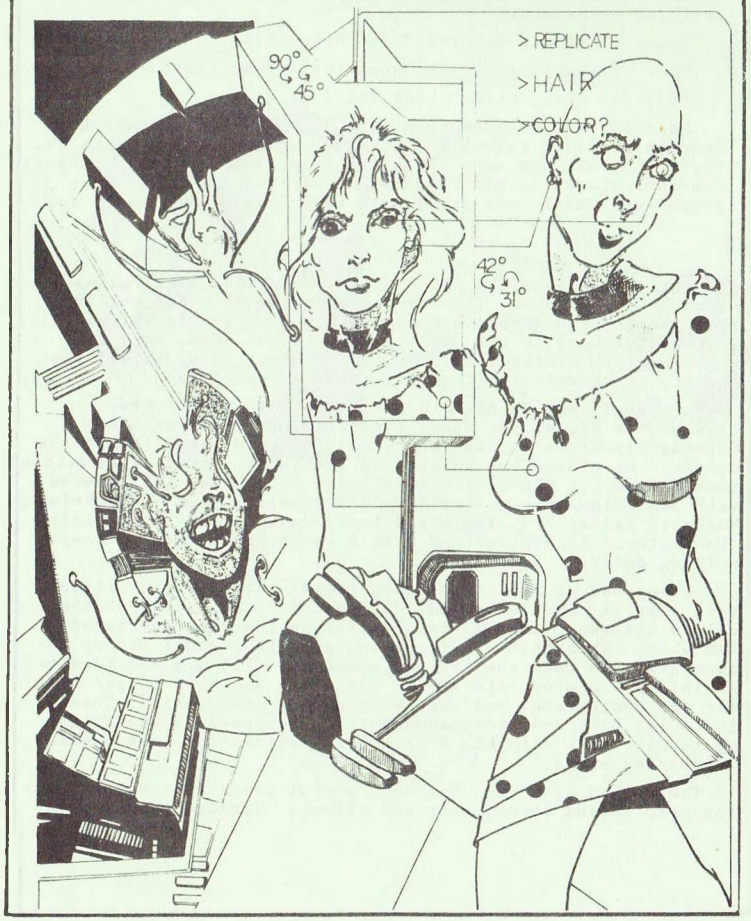
He reached up and pulled down the Crown, a sensor-filled ring that fit over his head. He felt several little pinches across his scalp as the tiny needles in the ring punctured his skin. When this was in place, a control panel lit up before him. He took the tape he'd brought with him and inserted it into the appropriate slot. There was another, larger slot for the photograph, and that went in and disappeared. Then, Swift lay back and breathed deeply. The Envelope was pulled up to his chin, with his arms tucked inside. He made a quiet, whimpering sound.

The Cocoon went dark and the control panel vanished. It was calm inside there, soft and silent. The Crown took over.

Swift opened his eyes. There was a greenish light inside the chamber now, and the walls seemed to be gone, or at least they were out of sight. Swift felt himself floating slightly, then sensed something hard underneath him. The green solidified and took on depth and angles. A sound now filled his ears, like the buzz from the drug.

Things moved, and Swift felt them as they formed.

The dress was silk. He played the cool blue cloth with its white dots between his fingers. She dropped her hand to her knee and took his hand, embarrassed that someone in the crowd might see him caressing her. She smiled that smile and let her head rest on his shoulder. He put his arm around her and touched the silk once more, as the autumn breeze lifted her soft red tresses and passed the redolence of her hair before him, masking sweetly the smell of cheap cigars, stale beer, and burned popcorn. October's early evening air had a hinting bite to it, but Swift was warm and she was warm and Toshiro Noh was saving another Series while Wendy's satin laughter wafted through the liquid night.



SOMNAMBULIST POET

With something human
in a breaking mirror
in long night journeys
a fuzzed portrait
with the pack dogs of spring
outside jalousie windows.

Watching the pale birches
in precincts of a dead lyric landscape
through a liquid silence
night knocks you out
sounding into the wind.

-- B. Z. Niditch --

EREBUS

Who wakes in pain at the close of day,
As first and final brush a dusky portrait,
Weeping in vain with curtained eyes,
Soundless as the throat of night.

Who walks with solitude in the evening,
The dark of night and shade of space,
Wielding a sliver of obscurity
Against the source of perception.

Who wears a cloak of pale horizons,
Model form of clothed beginnings,
Working the stygian shift
In our ephemeral world.

-- Jeffrey Kent Nicholes --

THE BUBBLE

The bubble of air, trapped
In ice a million years
Held just one secret:
A richer mix of oxygen
Than the curious researchers
Breathed when they released it.

Odd, they remarked,
And published their results
To little fanfare.
No one heard the explosion,
The grumbling of a huge rock slab
As it slid away from the tomb,
Or noticed the shining key within
And these few words;
Surface and volume --
Lungs, surprised, aching,
No longer sufficient --
Salamanders will understand.
Wake them with your ancient air
And they will scamper like squirrels
or dinosaurs restored.

-- Kenn Amdahl --

FRITZ LEIBER: SWORDSMAN AND PHILOSOPHER

by

JUSTIN LEIBER

Part One: Heroic Artisan

When I was an adolescent, my mother and I called my father "Fafhrd" or, more commonly and shortly, "Faf" (with a broad "A" sound). He rose up six feet five inches over my five eight. He fenced and played tennis, electrified audiences with dramatic readings, and women surrounded him at drinking parties, while men mused that he might have made an even greater name for himself with an acting career, like his Shakespearean father. You can understand how insufferable it was as an only child growing up next to that.

In his "The 237 Talking Statues, etc.," Fritz makes a kind of peace with his father, Fritz Leiber, Sr., or "Guv" as we called him. Guv was a major touring actor-manager Shakespearian in the 1910s, 20s and 30s. He played opposite Theda Bera in the early silent film Anthony and Cleopatra ("There was nothing under the beads she wore," quoth Guv). He returned to screen character roles after the Depression put an end to his acting company. My father, under the name of Francis Lathrop, accompanied him for the last Shakespearian tour. Fritz now thinks that Guv arranged the tour so as to play Los Angeles before the inevitable collapse.

Guv spent the time free from movies on sculpture, painting, and photography. He peopled his Los Angeles house with paintings and statues of himself and Virginia (Fritz's mother and an actor as well), usually in Shakespearian roles. Other were represented in less profusion--a statue of me at age four bestrode a modest backyard fountain; Fritz now displays in his San Francisco apartment a painting Guv did of him in the role of Edgar in King Lear. Guv also liked to paint young women in bathing suits, working from photographs (occasionally the suits disappeared). The Guv's artwork was what you might expect of a man who also put together a fine darkroom and shop, meticulously maintained and stocked with a large number of tools, cabinets, and devices that he had made for himself. The kitchen walls, for example, were peopled with nursery-book characters that would gratify a Disney cartoonist in the craftmanship and lack of pretension.

(I just came across a photograph for one of Guv's paintings that still affects me. When I was six years old I asked Guv to paint a picture of me in the fine theatrical suit of Roman armour that he had mounted on a wooden stand. He sent me a painting of myself, from a photo taken when I was five, inside a scaled down version of the Roman armour. Somehow I tearfully managed to communicate that that wasn't at all what I wanted. What I wanted was of course impossible--a painting of myself in the Roman armour, at maturity (or maybe a bit taller than I could expect). Guv responded with a picture of himself, painted from the photograph now before me, at his full sixty-odd years, in the Roman armour.)

In "237 Talking Statues, etc.," we find Francis Legrand II, a mildly alcoholic midlife failure, making his peace with his dead "famous actor" father, who like Guv peoples his home with theatrical self-images. Francis talks to his father, who speaks from one or another of self-statues, particularly that of Don Juan. Francis speaks of his jealousy and suspicion, his envy of father's supposed sexual exploits; his father, demurely denying such success, arranges his own exorcism with affection and dispatch. Mother is persuaded to let one of the cluttering images go. The Don Juan statue is donated to the Merrivale Young Ladies Academy.

In his late teens, Guv was a prize-winning runner. You can still see his amazing physique and bodily grace when he plays the role of Jacque in the Ronald Coleman Tale of Two Cities--in his fifties Guv still has the musculature of an Olympian, well displayed as he climbs up the chateau of an evil aristocrat played by Basil Rathbone. He had an easy charisma that surely overwhelmed my shy father. So maybe things are bad all over.

Fritz waits, and has a sense of delicacy. The "237 Talking Statues, etc." did not appear until over a decade after Guv's death in 1949--my father and mother stayed for a couple of years in the Los Angeles house in the late fifties, along with Virginia, Fritz's mother. Guv also appears, off stage and deceased, as the actor father of the actor protagonist of A Specter is Haunting Texas, and as the mountain-climbing father of Fafhrd, Nalgron the Legend-Breaker. Virginia herself, Fafhrd's implaccable mother, Mor, finally appears in the Fafhrd-Gray Mouser stories in 1970 in "The Snow Women," a little over a year after Virginia's death and some months after my mother Jonquil's death. Like many sons, Fritz still cherishes a picture of his mother as a young woman; and to my mind something of that also appears in this story in the character of Mara, Fafhrd's respectably betrothed Mara, an eighteen-year old snow woman. The hegemony of the snow women and their control over the adventuresome young Fafhrd is disrupted by Vlana, a travelling actress who aids Fafhrd's exit from the stifling (and cold) home-tribe environment. Indeed, single and double analogs of Jonquil similarly appear in later Fafhrd-Gray Mouser stories.

But two individuals are reflected in the stories from the beginning, and indeed before: Fritz, of course, obviously reflected as Fafhrd; and Harry Otto Fischer, as Gray Mouser.

Harry, whom Fritz met in his early University of Chicago days, was a brilliant and diminutive young man, with a mannered and dramatic way of talking and moving, and more widely read than Fritz. Their lifelong relationship was one of occasional dramatic meetings and long (often wax-and-signate-ring-sealed) letters. My mother initiated the correspondence they both carried on with H.P. Lovecraft in the last year of his life.

In September, 1934, Harry wrote Fritz,

> For all do fear the one known as the Gray Mouser. He walks with swagger'mongst the bravos, though he's but the stature of a child. His costume is all of gray, from gauntlets to boots and spurs of steel. [His flat, swart face is shadowed by a peaked cap of mouse-skin and his garments are of silk, strangely soft and coarse of weave. His weapons: one called Cat's Claw, for it kills in the dark unerringly, and his longer sword, curved up, he terms Scalpel, for it lets the heart's blood as neatly as a surgeon.]

He described the seven-foot tall Fafhrd so:

> [His light chesnut hair was found in a ringlet of pure gold, engraved with runes.] His eyes, wide-set, were proud and of fearless mein. His wrist between gauntlet and mail was white as milk and thick as a hero's ankle. [His features were lean cut and his mouth smiled as a he fingered the ponderous hilt of a huge longsword with long and nimble fingers.]

The twain met "in the walled city of Tuatha De Danann called Lankhmar, built on the edge of the great Salt Marsh."

On September 24th, Fritz, then living on Lower New York Bay, replied:

> Last night I walked down by devious paths to the sea. And there I sat beside a congeries of silver gas tanks in the light of a veiled moon. I crouched upon a bulkhead and the sea lapped subtly at the rocks about my feet.
>
> And in came to pass then that a low black craft slid into my range of vision. In the black rose the ominous frame of Fafhrd, clad all in black. Ever and anon he would change their course when a whisper floated back from the bow, where the grays of the Mouser's garments hung over the sea like a ghost's. Through a strange scopic instrument he was peering into the sea--only I noted that the instrument made no ripples where it entered the deeps: it was not into our local waters that the instrument peered.
>
> Then came a swirl of waters on that calm night as if a whirlpool lay at right angles to the boat had seized it. I caught a glimpse the Mouser fighting an indistinct creature that held eight swords in as many writhing arms.

What his biographer, Tom Staicar, and Fritz do with Harry's passages is revealing. When Fritz quotes these, in his introduction to the Gregg Press series, In Swords and Deviltry, he writes, self-dismissively, that "Harry's fragment has style and polish, a remarkable example of hitting the right tone on first attempt." In fact, Fritz removed the passages I have put in square brackets, which to my mind show the more ornate and triter side of Harry's prose.

Staicar, on the other hand, dropped the definitive final line of Harry's, possibly to diminish Harry's share in the project. And Staicar points out that Fritz's passage leads (and in fact led) into a story, into action, while Harry's passage is static. Staicar is certainly right in that Harry's only sustained writing about the twain did not form a story--after he had made Fafhrd and Gray Mouser into two of the most well-known characters in heroic fantasy, Fritz fraternally and handsomely wove a story around several thousand words that Harry wrote in 1936, thus producing, in 1968, "The Lords of Quarmall."

In the 1970s, after Harry, near deaf and blind, had retired from a career as executive of a box-making company, the TRS game company planned to issue a Lankhmar board game, one somewhat like a game Fritz and Harry had worked out in 1936. When they asked Fritz about the project, he insisted that they consult with Harry. Indeed, both were invited to a convention featuring the game.

Fritz told me that the convention unsettled him, particularly before he discovered the source of his unease. Harry, a chuckling ogre-ish looking, middle-aged Mouser, was attracting more attention than Fritz, who, after all, had created the characters and their world. The reason, of course, is that many more readers empathize with the trickster Mouser than with the Olympian Fafhrd. If you attend a fantasy and s-f convention, you are likely to see five gray-clad Mousers for every Fafhrd.

In Fritz's autobiography in Ghost Light (New York: Berkeley Books, 1984), there is a marvellous Tim Kirk caricature of Fritz as a white-haired Fafhrd, looking down sceptically at Harry as a plump, balding, trickily-smiling, middle-aged Mouser, who has just demonstated some ball-and-cup sleight-of-hand. There is a whiff of Don Quixote and Sancho Panza about them. Though Fritz has yet to depict them as quite that old, the twain are near alone in heroic fantasy for lasting from adolescence into something like their early fifties. In one recent tale, "Rime Isle," the aging pair find themselves employed by women councillors of an atheistical community, with Fafhrd's left hand lopped off, an event doubtless common enough among real sword-bearing adventurers (Horatio Nelson comes to mind), but not among fictional ones.

Close on six years ago, Harry needed a complicated spinal operation. Having delivered courtly goodbyes to his friends, he seems to have decided not to recover from the two-part operation. Fritz, who had been communicating on a regular basis with recorded tapes and shorter notes and who had visited with Harry several times in the previous few years, found himself cut off. Harry wouldn't write or tape, and claimed that talking on the phone was too much trouble.

Fritz began writing "Mouser Goes Below," a tale in which poor Mouser is hit by a spell that causes him to sink into the ground, where he wins through various adventures to get back to the surface. One thing that worried Fritz was that Harry (like Fritz himself) fancied that since he had been born in the year of Halley's comet, he might well, like Mark Twain, leave with its return. And, indeed, Harry promptly did die of heart failure in January of 1986. (Myself, I watched Fritz through the 1986 holiday season, and heaved a sigh of relief when he answered my phone call on January 1st.) So Fritz is just now completing a short story that has grown into an epic of resurrection, his first novel in over ten years and the most deeply moving of all the Fafhrd and Gray Mouser stories.

Someone who wanted to write an account of friendship might not do badly considering Fritz and Harry, especially in the interplay between them, their writing, and their fantasy personae.

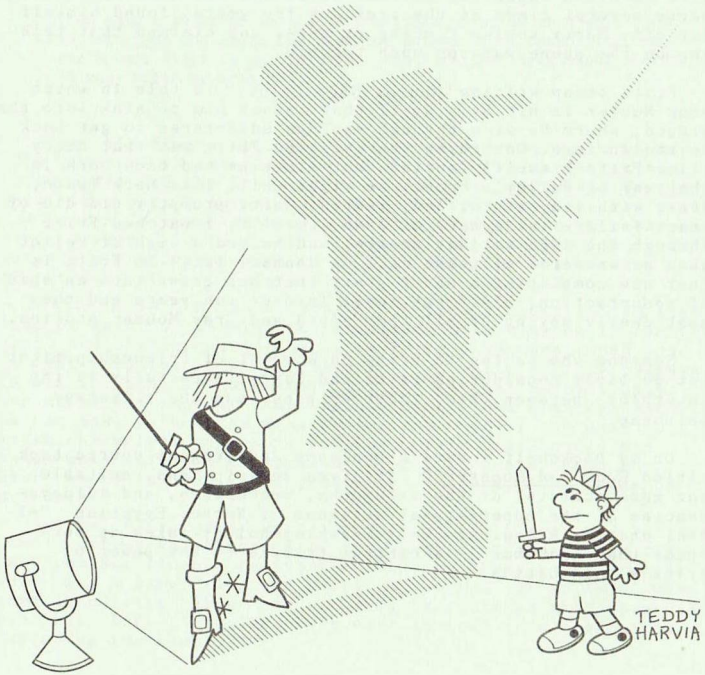
On my bookshelf I have a Dungeons and Dragons source book titled Gods and Monsters. It gives descriptions, suitable for game scripts, of the strengths, weaknesses, and idiosyncracies of the supernatural denizens of Norse, Egyptian, Celtic, etc. mythologies. Only Greek mythology takes up more space than Lankhmar -- a curious tribute to the power of Fritz's imagination.

To my mind, Fafhrd and the Gray Mouser began as fanciful self-visions, pipe-dreams of what two bookish 1930s young men might have been as men-of-action who live by their artistry with courtly handweapons, not the rude plebian technology of "the great equalizer" or the still ruder button-dispatched missiles of modern warfare. But, of course, none can be career swordsmen in our age. But of course, even in the most appropriate age, there never were quite such men. Yet our culture ever whispers back to us (since the Iliad) that only such men, and such lives, fully capture notions like courage and comradeship. So the relationship between Fritz and Harry, and Fafhrd and Mouser, is a miniature of a major strand in our own condition.

Strangely, as the series advances, Fafhrd and Gray Mouser become more like Fritz and Harry Fischer. Or, perhaps, all four have come more real, It is the interplay between them all that renews the work.

Hey, Fafhrd, grab your pen.
Stride Lankhmar's streets again.
Ink as a way to be
Outlives pedestrian reality.

(to be continued)



VOICES THAT BUMP IN THE NIGHT

he's drunk his heated milk and gin with hopes
that all those voices of the night this time
will leave his bed alone and not creep up
the sheets to burden his worn mind with frames
of images he's said his atheistic prayer
and waits now for his eyes to become heavy
enough to choose a slipping into higher
levels of rest but as the sheep drive
through fragile pens to frisk inside his eyelids
the alleys of his brain crowd with droppings
the skipping motions garbling in his head
confuse the pills he's taken and all those trips in
search of sleep still stir the voices loud
enough to churn the milk and gin to blood

-- Ottone M. Riccio --

THE FREE ZONE

The kiwi walks across my chest with feet of fire;
the Solomon Islander in the corner laughs.
I sneer and take another draught
of the clear green liquid;
it burns like the first, all the way down.
I expect dawn to come
at any moment -- it doesn't.
Guns boom in the distance --
this, in a nuclear-free zone.
It is already the day after
tomorrow, pink streaks show in the sky
like tattered banners,
how far, how far?
I have sat in this tavern
till the chair seems to meld with my body,
wooden legs going down into the earth,
the uncertain taproot reaching for sustenance,
for substance, meaning.
In my mind's eye I see the fireball
skipping across the avenue
toward this fragile board building,
its flashpoint arcing across my chest
a kiwi, with feet of fire --
the Solomon Islander, gone up like a wax effigy,
his hair a burning bush.

-- Denise Dumars --

THEY CALL IT HOLY WEEK IN SEVILLE

She came on like a plaster saint, out
Of style, fiercely cosmetic and
Thinly alone; bones tried to shout.

Camera eyes stealing the scene
Away from poverty of grace,
But in her purse she was a queen.

"Young man, the parade, how long, when?"
Cathedral arching feline back.
"My mantillas, I must have ten,
Left back in Majorca." A stack

Of skeletons, too. Everyone
Staring at her caterwauls pitched
Above the Giralda. "And son,
Will we see gore?" Painted lips stitched.

"I have heard that some of the men
Really die from the blood-letting,
So could you find me a chair then?"

For the bristling cathedral I
Pounced on her, right there in the nave:
I a Jesuit, this a cave,
I must possess you ere I die.

Her uncle, said this near-raped Miss,
The cardinal would hear of this.

-- Thomas Kretz --

MAPPING THE MAINSTREAM

Surveying the Boundaries between Fantasy and Realism

by
KAREN MICHALSON

The recent growth of critical interest in fantasy literature has been accompanied by a spate of attempts to "define" it as if it were somehow different in kind from all other modes of literary discourse. A glance at some recent definitions reveals a unanimous perception of fantasy as a literature that violates expected notions of cause and effect:

> A fantasy is a story based on and controlled by an overt violation of what is generally accepted as possibility; it is the narrative result of transforming the condition contrary to fact into "fact" itself.
> -- W.R. Irwin

> Fantastic literature, be it literature of escape, fairy tale, or true Fantasy, is founded on the structural inclusion of diametric opposition.
> -- Eric S. Rabkin

> Fantasy is any departure from consensus reality.[1]
> -- Kathryn Hume

Rabkin's redundancy, "structural inclusion," certainly presents a problem to readers who find themselves asking, "What other kind of 'inclusion' is there in a piece of fiction? Aren't all the elements we usually associate with novels and short stories: language, plot, character, and so on, contained within the fictional work's 'structure' by definition?" Rabkin's "diametric opposition" is another redundant phrase which suggests that the distinguishing feature of fantasy literature is its violation of causal relationships. Only in fantasy can little girls go to bed in Kansas and wake up in Oz. Rabkin is repeating what Irwin and Hume are saying, that fantasy violates our expectations of reality, of what is "supposed to happen." None of the above definitions provides particularly clear insight into what "consensus reality" is. Even if we grant the underlying assumption that there is a "consensus reality," we run into trouble.

Why, then, do we try to define fantasy, and why is there a consensus that it is oppositional to conventional norms? I would like to read the above definitions re-written from a "realistic" standpoint:

> A realistic story is based on and controlled by an overt adherence to what is generally accepted as possibility; it is the narrative result of transforming fact into "fact" itself.
>
> Realistic literature is founded on the structural exclusion of diametric opposition.
>
> Realism is any arrival at consensus reality.

Clearly, there are too many problems when such a "definitive" approach is tried for any genre. Literary definitions are notoriously easy to find exceptions to, because the distinguishing features of one genre are constantly showing up unexpectedly in others. Also, as readers of a literature that has long been belittled, or worse, ignored, by the majority of academic literary critics, we do ourselves no service by defining it as "different" from and "oppositional to" those works that have achieved "legitimate" status. Such a stand only tends to perpetuate the ghettoization of fantasy and to confine it to a specialized realm of study outside of "legitimate" scholarship.

Let us adopt a comparative approach, one that through repeated applications to various works and motifs would allow us to map those points at which fantasy and mainstream realism confront each other. Our intent is to describe, rather than define, the historical relationship that has evolved between these two literary traditions. Take, for example, two roughly contemporary works such as J.R.R. Tolkien's The Lord of the Rings and Ralph Ellison's Invisible Man. They may seem an unlikely and arbitrary choice for comparison, but besides being extreme examples of fantasy and realism, respectively, both novels were originally accorded minority status by academics (fantasy has always been treated by mainstream critics like a minority literature). Ellison's novel, however, has been thoroughly accepted into the mainstream; it has become standard reading in survey courses on the American novel and required reading for most graduate comprehensive exams. Both novels are concerned with the issue of one's place in a social scheme, and an examination of this concern from a comparative standpoint would be a way to discover a possible point of contact between fantasy and the mainstream.

Ellison's narrator, who remains nameless, introduces himself by explaining, "I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me."[2] The novel is structured around a series of such refusals, transforming the protagonist's quest for identity and social recognition into a quest in which the hero constantly places his trust in people who offer guidance and deliver betrayal. Dr. Bledsoe, the college president who initiates the hero's quest by throwing him out, is one of these people.

Bledsoe is a Merlin figure by virtue of his age, his position as nationally esteemed educator--"in days past he had conducted the President himself about the campus"(114)--and his role as mentor (albeit false mentor) to the hero. The narrator refers to him as "our magic"(114). Bledsoe is usually sitting in shadow and making motions with his hands; even when his face is composed his eyes are described as "glittering." He provides the hero with sealed letters of reference and the promise that by mailing them to certain business associates he will find work, yet the letters are damning and only thwart the hero's attempts to find a place in society.

While Ellison's hero is always without social rank, and is punished every time he tries to establish one, Tolkien's characters are defined by their place in the social scheme of Middle Earth and are punished for trying to step outside of it. When Boromir, the eldest son of the steward of Gondor, tries to assume possession of the one ring that would give him absolute power over the world, he is killed by orc arrows. When Eowyn, niece of the King of Rohan, abandons her place at home and rides into battle dressed as a man, she is nearly killed.

Conversely, Strider the ranger is eventually recognized as Aragorn, heir to the kingship of Middle Earth, not because Aragorn needs or attempts to acquire social recognition but simply because it is his position by birth. Gandalf is a wizard because he was created by the Valar, the god-like beings of Middle Earth, to be a wizard. Tolkien's characters are not searching for identity; they are on a quest because of their individual identities.

Gandalf is not only one of many examples of a strongly defined sense of identity and position; he is also, like Dr. Bledsoe, a Merlin figure. Besides the obviously archetypal associations he had with Merlin--his wizardly powers and appearance, his wisdom, his close association with the future king--he shares with Bledsoe a characteristic that does not derive from the Merlin archetype: an intense, professional involvement with members of another race.

Bledsoe makes it clear to Ellison's protagonist that he has attained his prestigious position as college president by presenting the required facade to Whites; Gandalf is the only wizard in Middle Earth who has make a study of and mingled among hobbits, and his association with them is partly responsible for his inclusion in their quest to save Middle Earth by destroying the ring. Also, invisibility is as important a motif in Tolkien's work as it is in Ellison's. For Tolkien, invisibility is also connected with rank, although a moral rather than a social one. It is a function of an individual's decision to choose evil rather than of society's unwillingness to "see" an individual. Frodo becomes invisible when he puts on the ring; Sauron, the ultimate representation of evil, is never described in terms of a physical body but as a single penetrating eyeball.

Here is a point of contact. The structure of Ellison's novel cannot accommodate a "placed" hero or a benevolent guide. Tolkien's cannot accommodate a "displaced" character or a guide with evil intentions like Boromir. Both authors create Merlin figures that differ from the archetype by involving themselves with another species.

When Bledsoe acts according to White expectations he becomes an entirely different person than when he deals with Blacks; his facility at moving between cultures makes it difficult for the protagonist to place him in either. Gandalf's involvement with hobbits has the opposite effect; it secures his position as their guide and advisor but necessitates no radical personality changes. Although he is given several different names by the inhabitants of Middle Earth, he is always considered a member of the order of wizards. While both novels are structured around a quest, Ellison's plot is such because his hero is constantly held back in his quest for social identity by members of society whom he trusts as mentors and guides. Tolkien's begins with everyone sure of his own identity, and is an attempt to prevent evil from interfering with each individual's given place. Anyone who comes under the ring's power becomes a slave to it, gradually losing his own identity. Frodo's invisibility while wearing the ring is an example. In each work, to be invisible is to have no identity, but while for Ellison invisibility is externally imposed by society, for Tolkien it is chosen by the individual.

In arguing that fantasy is not a unique literary form, I don't mean to suggest that it doesn't offer any kind of difference in perspective from mainstream literature, but that this difference comes more from the way fantsy has historically been treated by literary scholars than from any inherent difference in the literature itself. If fantasy is indeed the "literature of the Other," it is because scholars have made it, defined it, as such; and we can use fantasy, like any other minority literature that has been generally ignored, as a unique vantage point from which to study the mainstream.

It is striking that a parallel can be drawn between the history of fantasy scholarship and that of feminist criticism, and perhaps it is not a coincidence that so many contemporary fantasy writers are women who explore such feminist topics as female heroes, female coming of age, and female quest motifs. Throughout the 1970s, as Myra Jehlen points out,[3] feminist literary criticism concerned itself with women's writings as distinct from men's. It was interested in questions concerning the nature of the feminine imagination, feminine discourse, and feminist perspective, and was not concerned with studying women's writings in their larger, patriarchal context. The many insights gained by pursuing these questions remained largely confined to women's studies programs and have had little impact on mainstream thought. It seems to me that Jehlen's suggestion--that works of women writers might be used by feminist critics as "an external ground for seeing the dominant literature whole" and "thereby demonstrate the contingency of dominant male traditions" (199)--could be used by fantasy critics as well.

The fact that serious literary works of fantasy exist at all in the face of the second-class status critics have assigned to this genre suggests that the fantasy tradition has been consistently exerting, to borrow another phrase from Jehlen, a "denial of dependence" on the mainstream. By examining the form that this denial has historically taken, we can begin to describe the philosophical "grounds" upon which each tradition is constructed, the contingencies that make each tradition possible. Fantasy can be a vantage point from which we can examine the processes that have arisen naturally in a tradition that has only recently come under critical scrutiny.

It is not surprising that the issue of establishing an identity and place in society is a concern shared by both traditions. Obviously, this issue is present in one form or another in nearly all literature. However, twentieth-century critics (with a few recent exceptions) have structured a canon that does not tolerate fantasy, treating it as social forces treat Ellison's protagonist, as invisible. Witness the refusal to see fantasy on its own terms--to see no distinction between fantasy, children's literature, science-fiction, horror stories, Gothic romances and comic books--an error not limited to casual readers and organizers of comic-book conventions. Thwarted in its various attempts to find a place in the mainstream, fantasy writers have formulated a rigorous internal sense of self-definition to a point where it has become de rigueur to include maps, historical and genealogical appendices, to specify what magic can and cannot do, or to distinguish between elves and dwarves.

Hence fantasy has evolved its peculiar characteristics, largely because of its exclusion from the mainstream--but there still exist overlapping areas such as identity and social place. Examining these points of contact can yield new insights into both mainstream and fantasy literature.

FOOTNOTES

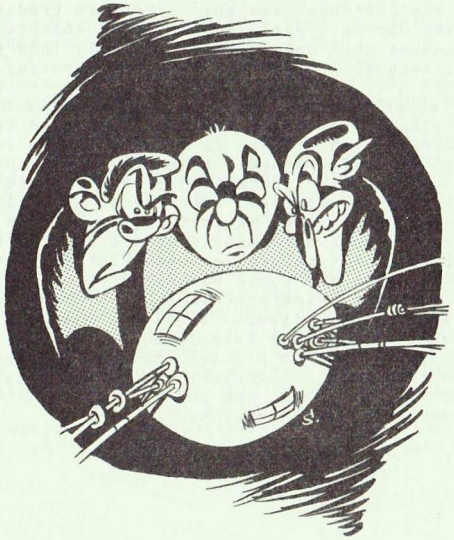
1) W.R. Irwin, The Game of the Impossible: A Rhetoric of Fantasy (Chicago: University of Illinois, 1976), 4.

Eric S. Rabkin, The Fantastic in Literature (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1976), 74.

Kathryn Hume, Fantasy and Mimesis: Responses to Reality in Western Literature (New York: Methuen, 1984), 21. Perhaps it is unfair to include Hume here, as she also states quite clearly that fantasy should not be treated as a separate literary phenomenon but as an element of all literature (20-21), but her definition of fantasy as a literary occurrence is reflective of the present critical consensus that the essence of fantasy literature is its conscious violation of our cultural and literary expectations.

2) Ralph Ellison, Invisible Man (New York: Random House, 1972),3. All further references to Invisible Man are to this edition.

3) Myra Jehlen, "Archimedes and the Paradox of Feminist Criticism" in Feminist Theory: A Critique of Ideology, eds. Nannerl O. Keohane, Michelle Z. Rosaldo, and Barbara C. Gelpi (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1982), 189-91.



EDGE

The woman is perfected
Her dead
Body wears the smile of accomplishment,
The illusion of a Greek necessity
Flows in the scrolls of her toga,
Her bare
Feet seem to be saying:
We have come so far, it is over.
Each dead child coiled, a white serpent,
One at each little
Pitcher of milk, now empty.
She had folded
Them back into her body as petals
Of a rose close when the garden
Stiffens and odours bleed
From the sweet, deep throats of the night flower.
The moon has nothing to be sad about,
Staring from her hood of bone.
She is used to this sort of thing.
Her blacks crackle and drag.

-- Elizabeth Ann Burton --

MORNING EXERCISE

This is a game
you don't want to play.
Nobody tags you;
you have never been touched
by anyone. The others
line up against you,
their arms walls of stone.
You stand alone
imagining what is about to happen.
You cannot remember
a single magic word
you ever dreamed.

Someone picks up a rock, throws.
The others begin hurling
stones, wood, old bones --
anything that can bruise flesh.
Both your eyes split open;
your face is a gargoyle of blood
that spills down between
your toes and into the street
flooding the town.
The blood bathers riot.

The Mountain King does not like it.
His rumbles shake the land.
He comes galloping, galloping
on a milk-white horse
fording the red rivers
to find you.
Where can you hide?
The scent of your blood is everywhere.
He seizes your hair
and begins to eat your flesh
until all you can feel
is the tickle in your brain
that knows your body is gone
and you are nothing
but bones
glittering in the sun
like granite.

-- Grace Pow Simpson --

THE FILM VERSION

Every colour stays in place.
Her hatred squealing
from hell,
baptized dry
as slit bone.
And his love
arched, shuddering,
the blasphemous axle
driving him
to logical ruin.
Every colour, every time.

-- -- Bob West --

FIAT VOLUNTAS TUA

MILLER'S ANTI-UTOPIAN VISION:
A Reading of "A Canticle for Leibowitz"

by
MARILYN HOUSE

#1 INTRODUCTION

A Canticle for Leibowitz is a trilogy of short novels--"Fiat Homo," "Fiat Lux," and "Fiat Voluntas Tua." The first of these is set in the southwestern United States six centuries after an atomic disaster (the "Flame Deluge") of the 1960s had caused the disintegration of twentieth century civilization ("The Age of Enlightenment") and the return to a primitive culture much like that of an earlier age. This Flame Deluge was followed by an "Age of Simplification" during which mobs sought to eradicate all literary and scientific writings, and hunted down the surviving intelligentsia whom they claimed to be the perpetrators of the disaster. Isaac Edward Leibowitz, an obscure engineer of the time of the Flame Deluge, managed to escape the fires of the Simpletons long enough to found a religious order, "The Albertian Order of Leibowitz," whose purpose was to collect, memorize, and otherwise preserve the scientific and historical records of the twentieth century. Even after Leibowitz's martyrdom at the hands of the Simpletons, the Abbey of Leibowitz and its precious "Memorabilia" continued for centuries to be the repository of human knowledge. Six centuries later, the point at which the novel opens, the society of "Fiat Homo" has evolved to a stage comparable to the Dark Ages. A young novice, Francis, discovers a Fallout Shelter near the abbey in the New Mexican desert. In it he finds some "relics" of Leibowitz (by this time the Blessed Leibowitz), relics that eventually convince the church to canonize the scientist.

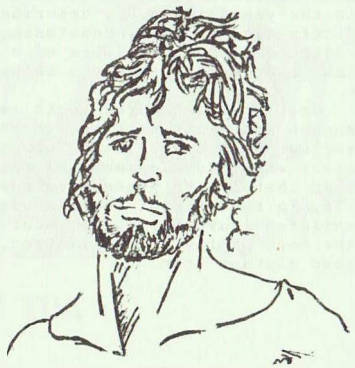
The carefully preserved records of past technology eventually enable mankind to unearth lost secrets. "Fiat Lux," set in the year 3174 A.D., describes an era similar to the late Middle Ages or early Renaissance. In this section the monks rediscover the principles of electricity and build a huge arc lamp and generator in the basement of their abbey.

Another six hundred years later a new age of technology ensues and seems destined to prepare the world for a second nuclear deluge. In "Fiat Voluntas Tua" Miller creates a society whose development has reached a stage even more advanced than that of the present decade. History has come full circle. In the face of total annihilation a few monks, nuns, and children leave the earth, bearing with them the records of the best of their civilization, to start a new generation on some distant star.

#2 PARADISE FOUND AND LOST

Walter Miller's novel is often termed "apocalyptic" s-f. The word stems from the Greek apokloptein--"to uncover." Apocalyptic as a genre of religious literature is a branch of eschatology dealing with the "uncovering" or revelation of end times and the dramatic intervention of God in human history to judge the world and to reward his faithful, oppressed people. The rise of this specific kind of writing may be traced back in Hebrew history to the dark days of the Inter Testamental period. This is a literature that arose out of profound despair, out of a hopeless conflict of faith and fact. The only possible solution, Jewish writers of apocalyptic believed, was a God who would act much in the same way as the Greek deus ex machina. It is with the events of this grandiose culmination of history that religious apocalyptic is concerned.[1] A Canticle for Leibowitz as an s-f apocalypse has much in common with the typical religious one. But the basic message of the religious apocalypse, the intervention of God in human history, has nothing in common with Miller's novel unless one were to interpret the title of the final section, "Fiat Voluntas Tua" (Thy will be done), literally rather than ironically. Both types of apocalyptic, however, arise out of dissatisfaction concerning the present and pessimism about the fate of unaided man as he stumbles into the future. These apocalyptic visions both establish themselves chronologically at some future period that will be the crux of human history. The ensuing conflict between the forces of good and evil takes place on a gigantic scale and in the Judeo-Christian apocalyptic tradition is described in language often verging on fantasy, rich with symbolic imagery and mystery.[2] Often strange beasts and superhuman forces sweep through the pages of the religious apocalypse, making it seem akin to s-f indeed. Certainly Rachel in Miller's novel is a figure who blends in perfectly with characters found in religious apocalyptic literature. Even the traditional "woes," the dire pronouncements of disaster, so common to the Jewish or Christian apocalyptic, seem to be echoed in the warning of A Canticle for Leibowitz.

One of Miller's key principles is his rejection of the assumption that man increases his control over his destiny by increasing his control over his environment. By juxtaposing the increasing comforts, safety, and sophistication of a developing civilization with its increasing discomforts, dangers, and primitive instincts the author intends to make the reader perceive the paradoxical nature of progress.



Each section of the trilogy ends with a death, each one being more "progressive" than the last. Francis is killed by an arrow, the Poet dies with a musket ball in his stomach, and Abbot Zerchi is a victim of an atomic blast. The increase of scientific knowledge throughout the time span of the novel is directly proportional to the amount of pain and misery depicted. In "Fiat Homo" Francis' suffering is confined to his self-imposed sunburn starvation vigils in the desert and to a few whacks from a hickory ruler inflicted by Abbot Arkos. His fainting spells are more humorous than pitiful and his death is instantaneous. Dom Paulo and the Poet of "Fiat Lux" experience much more suffering. Paulo must endure the agony and haemorrhaging brought on by his stomach troubles (perhaps ulcers or stomach cancer) and the Poet dies a slow, painful death from a gaping wound in his stomach. Then the whole world of "Fiat Voluntas Tua" erupts into pain with the atomic holocaust. A young woman and her baby suffer terribly from injuries inflicted by the attack and from radiation sickness. Zerchi dies in agony with the lower half of his body crushed beneath five tons of rubble--conscious until almost the very end. Miller's point is that "the closer men [come] to perfecting for themselves a paradise, the more impatient they [seem] to become with it, and with themselves as well. They [make] a garden of pleasure, and [become] progressively more miserable with it as it [grows] in richness and power and beauty" (237).[3]

One facet of this anti-utopianism is, in the words of Northrop Frye, "a product of a specifically modern fear, the Frankenstein myth of the enslavement of man by his own technology and by his perverse desire to build himself an ingenious trap merely for the pleasure of getting caught in it."[4] On first reading Miller's fiction the reader might assume that his point was very similar to that of H.G. Wells, who despite the vision expressed in his early anti-utopian scientific romances, saw nothing evil in the machine per se and whose utopian societies are well stocked with technological hardware. Man's misuse of technology was for Wells the "misfortune of machinery and not its fault."[5] Miller appears to echo this attitude. In "Dark Benediction" one of the priests makes an important remark, one which seems to be the crux of this story: "It's been pointed out by our philosophers that things become evil only through human misuse" (162-3). The same attitude towards scientific knowledge is reflected in the words of Miller's Joshua: "'And yet the Memorabilia was to go with the ship!' he said to himself. 'Was it a curse?...Discede, Seductor informis! It was no curse, this knowledge, unless perverted by Man!'" (236). And yet elsewhere in "Fiat Voluntas Tue" the bitterness of Miller's tone seems to be directed as much at the machine itself as at the abuse of it by its creator.

> Low-slung trucks with feeble headlights (useful only for warning purposes) sped mindlessly past them with whining tires and moaning turbines. With dish antennae they watched the road, and with magnetic feelers they felt at the guiding strips of steel in the roadbed and were given guidance thereby, as they rushed along the pink, fluorescent river of oiled concrete. Economic corpuscles in an artery of Man, the behemoths charged heedlessly past the two monks who dodged them from lane to lane. To be felled by one of them was to be run over by truck after truck until a safety cruiser found the flattened imprint of a man on the pavement and stopped to clean it up. The auto-pilots' sensing mechanisms were better at detecting masses of metal than masses of flesh and bone (221).

The bulk of Miller's criticism is, however, directed towards man for his abuse of technology in his struggle to progress at all cost. Progress of this sort is inextricably bound up with violence. Thon Taddeo of "Fiat Lux" is aware of this and yet at the same time is willing to accept the progress as inexorable:

> A century from now men will fly through the air in mechanical birds. Metal carriages will race along roads of man-made stone. There will be buildings of thirty stories, ships that go under the sea, machines to perform all works.
>
> "And how will this come to pass?" He paused and lowered his voice.
>
> "In the same way all change comes to pass, I fear. And I am sorry it is so. It will come to pass by violence and upheaval, by flame and by fury, for no change comes calmly over the world" (175-176)

In the "Chant of the Centuries" which opens Book III is the line "atrophy, entropy, proteus vulgaris." Miller is speaking of possible futures for man. He believes that the end of human history will bring man full circle to a position worse than his primitive origin. The pessimism (or rather what the non-Christian humanist would regard as pessimism) that prompts Miller's anti-utopian speculation results from his mistrust of human nature.[6] "In the utopian imagination, mankind can be wiped out by time, natural forces or strange invaders. But it also carries the seeds of destruction within itself, since its extinction is foreshadowed by absolute war." [7]

A primary goal of utopianism has always been the eradication of pain and suffering from human life. A Canticle for Leibowitz questions the feasibility of attaining this goal and even its validity. Similarly Miguel de Unamuno, the great Spanish existentialist, wrote:

> And how do we know that we exist if we do not suffer, little or much? How can we turn upon ourselves and acquire reflective consciousness save by suffering? When we enjoy ourselves we forget ourselves, forget that we exist; we pass over into another, an alien being, we alienate ourselves. And we become centred in ourselves again, we return to ourselves, only by suffering.[8]

Dom Paulo of "Fiat Lux," struggling to endure the pain of his intestinal haemorrhaging parodies Descartes: "Pain is. Ergo Sum" (128). This is just one example of what appears to be the author's implied assertion of the inevitability of suffering and misery in human life. Miller would probably go even father than this. In "Fiat Voluntas Tua" Zerchi--speaking, as Paulo had, out of intense personal agony--says to himself: "Listen my dear Cors, why don't you forgive God for allowing pain? If he didn't allow it, human courage, bravery, nobility, and self-sacrifice would all be meaningless things" (273). This point of view is akin to Wells's famous statement in his earliest anti-utopian novel, The Time Machine, that "man is kept keen on the grindstone of pain and necessity." Miller, too, rejects a utopianism that would have the elimination of suffering as its goal.

Miller depicts man, furthermore, as capable of bearing pain; twice he incorporates the maxim, "Nature imposes nothing that Nature hasn't prepared you to bear" (261, 270) into his prose passages. Abbot Zerchi rejects entirely the humanists' position that pain is the only evil and maintains that man can somehow serve God by bearing his suffering as a kind of testimonial to faith, hope, and love. "Crucifixion is always now" (128) but "Crucis autem onus si audisti ut honorem, nihilo erraste auribus" (237) ["If you've heard that the Cross is an honour, not a burden, there's nothing wrong with your hearing" -- literally, "However, if you have heard of the burden of the cross as an honour, you have not erred at all with your ears"].

This theme is dramatized poignantly in the situation of the young mother with the broken hip who, with her child, is suffering from a severe case of radiation sickness. After they are given a red ticket, a euthanasia permit for the "Green Star Mercy Camp" by Doctor Cors (cors comes from the Latin word for "heart"), the woman wishes only that she and her child be put out of their misery. Abbot Zerchi, however, is adamant in his opposition--"I'm not asking you. As priest of Christ I am commanding you by the authority of Almighty God not to lay hands on your child, not to offer her life in sacrifice to a false god of expedient mercy" (261). At this point in the novel Zerchi seems harsh; indeed he appears to be somewhat of a Pharisee. Later, I believe, Zerchi experiences a sense of guilt for the position he has taken. While he does not retreat at all from his theological position, he feels that he must earn the right to maintain this position for himself and the right to impose it on others:

> He was afraid to die before he had accepted as much suffering as that which came to the child who could not comprehend it, the child he had tried to save for further suffering -- no, not for it, but in spite of it. He had commanded the mother in the name of Christ. He had not been wrong. But now he was afraid to slide away into that blackness before he had endured as much as God might help him endure. Let it be for the child and her mother then. What I impose I must accept.
>
> (272)

Zerchi exhibits no bitterness about life's sufferings. The title of this last section, "Fiat Voluntas Tua," would suggest that God was responsible for the misfortunes and the misery of His creatures. The two-headed Mrs. Grales felt in her simplicity that God was responsible for her deformity but was also willing to give up her bitterness and to "be giving shriv'ness to Him, as well" (267). Zerchi, unlike Dostoevski's Grand Inquisitor, is not eager to blame God for giving man too much freedom, freedom to create a weapon that could cause genetic mutations for generations to come. His conception of God is of a deity who participates in human suffering. He sees Christ as Adam, the "second Adam" of whom Paul speaks in his Epistles to the Corinthians (I Cor. 15:45). Zerchi is emphasizing an incarnational theology; he is speaking of Christ's real suffering. "Jesus never asked a man to do a damn thing that Jesus didn't do," the dying abbot says in his delirium. Walter Miller's Christianity is not merely a doctrine of atonement; it is a doctrine of identification with a Christ who is the supreme example for suffering humanity. Instead of telling man to look beyond the pain and misery of the here and now to a utopian afterlife, Miller sets forth the more profound ideal of a realized eschatology.

#3 THE SOURCE

Miller's affirmation of the Judeo-Christian ethic is the moral positive that gives focus and direction to his novel, and his constant use of biblical allusions and symbols reinforces his theme. The strength of the novel certainly does not lie in its plot; there is very little dramatic action. As has already been observed, no single character emerges as a centre of consciousness to dominate all three sections. It is the biblical symbolism that unifies A Canticle for Leibowitz by providing a consistent frame of reference for the reader.

The author's fondness for biblical allusions would be obvious even after the most cursory reading. The novel abounds in references to the Hebrew canonical scriptures: Eden, the Flood, Rachel, Joshua, Canaan, Samuel and Saul, Sheba and Solomon--all appear in the novel. The atomic disaster that ended the "Age of Enlightenment" becomes the "Flame Deluge" in the terminology of the "Age of Simplification." The allusion is clear: God's destruction of a corrupt society is recorded in Genesis in the legend of Noah's Ark and the Deluge. Clearly Miller intends the reader to make the parallel and to see the catastrophic war of the 1960s as a second Great Flood: man will always refuse to accept the responsibility for the disasters he brings upon himself and will continue to try to protect himself from further catastrophes by materialistic means. Samuel, the last and the greatest of the Hebrew judges, warned his people about the dangers of a secular monarchy (I Samuel 8 and 9). At their insistence, however, he appointed a king for them--Saul. Miller picks up this historical account and uses it in "Fiat Lux" to underscore his depiction of the shift of power from Church to State in human history (145). Miller's reference to the story of King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba (I Kings 10) is used as well to depict the relationship between Church and State. Marcus Apollo speaks in terms of the reversal of what he believes to be the correct roles of Church and State when he says to his nuncio: "At the abbey, tell Dom Paulo that Sheba expects Soloman to come to her. Bearing gifts" (108).

Allusions from the New Testament are even more frequent. The dichotomy of the role of the Christian Church is likened to the divergent positions of Martha and Mary(247): Martha's being that of active, practical service; Mary's, that of contemplative worship. Biblical references even create a little humour in the novel. Miller's Brother Pat is a caricature of Peter. As the young monk edges towards the door of Abbot Zerchi's office, fearful that the "Abominable Autoscribe" in the less than competent hands of the abbot might short circuit or even explode, Zerchi laughingly rebukes him in language reminiscent of Peter's betrayal of Christ: "Before the cock crows thrice--besides, you touched the first knob, didn't you?" Throughout the novel the references to Caesar carry the same meaning as in Mark 12:17: "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." "Caesar" is the secular state. Other biblical references are, perhaps, less obvious. When the Poet arrives,late and uninvited, at the dinner for Thon Taddeo he facetiously asks: "What are we having tonight? Roast fish and honeycombs in honour of the temporal resurrection that's upon us? Or have you m'Lord Abbot, finally cooked the goose of the mayor of the village?"(165). The verbal irony of the reference to roast fish and honeycombs is probably lost on Thon Taddeo though not on Dom Paulo. Christ's eating of broiled fish and a piece of a honeycomb after his resurrection (Luke: 24:42) has been taken by some scholars as proof of the temporal nature of His resurrection body. The Poet has no illusions about the Thon's "being on our side"(145), as Benjamin had phrased it; Taddeo was no spiritual leader but was a secular scholar controlled by the temporal power of the state. Another biblical reference, but one of minor significance, occurs at the very end of the novel. As the last monk enters the spaceship he makes a symbolic gesture: "[He] paused in the lock. He stood in the open hatchway and took off his sandals. 'Sic transit mundus,'he murmured, looking back at the glow. He slapped the soles of his sandals together, beating the dirt out of them"(277). Christ told his disciples that if a city were to refuse their message, they were to shake the dust of that city from off their feet in a gesture of hopelessness as they left it (Matthew 10: 14).

Other biblical allusions of greater thematic significance are developed more extensively. Miller shows that man, as if to console himself for the inadequacy of his present situation, created the archetypal myths of perfect societies set in his distant past--Eden, the Golden Age, Arcadia--and then went on to embody all his hopes in a vision of a future state of perfect happiness--Heaven, the New Jerusalem, etc.

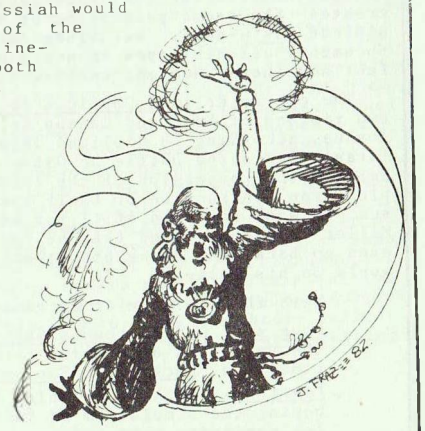
The character in A Canticle for Leibowitz who links these two visions of Eden and Canaan is, significantly enough, named Joshua. According to Biblical legend it was Joshua who led the Israelites in the battle at Gibeon, a victory that ensured the Hebrews the possession of the land of Canaan. In order to complete the destruction of their enemies, Joshua had ordered the sun and moon to stand still for an entire day (Joshua 10:12-14). Miller's Joshua wished that he too could make time halt and even go backwards as he absent-mindedly twirled a globe of the world on his desk:

> Said the namesake of my namesake:
>
> Move not, O Sun, toward Gabaon, nor thou, O Moon, toward the valley--a neat trick forsooth, and useful in these times too. Back up. O Sun, et tu, Luna, recedite in orbas reversas...He kept spinning the globe in reverse, as if hoping the simulacrum of Earth possessed the Chronos for unwinding time (214).

Joshua in his despair with the world of "Fiat Voluntas Tua" wished that man could return to the original innocence of Eden. "'Better to use a motor and spin it back to the beginning of Man,' he said to himself"(214). Zerchi's thoughts too want back to Eden as he lay dying. In his delirium he saw Rachel as a creature of "primal innocence" and he rejoiced that the Earth would once again be inhabited by a creature with "the preternatural gifts of Eden--those gifts which Man had been trying to seize by brute force again from Heaven since first he lost them"(276-277). Zerchi realized too that men in the ages to come would still have the same propensity for dreaming of a lost Eden. Using the language of the Genesis story of man's expulsion from Paradise, Zerchi had warned the starship's crew: "If you ever come back, you might meet the Archangel at the east end of the Earth, guarding her passes with a sword of flame"(239).

Miller's Joshua, like the Joshua of old, was destined to be a leader of men. He assumed the responsibility of heading the starship mission, the only hope for the survival of the human race. He and the monks, nuns, and children were heading towards a new Canaan on "a new Exodus from Egypt under the auspices of a God who must surely be very weary of the race of Man"(239). Perhaps Joshua and his charges did not dare at this point to think in terms of a utopian future for themselves. Earlier, in a moment of pessimism, Joshua had said that "there would be no Edens found out there"(235) and that "their new non-Edens" would be "even less like Paradise than Earth had been"(235). But even Joshua could not resist the impulse to cling to a dream of recapturing Eden and in a gesture of simple religious faith he accepted the responsibility for the starship mission and joined with sincerity in the recitation of the evening prayer. "And there shall be declared to the Lord a generation to come; and the heavens shall show forth His justice. To a people that shall be born, which the Lord hath made"(237). Joshua (whose name means "Jehovah is a help") decided that the future could indeed be faced by mankind and, moreover, that at some time to come divine power would triumph over evil in a final consummation of history that might well lie beyond the conditions of the temporal process.

The Old Jew in the novel expressed his dream in terms of a search for the Messiah. The Jews believed that their Messiah would appear just before the end of the world. He would be of the lineage of David and would be both a spiritual and a political leader who would restore the lost glory of Israel, initiating a reign that would be even more glorious than that of David or Solomon. The Hebrew apocalyptic vision was firmly rooted in this world rather than in the next; their dream was as much a national as a religious one--the concept of a rejected, defeated Messiah was unthinkable.



#4 THE HEBREW CONNECTION

The Judaic tradition is represented by a highly symbolic figure, who appears in all sections of the novel. This character is blessed with singular longevity. The Poet claims that the old man is 5408 years old. Since "Fiat Lux" is set in the year 3174 A.D., we may assume that the Poet is placing Benjamin Eleazar's birth date at about 2234 B.C., approximately at the time of Abraham, the founding patriarch of the Hebrew race. Father Gault, the abbey's young prior, had heard the Jew claim that he was 3209 years old. If this were true, he would have been born in 35 B.C. Certainly, whatever his birth date might have been, he was asserting his identity in terms of crucial dates in Hebrew history.

In "Fiat Homo" he is a wandering pilgrim, the "Wandering Jew" figure of the legends. In "Fiat Lux" he appears as Benjamin Eleazar but as Dom Paulo realized, "he ceased to be Benjamin, becoming Israel...His 'I' was the converse of the Imperial 'We'" 141). As such he represents Judaism's national and religious dreams for the Saviour promised them by Isaiah. "Benjamin" was the name of one of the twelve tribes of Israel. Furthermore, Israel's first king, Saul, had been from the tribe of Benjamin. Perhaps Miller hoped that his readers would appreciate the overtones of this name. "Eleazar" had been the third son of Aaron, the High Priest, and had succeeded his father in that role. It is interesting to note that Father Gault --himself a priest--refers to the Old Jew not by his national name as it were but by his priestly name, "Fleazar" (thus causing a moment of confusion for Abbot Paulo) (213). Miller does not belabour this particular reference but apparently he intends the perceptive reader to be aware of the duality of his symbolic function as a representative of Judaism. In "Fiat Voluntas Tua" the Jew identifies himself simply as "Latzar." The children seem to associate him with Lazarus of Bethany (John 11:43) yet in his role as beggar at the table reserved for tramps in the abbey's refectory, he appears to be closer to the Lazarus described in the story of "Dives," the rich man who allowed a poor leper to eat the crumbs that fell from his table (Luke 16: 19-31).

In each book we hear of the quest of this old Jew. We are introduced to this idea in "Fiat Homo" in Miller's description of the wandering pilgrim:

> He fanned himself with a tattered basket hat and munched his spice-leaf quid. He had been wandering for a long time. The search seemed endless, but there was always the promise of finding what he sought across the next rise or beyond the bend in the trail (96).

It is not until the second book of the novel that we hear of the object of his long search. As Benjamin watches a rider approach his arroyo, his eyes burn with eagerness:

> "Ah!" snorted the hermit..."His empire shall be multiplied, and there shall be no end of his peace: he shall sit upon his kingdom."
>
> "Olla allay!" he shouted; and as the rider halted, he darted forward to seize the reins and frown anxiously up at the man in the saddle.
>
> His eyes blazed for a moment. "For a Child is born to us, and a Son is given us..." But then the anxious frown melted away into sadness. "It's not Him!" he grumbled irritably at the sky (135).

Benjamin Eleazar has been waiting for and searching for the Messiah, the hope of Israel. When Paulo taunts him gently about the "One--Who--Isn't--Coming," Benjamin claims that the Messiah is in fact here and that he has seen Him (143). After further prodding from the abbot, he explains cryptically: "Someone who shouted at me once." "Shouted?" asks Paulo. "'Come forth!'" (145) replies Benjamin, undaunted as ever. The allusion is clear. Benjamin is claiming affinity with Lazarus of Bethany, a man Christ raised from the dead. But is he professing Christianity? I think not. He is expressing his dream for a Messiah who could perform "signs and wonders" for his people. Perhaps, too, the Old Jew is fascinated with the idea of the resurrection of Lazarus and identifies himself with him as a way of asserting his desire for the national and spiritual rebirth of his people. He cannot, however, think of the crucified Christ as the promised Messiah of Israel. In Book Three the role of the Old Jew is minimal. Secular materialism has triumphed in the world of "Fiat Voluntas Tua" and there is little room for the utopian vision of an ancient Hebrew. The modern mechanistic society has encroached on his way of life too, as he knew it would when he confronted its most articulate spokesman at the end of "Fiat Lux" (177), and his dream of One who would bring love to mankind and blessing to His Covenant People fades quickly into the backdrop of a society bent on self-destruction. Lazarus has become a beggar at the table of the rich society which like Dives of the parable is soon to be tormented in the flame of its own judgment (Luke 16). And thus it is that in Book Three there is no mention of the Jews' cherished hope. The Promised Land,Canaan, the Messiah--these are the dreams of an age that dares to hope.

#5 THE BOOK OF AZAZEL

Walter Miller has depicted, I believe, four classic types of positions assumed by humanity in its four main stages of historical development. In an age of barbarism both individuals and society in general act irresponsibly. The ignorant"Simpletons" in the anarchy of the Age of Simplification blamed the scholars and scientists for the holocaust of the 1960s, killing them ruthlessly as scapegoats. In a society similar to that of the Dark Ages, the individual is willing to hand over his decision-making powers to an institution, the Church. By thus rejecting any decision-making process, he is abrogating his responsibility. In the civilization depicted in "Fiat Lux," one which is closest tc the Renaissance, we see the individual struggling to exercise his responsibility in the determination of the future of his society. But he is virtually powerless, caught in the struggle between the declining Church and the increasingly powerful State. Finally, in tne ultra-modern state the individual is even less conscious of his own responsibility in shaping the world in which he he lives. He is alienated from the governing bureaucracy which has proved itself to be full of corruption and duplicity, remote from those who are responsible for bringing disaster to the world.

Miller's theme of man's propensity to avoid responsibility for his mistakes is heightened by his use of biblical symbolism. Zerchi knows that man is always prepared to say in the words of Eve. "The serpent deceived me and I did eat." The second book,"Fiat Lux," is the crux of the novel, the depiction of a turning point in human history; with "lux," knowledge, inevitably comes responsibility.

The Poet is the objective, detached observer of the society in which he lives. His casual life style and his constant references to his glass eye, his "Removable Conscience"(182)make him appear to be the epitome of irresponsibility. At the end of "Fiat Lux," however, we see that the Poet is in fact willing to commit himself for what he believes to be right and that Thon, the man who gave every appearance of being a responsible, respectable scholar, is the one who ends up in possession of the Removable Conscience. Early in "Fiat Lux" we are introduced to this poet who, along with a mutant, bald, blue-headed goat, has taken up residence in the abbey's guest room. When questioned by the abbot, the Poet finally reveals that he obtained the goat by winning it from--significantly enough--the Old Jew, Benjamin Eleazar. When Dom Paulo urges him to return the animal, the Poet claims that the abbey will be needing it before long.

> The abbot steeled himself. "Never mind. Just get yourself moved out. And tomorrow get the goat back to Benjamin."
>
> "But I won it fairly."
>
> "We'll not discuss it. Take the goat to the stable then. I'll have it returned to him myself."
>
> "Why?"
>
> "We have no use for a goat. Neither have you."
>
> "Ho, Ho," the Poet said archly.
>
> "What did that mean, pray?"
>
> "Thon Taddeo is coming. There'll be need of a goat before it's finished. You can be sure of that." He chuckled smugly to himself.

The Poet is referring to the Hebrew ceremony of the "Scapegoat." On the Day of Atonement two goats were to be taken to the tabernacle, with one being sacrificed as a sin offering for the sins of all the Israelites. The other goat, the one known as the scapegoat, was not be be sacrificed but was to be let go, symbolically carrying the sins of the people into the wilderness. In the language of Leviticus 16: 20-21,

> And Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness:
>
> And the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited: and he shall let go the goat in the wilderness.[9]

There are three allusions to this ceremony in "Fiat Lux." The Poet's first cryptic reference (quoted above) is not readily understood by the abbot. The Poet later becomes much more explicit. He believes that the scientist is morally responsible for the use to which his scientific discoveries are put. And if the world is to be torn apart as a result of hideous weapons, then the scientist and the scholar must share responsibility. The Abbey of St. Leibowitz too, as a repository of secular knowledge, must also be aware of its responsibility. Yet, the Poet knows, man in his characteristic way will find some scapegoat. The Poet suggests that he could function as the "Apologetic Advocate" for the great scholar from the collegium of Texarcana. His irony is obvious. Humanity will not need a scapegoat for the past but for the future:

> "And my system of negotiable and transferable apologetics would have been of particular value to you, Thon Taddeo."
>
> "Would have?"
>
> "Yes. It's a pity. Somebody stole my blue-headed goat."
>
> Thon Taddeo was frowning slightly, but he seemed determined to untangle the Poet's obscure skein of meaning.
>
> "Do we need a blue-headed goat?" he asked his clerk.
>
> "I can see no pressing urgency about it, sir," said the clerk.
>
> "But the need is obvious!" said the Poet. "They say you are writing equations that will one day remake the world. They say a new light is dawning. If there's to be light, then somebody will have to be blamed for the darkness that's past."
>
> "Ah, thence the goat."
>
> "You mistake my meaning, Your Brilliance. The goat is to be enshrined and honored, not blamed! Crown him with the crown St. Leibowitz sent you, and thank him for the light that's rising. Then blame Leibowitz, and drive him into the desert. That way you won't have to wear the second crown. The one with thorns. Responsibility, it's called."
>
> "And when," said the Poet, "your patron's army comes to seize this abbey, the goat can be placed in the courtyard and taught to bleat 'There's been nobody here but me' whenever a stranger comes by" (167-8).

Earlier in the novel, the Old Jew, while retaining the allusion to the scapegoat that was to be driven into the desert, also suggested another role for the goat. Speaking to Dom Paulo, Benjamin wryly disclaims his ownership of the animal:

> "It's not a goat," the hermit said crossly. "It's the beast which your prophet saw, and it was made for a woman to ride. I suggest you curse it and drive it into the desert. You notice, however, that it divideth the hoof and cheweth the cud" (135).

The old Hebrew is talking about the secular state and its potential for crushing the Church. While the State appears to be religious (the goat is ritually clean according to Mosaic Law), it is really as corrupt as the beast of the Apocalypse. Its rider, the great whore, is "Babylon," an early Christian name for Rome--"the seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sitteth" (Revelation 17:9). The beast, then, symbolizes the Roman Empire of the first century A.D., the secular world that had seemed bent on persecuting the early Church.[10] Benjamin Eleazar seems to be warning Paulo that the state will ride roughshod over the abbey and everything it stands for. Later he expresses the same idea in different words: "The children of the world are consistent too--so I say they will soak up everything you can offer, take your job away from you, and then denounce you as a decrepit wreck. Finally, they'll ignore you entirely" (144).

The Old Hebrew is one of the characters in the novel who is willing to assume responsibility for his fellow man. Benjamin Eleazar spends his time in the arroyo doing "penance for Israel"(142). Dom Paulo realizes his friend's self-imposed burden and asks, "Why do you take the burden of a people and its past upon yourself alone?" If Benjamin had answered Paulo's question he would have told the abbot that he was the Suffering Servant figure of Isaiah 53, the man who, like the scapegoat, could vicariously atone for his race by suffering a living death for their sins.

#6 THE OLD AND NEW ADAM

Miller portrays humanity as having much in common with both Adams: the Adam of the Genesis myth--the man who alienates humanity from God--and the "second" Adam of Pauline theology--the man who was God incarnate and who could help fallen man to be once again reconciled to his Creator. This dual vision of humanity is expressed throughout the novel in various ways, three of which, I think, merit close attention. The duality of human nature is presented through Francis of "Fiat Homo" in an entirely humorous context; through Zerchi of "Fiat Voluntas Tua" in a serious, realistically conceived manner: and finally through Rachel, in the final pages of the novel, in terms of fantasy verging on myth.

Francis is a parody of the Adamite figure. He stands virtually at the beginnings of history, for man has to remake his world once again after the disintegration of civilization. But Francis' environment is no Paradise; the arid desert of the opening pages of the novel is a wasteland, a parody of Eden. He is not the stalwart young man facing the future with optimism and courage, the American Adam whose presence infuses so much of American literature.[11] Francis is a caricature of this figure, a lovable but ludicrous child who faces life trembling and fainting, "confronting the Unknown, face-to-backside"; Adam's original innocence is mirrored in Francis' naivete and immaturity; Adam's temptation, in Francis' longing to eat the pilgrim's cheese and in his enjoyment of a succubus' nightly visitations; Adam's sin, in Francis' croaking confession, "Bless me, Father: I ate a lizard"; and Adam's attainment of the forbidden knowledge of good and evil, in the Fallout Shelter, complete with treasured "relics," a file, a few inconsequential memos, a tool box, and a grocery list.

As Adam and Eve, who desired to be "as gods, knowing good and evil," were rebuked for their folly, so Francis, too, is censured by his abbot for trying to rise above his station. According to Dom Arkos, he is like the cat who studied ornithology when called by nature to be only an ornithopage (Francis ponders this gravely!).

Miller is clearly drawing comic parallels not only between Francis and Adam but also between Francis and Christ. Christ's experience in confronting evil during his forty days in the wilderness is parodied by Francis' Lenten vigil in the desert during which his only accomplishment (other than the discovery of the bomb shelter) is his increased proficiency in wolf calls. The moral import of Christ's temptations sees remote indeed from Francis' desires for some cheese, a lizard, and a succubus. Francis, too, can say "Apage Satanas" (5) but his rejection of the powers of evil brings only anti-climactic results:

> The pilgrim-Beelzebub failed to explode into sulphurous smoke, but he made gargling sounds, turned a bright shade of red and lunged at Francis with a bloodcurdling yell. The novice kept tripping on his tunic as he fled from flailing of the pilgrim's spiked staff, and he escaped without nail holes only because the pilgrim had forgotten his sandals.

Christ's vocation was dramatically announced at his baptism by John in Jordan when we are told,"...he saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon him: And there came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Mark 1: 10, 11). The old pilgrim whose main article of clothing is a loin cloth of dirty burlap seems like an attempt of the novelist to create a John the Baptist figure (John wore a camel's skin loin cloth). The old pilgrim does not baptize Francis--it is Francis who tosses some holy water on the pilgrim, much to his annoyance--but he does announce his vocation to him by showing him the entrance to the shelter. Francis realizes this: "May you find your Voice soon, boy, the wanderer had said. But not until now did the novice suspect that the pilgrim meant Voice with a capital V" (24). This annunciation is accompanied not with the descent of the proverbial dove but with the attentions of a flock of hungry buzzards who expect Francis to expire at any moment.

> A whole black heavenly host of them had gathered, and they circled at a curiously low altitude...They soared higher when he moved. Suddenly ignoring the possibility of chipped vertebrae or a crushed rib, the novice climbed shakily to his feet. Disappointed, the black sky-horde rode back to altitude... Dark alternatives to the Paraclete whose coming he awaited, the birds seemed eager at times to descend in place of the Dove."

"Fiat Homo," then depicts a creature who is weak, naive, and humorous, a mere shadow of the first Adam and a pathetic caricature of the second.

Miller has deliberately linked Francis and Zerchi to create a continuum in his presentation of humanity through the ages. When the crypt of the abbey is destroyed during the bombing at the end of the novel, Zerchi finds what is clearly intended to be the skull of Brother Francis in the ruins. He speaks to the skull, comparing his role with that of the dead monk and finally tracing their common origin back to its source--"Homo inspiratus" (273),Adam. In Miller's portrayal of Zerchi, however, we find a serious thoughtful presentation of the Adam/Christ motif. Zerchi is an Adamite figure in the Hebraic sense of the word: he becomes an Everyman: "The trouble with the world is me... Thee me Adam Man we. No 'worldly evil' except that which is introduced into the world by Man--me thee Adam us--with a little help from the father of lies"(271). Zerchi stands virtually at the end points of human history and continually looks back to find the germinal causes of human folly. His search always brings him to a sense of awareness of his own and of man's participation in the Adamite nature and to a feeling of shared identity with fallen humanity:

> He [Zerchi] fingered the mound of faggots where the wooden martyr stood. That's where all of us are standing now, he thought. On the fat kindling of past sins. And some of them are mine. Mine, Adam's, Herod's, Judas's, Hannegan's, mine. Everybody's (231).

At times Zerchi becomes almost a Christ figure. In his role as confessor, his participation in the absolution of the penitent is akin to Christ's: "Spikes driven through palms, piercing timber. As alter Christus he sensed the weight of each burden for a moment before it passed on to the One who bore them all" (268). Finally at the height of his dying agony, Zerchi perceives his common identity with Christ. In his delirium he links his own identity with the first and the second Adam and with all humankind--"Me us Adam, but Christ, Man me" (271).

#7 VISIONS REAL OR IMAGINED

Rachel provides the reader with one of the most intriguing puzzles of the novel. Is she the product of Zerchi's delirium as he himself believed at one point (274) or is she to be regarded as pure fantasy? Perhaps her thematic function is best understood if one interprets her character in terms of biblical symbolism. Rachel/Mrs. Grales is both Eve and Mary. Mrs. Grales, the old woman who sells tomatoes represents fallen humanity, in much the same way as the Adamic aspects of Zerchi do. She is Eve as Miller clearly states: "She spoke haltingly. He could not see her through the mesh that covered the grille. There was only the low and rhythmic whisper of a voice of Eve. The same, the same, everlastingly the same...a mindless mimicry of the Original" (268). It was not accidental that Miller portrayed Mrs. Grales as bicephalous. Her two heads, the result of genetic mutation, take on separate symbolic roles, an effective feature from a purely interpretive point of view but one likely to arouse a certain aesthetic disgust in the reader. This duality is recognized by Zerchi when he realizes that Mrs. Grales's head has fallen asleep and that the beautiful Rachel has come to life. He senses that she is saying, "I am somehow like you"(274). The difference that he perceives is her "primal innocence." Since she has no original sin she refuses the sacrament of baptism. She is a second, an unfallen Eve ("Eve" means "life" in Hebrew) and has come to bring Zerchi a message and a promise. She says only one word that is not a direct repetition of the abbot's and that word is her message to the dying man--"Live." Zerchi interprets this as a promise of resurrection (277).

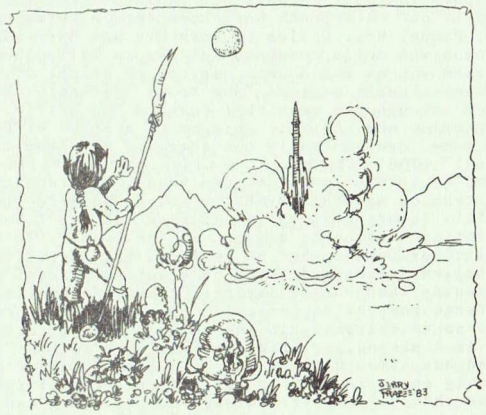
Rachel may also be interpreted as a symbol of the blending of the human and the divine. When she appears to Joshua in his dream, she whispers "I am the Immaculate Conception" (228). Zerchi's final conclusion about her is that she expresses a second incarnation. Mrs. Grales has been the second Mary who has given birth to a being that shares Godhead, and Zerchi wishes to teach her the words of the Magnificat as his last act as a priest. Perhaps his final words reflect as much his own sense of gratitude to God for revealing to him this promise of life.[12] Rachel means "ewe"; she is a second Lamb of God, the pure, innocent sacrificial lamb of the Hebrew tradition and is associated with the "Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29) of the Christian faith.

Miller probably had another reason for selecting the proper name "Rachel" for this important character. Rachel, Jacob's second wife, was buried in Eprath (Bethlehem, Ephratah), the birthplace of Jesus. When Herod in his attempt to kill the infant Jesus killed all the children under two years old who were living in the area of Bethlehem, the people of the area believed that the prophecy of Jeremiah 31:15 had been fulfilled:

> Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children and would not be comforted, because they are not (Matthew 2:17, 18).

Rachel/Mrs. Grales also sees death and desolation around her. But she laughs. She is life and the promise of resurrection, not death. Perhaps she knows that Joshua, hopeful for a generation to come which will show forth the justice of the Lord in the heavens (237), is leading a little band of exiles to begin life anew. A rabbinical exegitical passage from The Midrash might further clarify Miller's use of biblical symbolism here:

> And Rachel died and was buried in the way to Ephrath...
>
> What was Jacob's reason for burying Rachel in the way of Ephrath? Jacob foresaw that the exiles would pass on from thence, therefore he buried her there so she might pray for mercy for them. Thus it is written, "A voice is heard in Rama...Rachel weeping for her children...Thus saith the Lord: Refrain thy voice from weeping...and there is hope for thy future."[13]



#8 CONCLUSION

The vision of life presented in A Canticle for Leibowitz contrasts sharply with that of the theologian Teilhard de Chardin, who saw science as a positive force in the continued evolution of mankind. According to Miller, humanity will never attain any "Omega Point" of participation in the Godhead. In the "Chant of the Centuries" (200) humans are told to:

> Be born then gasp wind, screech at the
> surgeon's slap, seek manhood, taste a
> little of godhood, feel pain, give birth
> struggle a little while, succumb:
> (Dying, leave quietly by the rear exit please.)

Miller would agree with H.G. Wells that the human race must adapt itself to the material forces it has created or else perish. It must begin to temper its twentieth century science with humanity. In "Fiat Lux" Thon Taddeo puzzles:" 'How can a great and wise civilization have destroyed itself so completely?' 'Perhaps,' said Apollo, by being materially great and materially wise, and nothing else ' " (106).

Miller depicts a society of humans who are aware of their origin yet who are powerless to change their essential natures. In "Fiat Lux" one man tries to avoid the morally frightening implications of his ancestral heritage. Thon Taddeo expresses the theory that after the Flame Deluge humanity was not a descendent of "homo inspiratus" but merely a servant species that had rebelled against its masters.

> "You know the legends of the Simplification. They all become more meaningful, it seems to me, if one looks at the Simplification as a rebellion by a created servant species against the original creator species..."
>
> The old priest advanced like nemesis on his guest. "So we are but creatures of creatures, then, Sir Philosopher? Made by lesser gods than God, and therefore understandably less than perfect--through no fault of ours, of course."

At the end of "Fiat Voluntas Tua" Walter Miller implies a new creation, a second genesis, in the character of Rachel. Interestingly enough, he refers to her not as a woman, but as a creature "of primal innocence" (276). To her lot falls the habitation of the devastated earth, now a wasteland, a ruined Eden inaccessible to humanity. It is almost as if humans had been judged unfit to bear God's image and as if a new creature has been formed for this purpose. Such a conclusion would direct the reader to regard the starship mission to Centaurus with a sense of futility, and in this context its code name "quo peregrinatur grex pastor secum" -- "Wherever the flock voyages [lit."pilgrimages"] the shepherd (pastor) goes with it" -- takes on inescapably ironic overtones.

Is Miller plumbing the depths of nihilism only to find reason to transcend it? He does indeed depict the tragedy of humanity but he also depicts the triumph of individual humans -- most effectively in his portrayal of Abbot Zerchi. Zerchi functions as a mouthpiece for Miller in his expression of the essence of human duality, humanity which is, as Alexander Pope suggests:

> Created half to rise and half to fall,
> Great lord of all things, yet a prey to all.
> Sole judge of truth, in endless error hurled,
> The glory, jest and riddle of the world!

A basic implication of s-f is man's capability of changing himself and his environment. This does not mean, however, that social s-f must present solutions to problems. A Canticle for Leibowitz certainly does not attempt this but "...is an extremelyly persuasive presentation of the idea that now, as never before, fallen man must live by the Judaic-Christian ethic" (Hillegas, op. cit., 173). Whitney Balliett claimed that Miller's novel "entertains but it changes nothing."[14] Surely, however, A Canticle for Leibowitz more than adequately fulfills Roger Caillois' requirements for a modern s-f novel:

> ...the futuristic story reflects the agony of an age which is afraid of technical progress; of an age which has ceased to view science as a protection against the unimaginable; it sees it always more like an abyss into which it is going to fall headlong.[15]

Walter Miller's novel is an accurate reflection of the ethos of its age and deserves critical attention both for the quality of its vision of life and for its aesthetic merits.[16]

FOOTNOTES

1) The Hebraic apocalyptic writings are to be found in the Apocrypha and the Pseudepigrapha. Chapter thirteen of Mark's gospel and The Revelation provide two examples of Christian apocalyptic.

2) Miller's language in the closing paragraphs of the novel is similar at times to passages in The Revelation. Certainly his references to the glow of Lucifer as "engulfing a third of the heavens" is an allusion to Rev. 8: 7-13.

3) I have changed the verbs in this quotation from the past to the present tense. The italics are mine.

4) Northrup Frye, "Varieties of Literary Utopias," in Frank Manuel, Utopias and Utopian Thought (Daedalus Library, 1962), p. 39.

5) This is from Wells's A Modern Utopia and is cited in Mark Hillegas, The Future as Nightmare: H.G. Wells and the Anti-Utopians (New York, 1967), p. 69. Although Wells stocked his later utopian works with all sorts of machines and tangible proofs of man's technological advancements, his earlier scientific romances express a mistrust of technology. There is clear evidence of his dislike of the "infernal machine" in such novels as The Time Machine and The First Men in the Moon.

6) The Christian vision is not directed towards a utopia that is the end product of human history but in an apocalyptic event that transcends history, intersecting the kronos (horizontal time, history) at God's appointed kairos (vertical time, the actualization of the "Kingdom of God").

7) Richard Gerber, Utopian Fantasy: A Study of English Utopian Fiction since the End of the 19th Century (London, 1955),p.124.

8) Miguel de Unamuno, The Tragic Sense of Life (London and Glasgow, 1921), p. 37.

9) Although the word "scapegoat" has derived its present English meaning from the ritual, it is probably a misnomer in the Biblical passage. The original Hebrew text says "one lot for Yahweh, and the other for Azazel." To this day, no one is absolutely sure who or what Azazel was, but when William Tyndale (c. 1495-1536) translated the Old Testament from the Hebrew, he also had the Greek and Latin versions at his elbow, and he took a hint from them to translate the mysterious Azazel as scapegoat'" (David Phillips, "Scapegoat" in Man, Myth and Magic, 59 (London, 1971), 2487). Whatever its original meaning, the account of the ritual involving this animal has always been interpreted as that of the innocent sufferer who vicariously bears the burden of guilt of his society.

10) A second beast who serves the beast on which the woman rides is described in Revelation 13 and his number is given as 666. If this number is decoded according to the rules of Hebrew numerology of the time, we discover that this passage is a veiled reference to Caesar Nero (Caesar:410 and Nero: 256). This then would tie in with all the references in "Fiat Voluntas Tua" to the secular authority of the state as "Caesar."

11) R.W.B. Lewis, The American Adam (Chicago and London,1955).

12) Strangely enough, Miller never does phrase Zerchi's final moments of peace in terms of the recapture of Eden in the individual consciousness. Miller seems concerned only with the impossibility of man's ever regaining Eden on the social level through his own attempts at self-betterment.

13) The Midrash Rabbah-Genesis II, Rabbi H. Freedman, trans. (London 1939), p. 761.

14) Whitney Balliett, The New Yorker, 2 April 1960, p. 159.

15) "...il racconto avveniristico reflette l'angoscia di un'epoca che ha paura dei progressi della technica; di un'epoca che, cessando de rappresentarsi la scienza come una protezione contro l'inimmaginabile, la vede sempre piu come un abisso nel quale va precipitando." Roger Caillois, "Della Fiaba alla Fantascienza," Interplanet, 4 (Piacenza, 1964), 42, cited in Carlo Pagetti, Il Senso Del Future: La Fantascienza Nella Letteratura Americana (Rome, 1970), p. 32.

16) Edmund Fuller (Chicago Sunday Tribune,6 March 1960,p.1) guessed that this work was "apt to arouse either enthusiasm or distaste, but little middle ground opinion." A cursory examination of criticism on this novel proves the accuracy of Fuller's statement. Maurice Richardson in the New Statesman 59, (1960), 533, characterized the "mixture of past and future genres, of Thebaid and scific" as being "not altogether consistent." The London Times Literary Supplement just a week earlier (1 April 1960), p. 205) had praised the author's sharp and exact style, claiming that "Mr. Miller looks at life from the different angles of God and scientists and poets and priests and the Wandering Jew and--believe it or not he makes sense out of it and beauty too." Richardson (op. cit.) went on to speak of Miller's "quite powerful if not original imagination..."; Robert Phelps (New York Herald Tribune, 13 March 1960, p.4) praised the novel's originality. John Coleman (Spectrum, 25 March 1960, p. 444) wrote that the novel's "humanists got such a poor deal that it depressed me," while Dorothy Nyren in The Library Journal, January 1960, p. 146, unconditionally recommended A Canticle for Leibowitz, commenting on Miller's "broad humanitarian compassion."

at 5 a.m.
the just broken
from night sky
has already
turned this sunday
to vacation's first
morning
the undulant
cape light
a mystery show of colours
a playful otter
pulling at strings
our deepest
city memory dreams
to make us join
in this ruleless rising
long before
the straight lines
of clocks
we are at windows
motionless
our fisherman eyes
hauling in
the bay's treasure

-- Joel Zeltzer --

OWED TO BLINDNESS

Cold nights feast
    on windshields
when the moon sleeps
in December.
They rob the night transparent
    of its eyes.
As I sleep blind
    in summer sunsets,
my dreams lie etched
    in galaxies
    removed
from winter's icy stare.

-- Harding Stedler --

HARMONY
by
JIM HARMON
Home on the Range

There are fandoms other than science-fiction fandom. It crosses over into a number of them. It is sometimes surprising how similar they may be with their Big Name Fans, fanzines, feuds, etc. This goes for old time radio fandom, comic book fandom, even Western movie fandom.

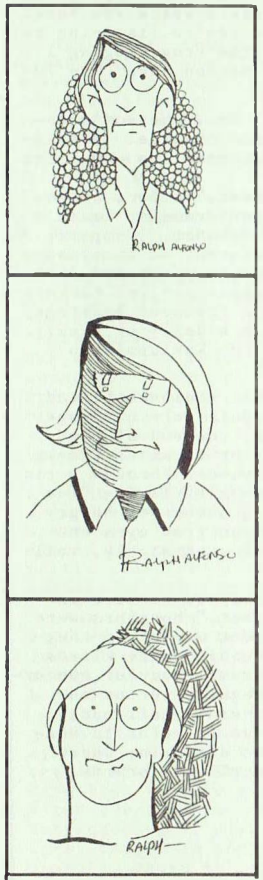
The last week in June 1991 seemed to revolve around Western film fandom. The week started off with my going to the graduation of my daughter, Dawn, from UCLA (magna cum laude), but then things changed. I had to go to jail.

I had to bail out my friend, John, the son of an old movie cowboy comic sidekick to Bob Wills, Tex Ritter, occasionally Gene Autry, others. (The father is still alive at 85, and I talk to him on the phone at his home down South once in a while.) John has a drinking problem. However, he has improved greatly in recent months, lifting himself up. I've known John for thirty years, and try to offer what support I can without getting too deeply involved (the old analogy of a drowning man, dragging his would-be rescuer down with him). This time, John's problem had nothing to do with alcohol. He was arrested for what he was wearing. A glove. He kept saying that, and I wondered if it were the glove's fault for being wrapped around somebody's throat, with John's hand just happening to be in it. As it turned out, the glove he was wearing had spikes on it, like a knight's gauntlet. Some cop thought it constituted a "dangerous weapon" (specific charge--John said, erroneously, "deadly weapon," a more serious charge).

John phoned and told me to bring $250 down to bail him out. Earlier he had given me $300 of his money to hold for him, so I felt I couldn't turn him down. On the drive into Hollywood it occurred to me that the bail bondsman would probably ask me to co-sign for him, which I wasn't willing to do. This was confirmed. I went over to the police station to tell John the bad news. First time I have ever been inside a police station in my life. (By rights, a few things I did when I was younger should have put me inside one, but didn't.) The cop at the desk was off a recruiting poster--young, handsome, polite, helpful, even kindly. He told me I could see John in a visiting booth. It reminded me of an announcer's booth in some small radio station. John looked good, for him--sober, well-dressed, clean, his nails manicured, looking older than his recently turned fifty. I started to tell him about the bad news when he broke me off. Everything had been taken care of by the son of a famous horror-movie star, now deceased.

John is the world's biggest fan of this star, and had known Jr. for many years. Jr. is a very successful attorney. For at least the second time in his life, Jr. had bailed John out of jail. What he can do for him in court remains to be seen.

A few days later I received my copy of Western Legends Newsletter, a fanzine published by Paul Mix, cousin of the late Tom Mix. Paul was kind enough to have as his lead item my claim to own the radio rights to the old "Tom Mix and His Straight Shooters" format. I have been copyrighting new productions in this format since 1975, and went on to produce the brief revival of the show for Ralston cereal in 1982-3. Bigger news was evidence of another place where the great Tom Mix was a real life Western lawman. He was a specially appointed sheriff in LeHunt, Kansas, in 1905, according to living witnesses. It was a wild boom town, with "knife and gun fights every day." Tom ran the camp with an iron hand.



June 30, 1991: Sunday, Barbara and I went to the 84th Birthday of Eddie Dean, one of the last living movie singing cowboys. He had his own series, rather unusual in that it was in two stripe Cinecolor. He was also featured in Hopalong Cassidy and Gene Autry pictures, and co-starred with Ken Maynard in Ken's last film. The party was an incredibly mobbed event at the home of video and poster store owner, Eddie Brandt. Eddie Dean was gracious as always, although I did not get to speak to him as long as I did at the Ivarson Movie Ranch party a few years ago. He can still sing beautifully, hitting high notes like a man a quarter of his age. He once said: "I'm getting better with practice. I'd hang it up if I didn't think I was improving." John Agar was there, Lawrence Tierney, Penny Singleton. Iron Eyes Cody asked for a Polaroid of himself, after I took one for myself. I saw my friend, Gene Bear, who did most of the performing before Eddie went on--Gene is a singer, M.C., and country music promoter. Dave Holland, author of that great Lone Ranger book, was there; he said he would make reservations for us for the next Lone Pinefilm Festival at the classic old hotel itself, where Tom Mix, Ken Maynard, Bill Boyd and the rest used to stay, rather than the modern motel annex.

A lot of the party attendees looked like real cowboys; at least stunt men and women on the films, horse wranglers, and they still looked tough as saddle leather. I realized that these weren't really "my people." I was part of another fandom besides s-f--Western film fandom. But I realized I belonged to the softer, "book-readin'," artistic side of the group. I believe a lot of the key players --Eddie Dean, Gene Autry, Tim McCoy-- were more at home with our kind of range rider themsolves.

THEATRE OF THE FANTASTIC
by
PETER BERNHARDT
Good Night, Frog Prince

We purchased our weekly supply of seafood and vegetables, and were relaxing in a cafe in the Sydney Fishmarket. The cafe's television was showing a rerun of The Muppet Show," distracting me from my coffee and cake. It brought back unhappy memories of hearing about Jim Henson's death on National Public Radio. Every time a news broadcast on NPR stops without explanation and you hear an entertainer's voice you know that person has just become worm food and you're listening to a canned memory. The day I heard Kermit the Frog singing I reacted with complete disbelief. Hadn't Henson done "The Tonight Show" a few days earlier?

Devote time and space to a puppeteer? Yes. Henson's career permeates almost 30 years of fantastic theatre. His impact on television dominates, but I will comment on some films.

My students, brought up on "Sesame Street," affect amazement when they learn that "The Muppets" performed at least a decade before they started teaching the alphabet. Puppetry remained an inexpensive source of entertainment on American television through the late fifties, with the Punch and Judy milieu preadapted to the small screen. Henson arrived comparatively late to the medium but prospered on frequent bookings on variety shows instead of remaining with a daily or weekly programme like the Baird Marionettes or the Kuklapolitan Players.

Playing evening slots to a largely adult audience placed atypical demands on puppets. These Ur-muppets were a savage lot. Henson once stated with glee that at the end of his skits the characters were always eaten up or blown up (smoke effects being achieved by blowing talcum powder through a tin funnel). A personal favourite featured Kermit playing "Tea for Two" on a piano to sooth an increasing number of hungry monsters. Kermit didn't eacape as the piano grew eyes and fangs, and ate him. Muppet monsters masticated slowly, rolled their eyes, and belched a lot.

This vision of an unfair, ravenous world had to be abandoned for Public Television's "Sesame Street." Monsters were in residence, but sarcasm was their sharpest weapon or they were reduced to toothless gluttons exchanging sloppy kisses for cookies. Of course, once we depart from irregular appearences on TV and move into the format of regular series on public, commercial, and cable stations Henson's influence "disneyfies." That is, while I may continue to refer to Henson's accomplishments it's not possible to determine where his influence ends and work of talented employees starts.

Henson's taste for the grotesque became dormant as his popularity increased and his financial resources grew to permit larger projects. "The Muppet Show" developed recurrent characters with engaging flaws who survived in a vaudeville world always at disaster's door. It's here that Henson achieved the talent of Disney, whom he admired for inventing characters so appealing they transcended the grown-up notion that puppets were only for kids. Yes, the Swedish Chef got away with sequences involving the boiling of a senorita lobster or preparing pressed duck (with a clothes iron). Professor Bunsen performed "product tests" using his shrieking pop-eyed assistant. However, acts of jolly cruelty had to be modulated,or else. People wrote letters and called stations when a live actor changed into a werewolf and used a bunny as a baseball (it was Easter Week). Whimsy is allowed to fill all the odd plots of "Fraggle Rock," although the tales seem to share unsettling daydreams with Ionesco and Stoppard.

It's my opinion that Henson's best work for television came in the mid-eighties with the luminous "Storyteller" series. Here was actor John Hurt heavily costumed in rags and prosthetics spinning folk-tales with the Henson touch.

This time, though, the budget was much larger, and Henson could combine the live action, puppetry and camera tricks first attempted in short films back in the sixties. Results are often beautiful; as Hurt narrates, the characters may appear as silhouettes on pottery or as reflections in bowls of water. This series offers some of the most interesting interpretations of the Celtic twilight available. Castles seem to be ugly piles, populated by weak, nervous rulers. Humans are more likely to triumph over the supernatural by sheer stubbornness, not ingenuity. "The Giant Who Had No Heart" and "Hans, My Hedgehog" indicate that acts of kindness alternately cure and destroy.

The films are a mixed lot. Those featuring Miss Piggy as arch heroine have amusing moments, but merely capitalize on the success of the television show. Some critics have praised "Labyrinth" as it draws on the goblin worlds of Maurice Sendak and Brian Froud. It's the only one I've missed, unfortunately. "The Dark Crystal" is a commercial film with an art movie's heart. We are expected to develop sentimental attachments to bizarre creatures whose effect is more cerebral than sensual. The happy ending is so brief it's ultimately unconvincing. Greater success is achieved when muppets merely accent a film. Americans should check their video shops for the British "Dream Child," starring Ian Holm. Alice Liddell (the model for "Alice in Wonderland") tours America at age 80 but her dreams remind her of how she ultimately betrayed her mentor, Charles Dodson. The muppet griffin, mock turtle and other characters are superbly "fleshed out" translations of the Tenniel illustrations.

Our local movie house showed "The Witches" a few months ago. What a fortunate final collaboration for producer Henson, director Nicholas Roeg, and author Roald Dahl! Roeg's talent for the macabre is evident in such past work as"Don't Look Now" and "The Man Who Fell to Earth." Dahl's work insists children are the prey of vicious adults and bullying peers.This is exactly the right combination needed for a story where witches transform and murder children because a kid smells like dog turds to a witch! Anjelica Huston seems to have been born to play the role of the sultry, smirking Witch Queen. When the children are transformed into mice, the intercutting of live and puppet rodents is seamless. The witches, caught in their own spell, die satisfyingly when their squeaky, mouse voices are stilled by someone stepping on them (their squelching bodies release a puff of green smoke).

Once again, though, the film-maker ultimately retracts his claws. The screenplay disregards the novel's plot twist which insisted that a child would be far happier as a mouse in the care of a doting grandmother. Since parents pay their children's tickets, one can't afford to end a picture so ambivalently, no matter how "logical" the original conclusion.

Satisfying public expectations may be the reason why Henson left us before producing a real masterpiece. He tempered an extraordinary vision to avoid a loss of popularity and the condemnation by authorities who always attempt to sanitize the horrors of childhood. He has left us so much of his work on tape and film, though, it will always remind us of the dark humour intrinsic to the best fantasy. Somewhere, there are artists who will be inspired by these provocative themes.

SELECTED LETTERS

1 Val de Mer, Alderney
Channel Islands, Great Britain

Dear Leland,

Receiving RQ 31, I was, as you confess yourself to have been, quite delighted by the literary/historical perspectives opened by Pat Hodgell's essay on The Old Curiosity Shop. It is perhaps worth remarking in this context that one of the most satisfactory Gothic ambiences in all of Dickens is that depicted in his shortly following "Christmas Story" novella The Haunted Man. There the shadowy and "vault-like" dwelling and laboratory of Redlaw, the eponymous professor of chemistry, lay in a "forgotten Crypt where the Norman arches were half-buried in the earth"-- a perfect setting for his double haunting by a spectral doppelganger who holds for Laidlaw/Dickens the keys to memory and forgetfulness, and by the urchin "wild boy," a pathetic and beast-like incarnation of the abandoned child, an image that perennially frequented Dickens's mind.

May I also offer comment on Colin Manlove's interesting insights in Wells's scientific romances. He goes beyond the dualisms commonly perceived in The Time Machine, those of darkness and light, of the pastoral and the mechanistic, usefully to suggest one of mind and mindlessness, and, equally basically, one of stasis and change. It is true that throughout his utopian and hortatory writings Wells, like his early Time Traveller vainly urging the Eloi, was concerned to shift his fellow men from habit to venturesome and radical innovation. At the same time, particularly in such early fantasies as "The Hole in the Wall" and The Sea Lady, and through to such late ones as The Happy Turning, he had a certain consciousness of, and nostalgia for, the satisfactions of that which does not change or is beyond change. I have sometimes heretically thought that there is a piquant duality in The Time Machine as between a viable cultural symbiosis existing in the year 802,701, and that alienated individual bursting in on it, imbued with many of the imperialist/missionary attitudes of the Victorian ethos. In fact I recently expressed this in not very serious stanzas which did see the print in one of the publications of the H.G. Wells Society, but which have perhaps a sly enough relevance to Colin Manlove's thesis to make them worth citing here:

Eloi

What's he want to come here for
on his Time Machine,
stirring up the Morlocks
wherever he has been,
setting fire to woodlands,
abducting little gels,
this antique anomaly
sent by H.G. Wells.

Morlocks

What's he want to come here for,
tinkering with the Sphinx,
hob-nobbing with the Eloi
(sharing eats and drinks),
frightening us with matches,
climbing down our wells --
the age concerning him should be
the one in which he dwells.

All

What's he want to come here for
let him travel back,
or forward to Apocalypse
where the sun is black --
no-one said "Come interfere
with our ecology";
we can do without this nuisance sent
by Wells. H.G.

After all, the prescient Grand Lunar thought rather along such lines--and exit Cavor!

Yours etc. K.V. Bailey

Only the past is absolutely fixed--so for the literary mentality a search for the unchanging is generally a look backward, a nostalgic Remembrance of Things Past. The scientific mentality looks to the future, so invariance is sought only in the formulation of physical laws. (Thus the tensor equations of General Relativity are invariant in accelerated reference frames.) This difference in temporal orientation separates the literary from the scientific area--and explains, perhaps, why s-f fans, being in both camps simultaneously, are forward-looking and yet backward looking.

P.O. Box 3086 Grenfell St
Adelaide, SA 5000, Australia

Dear Leland,

About eighteen months after I had written the letter you published in RQ 31, I re-read Connie Willis's "All My Darling Daughters" and wrote about it at greater length in Science Fiction Eye 7, August '90. When you comment that "equality (as opposed to strict class inclusion) can't be established"--thus, that the moral to be derived from the story can go no further than "what some men enjoy most in the sexual act" is to hurt and terrorize--it seems to me that you are writing about what can be established in the real world, not [about] what can be established about a particular s-f story's message about the real world. Ira Levin in The Stepford Wives offers (seriously or otherwise) a proposition about "all U.S. suburban men" when he shows all kinds of such men responding in the same way to a temptation that isn't available in actual life (having your wife murdered and replaced by a robot that looks similar but sexier, and is devoted to waxing your floors, caring for your children and being good in bed); similarly Willis seems to offer a proposition about "all adolescent males" (at the very least) when all the youths in her story respond identically to her invented temptation. It's possible (from her remarks in an interview in Science Fiction Eye 7) that she intended the youths to have the special shared characteristic of no family life (as "family life" was defined in the USA [of]the 50s in particular) but it is not at all clear from the story itself that none of these students would have had such a life.

It seems to me that both men and women have the capacity to be brutal. I do not dispute that there are sadistic elements in human sexuality, but to claim (as Willis's story seems to me to do) that testosterone isolates men from the human race, endowing them with an overriding instinct towards brutality, is like equating G.K. Chesterton's Father Brown with Jack the Ripper because Father Brown adopts towards sinners the attitude, "There but for the grace of God go I." Thus, I find in "All My Darling Daughters" a basic muddle about potentialities and abnormality.

Yours sincerely,
Yvonne Rousseau

My present estimate is that Connie Willis's is as accurate a fictional account as you can get. A totally veridical account of "reality" is undesirable (even if it were possible), so a verbal rendition of a bad situation often shows it as worse than it actually is--what Northrup Frye calls a "distortion of realism in the interest of structure." In particular, testosterone doesn't separate a specific group of boys or men from the human race--as might be inferred from the story--but it does isolate those modes of behavior shared with other male animals.

---

423 Summit Avenue
Hagerstown, MD 21740

Dear Leland:

Pat Hodgell on The Old Curiosity Shop had a built-in advantage for me. That was the novel my grandmother always wanted me to read when I was small and got to poking around in her almost-complete set of Dickens novels, her graduation gift from her father. I never got more than a few pages into it because I was not old enough for Dickens' style but I've retained a prejudice in its favour ever since. However, I think that some elements of the Gothic style of fiction which are cited here can be found in fiction of almost any era. The young woman in distress and in need of rescue, for instance: that can be traced all the way back to mythology in the adventures of females like Eurydice and Ariadne, and it was such a cliché in chivalric fiction that Cervantes parodied it mercilessly with Don Quixote's quest for the non-existent Dulcimara.

I'm afraid Colin Manlove loses me with his paradox claim for The Time Machine and The War of the Worlds as possessors of the most in common and the most in contrast among Wells's s-f. It sounds impressive but it's something like a claim that Dhalgren is both a short novel and a long novel. And I confess that I've always felt more interest in the shakiness of Wells's reasoning and science than in the sociological import of his early s-f stories. For instance, it seems preposterous that the Morlocks would depend on the Eloi for their meat. Farmers don't raise possums or foxes as meat animals. The Eloi presumably have similar attributes to the humans from whom they're descended: it takes them fifteen years or more to reach full size after birth, most of the time the females bear only one infant per pregnancy, and a fully grown Eloi would yield only perhaps a little more than a hundred pounds of solid edibles. Surely the Morlocks would have enough common sense to depend on the future equivalent of beef cattle, for good quantity of meat per carcass, or hogs, for multiple births and quick growth to imposing dimensions.

Communion is pretty well done. The only major complaint I can think of is the author's tendency to slow down the narrative pace when the action picks up, explaining too many details in the middle of the commotion.

Peter Bernhardt's paean to the Coneheads is lost on me. I never was able to find any pleasure in Saturday Night Live and the current reruns on Nickelodeon haven't changed my reactions.

It was almost painful to read Rick Sneary's letter in this issue. In case you haven't heard, he died a couple of months ago shortly after moving away from his beloved Southgate. His death apparently came quickly and easily, which might be some compensation for the health problems that plagued him so much during his life.

Carleton Morse isn't the only golden age radio creator whose accomplishments have weathered well. [In] 1990 I was lucky enough to acquire on audio tape almost all of the episodes involving Lum and Abner's Mars expedition of 1942. They are as hilarious as ever, maybe more so since some of the problems they faced are singularly like the troubles NASA has been having in recent years.

The illustrations are extraordinarily good throughout this issue, except for their size and the goldenrod paper which reduces somewhat the contrast. The ones accompanying Communion should make an overwhelming effect if they could be seen in black and white and at least twice their present dimensions.

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

I was stunned by your citation of Lum and Abner as astronauts, having always thought of them as proprietors of a country store.// Antiquity sets no precedence here: in the legends of Ariadne and Medea, e.g., it's the maiden (who's never in danger) that rescues the young man--by showing him how to traverse the Minoan labyrinth or by putting to sleep the dragon guarding the Golden Fleece--and in the story of Eurydice, a backward glance from her lover (Orpheus) messes up the entire rescue operation. In Chivalric tales, my impression (from reading Mallory) is that la belle dame exists not to be rescued but to show her knight new "adventures"--i.e., new ways to get into trouble.

1847 Babcock #406
San Antonio, TX 78229

Dear Leland,

...on to your new issue [with] two interesting articles by P.C. Hodgell and Colin Manlove. The problem with Ms. Hodgell's article is that in the beginning she gives several definitions of "Gothic" as it changed over time; then she spends the remainder of the article describing How Dickens' Old Curiosity Shop once more changed how Gothics would come to be defined. Yet, at the end, she does not give us a clear, concise definition of what Gothics had become and [doesn't specify] whether or not The Old Curiosity Shop totally fits into this new category.

Mr. Manlove's article nicely pointed out some interesting facts, but nowhere did he ever explain what he was trying to point out. What facet or facets of "dualism" is he trying to show us? The lack of any "tell them what you are going to tell them" left me wondering where [the article] would head next and whether [a] couple of points highlighted were related in any sense.

Communion [has] the germ of a decent plot, but [its] use of this idea frankly left me flat. None of the characters are developed in any depth. This is best done through (1) character interaction, of which [there is] little, and (2) contrasting the feelings of two or more characters (maybe if we saw that Ismail was also jealous of Matthew, for his own reasons). Sure, almost all people are prejudiced to some degree, but there needs to be some explanation why Matthew Rogers is prejudiced. Instead, all [that's given] us is a [whining] character who keeps telling himself what a schmuck he is, without making any effort to improve himself or "grow" as the story moves along.

Yours,
Alexander R. Slate

For info on dualisms (including some unnoticed by your editor) see the note from K.V. Bailey, our Channel Island correspondent.//On Matt's jealousy see p. 191: "The main reason Ismail repelled him, he knew, was that he had gotten higher grades than him in flight and maintainance training." About Communion's more general aspects--switching the focus away from the central character would destroy that unity of viewpoint so essential to a short story, which is to be regarded not as an extended time-sequence but as an instantaneous cross-section. Such brevity also means no growth (or deterioration) of character (though mutations are sometimes possible), only "snapshots" of it, as exemplified, e.g., in the final scene by Matt's revulsion at his own dried-corpse frozen-coffee imagery or by Ismail's request to be positioned to face Mecca at his moment of death.

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428 Sagamore Ave
Teaneck, NJ 07666

Dear Lee:

RQ is always interesting, and this issue, featuring thoughts on some beloved authors, is no exception. Colin Manlove's article on H.G. Wells, naturally, appealed first. I have no particular cavil with his thesis, TTM and WW as companion novels. I do not think of them that way myself, but in his Introduction to the 1934 Knopf reprinting of Seven Famous Novels Wells himself put them together: "The War of the Worlds like The Time Machine was another assault on human self-satisfaction."

Indeed, I once read somewhere, and have always agreed with it, that the young Wells who wrote TTM was, in the flush of youthful philosophizing and observation a discouraged young man, filled with gloom. This is the heart of TTM and its bleak picture (although as a youngster I willingly accepted the story at face value, loved it then, love it still, and will vote for it as the single greatest of all s-f stories, notwithstanding its old-fashioned qualities). As he grew older, became successful, and mixed philosophizing with philandering and espoused socialism, his view mellowed. He did not become an optimist: in that same Introduction he comments that seventeen years later when he wrote Men Like Gods he had already grown tired of writing "parables to a world engaged in destroying itself." Anyway, insofar as that vaunted technological brilliance of those Martians goes, I hope Colin is aware that a few years after WW, Thomas A. Edison, no technological slouch himself, organized an expedition (chronicled by Garrett P. Serviss) went to Mars and beat the pants off the buggers!

One sombre sidenote: the Martians being destroyed by "the meanest form of life on earth--the bacteria," inasmuch as they had no immunological systems. Today, of course, we face an enemy at least as bad as the extraterrestrials, the AIDS virus, which destroys the immunological system and leaves its sad victims prey, again, to bacteria, particularly a pneumococcus which offers little hazard to those with sound immune systems.

Ben Indick

With respect to "Martian Chronicles" I much prefer the latter-day version, not only for its lack of malice (on our part, at least), but because the natives, instead of being the hideous HGW-GS creatures, appear to be somewhat like ourselves. To put things bluntly: who would want to read a writer like Garrett Serviss when he can read one like Ray Bradbury?

4846 Derby Place
Klamath Falls, OR 97603

Dear Lee--

The "Danse Macabre" theme of the issue is borne out well in the cover illo by Teddy Harvia. The extensive article on the Gothic novel in transition was excellent. One notes that Monk was also the name of the primary villain in Oliver Twist, who was a nasty, shadowy figure acting as a prime mover to tempt Oliver into crime and thus become the only heir under the terms of the will. Coincidence or inspiration? Disraeli's fiction also shows Gothic elements, though his roots lie in his acquaintance and admiration of Byron (to the extent of inheriting his servant, Tito) and his own rich Sephardic heritage. The best recent example of Gothic work has to be that created by Phyllis A. Whitney (at least in my own 'umble opinion). As for the Brontes--Emily indulged in it the most, I feel, while Charlotte came next. Anne didn't seem to need it (Agnes Gray is pretty much a straight romance, but rather a nice one, really), while Branwell apparently adored it (judging by available fragments. In fact, some of those fragments really had potential beyond their Byron-clone aspects--there's one [where] I'd like to change some names and fingerprints...well, never mind).

Manlove's analysis of Wells was also excellent. One notes that Wells does like to provide some limiting factors by way of point of view and geography. Perhaps he felt it was necessary in light of the extremely wide scope of his ideas. No doubt he wished to keep his work accessible to readers (for which we thank him!). Given that he places the human race so small in perspective to both time and space, perhaps he wanted to make sure the reader wasn't totally lost in the process.

Communion by Lance Robinson was interesting, though I'd think there would be a story in the diplomats and media being crushed together for three days and not killing each other in the process. It is nice to see that religion apparently would still have some relevance in space (The Church of Christ, Cosmonaut is mentioned in the [Ben] Bova universe (the Kinsman stories) but apparently isn't part of the day to day life of any of the characters.) This story illustrates that sometimes doing the right thing will cost the ultimate price. Yet--would the others really expect Matt to sacrifice everything just so he could die with them? Wouldn't at least one of them object, and insist that he go?

Theatre of the Fantastic brought back lots of memories (like how the Coneheads drink beer from a sixpack). I might add that Beldar's name was correctly chosen as Dan Akroyd's chosen character name by a fairly young gentleman on MTV's Remote Control. No doubt his parents taped enough shows...

Live long and prosper,

Jean Lamb

Such a suggestion is made by Ismail, but after Matthew's disclaimer (p. 198)--"There's not much left there to get back to. We're probably the only ones alive"--insistence would seem pointless.// Geographic detail in War of the Worlds was not only to restrict scope but also to increase plausibility. This graphic depiction of the English countryside was one reason why the author objected to Orson Welles's radio adaptation, which was set in New Jersey.

Editorial Note: What follows is a letter of comment on RQ#30 (you're reading #32), delayed not by our correspondent's tardiness in writing about but by your editor's tardiness in waiting six months to send it.

1748 Eastmoreland Ave
Memphis, TN 38104

Dear Leland:

Kratz's bit about heroism/anti-heroism in s-f/f was nicely done. He obviously did his research. My only quibble was over the comment about Zelazny's "semi-sentient" computer being the inspiration for Douglas Adams's babel fish. I'm not sure what Doug's idea for the babel fish came from, although a quick flip through Neal Galman's Don't Panic: The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy Companion could probably tell you. Maybe Kratz and I read two different books, but insofar as I could tell, Zelazny intended Speicus to be a true artificial intelligence, operating as a symbiote within another organic being.

Peter Bernhardt was bang on the money with his piece on The Last Unicorn. As much as I loved it, I had some faults with the film from the first time I saw it. Hopefully the trend toward new animation will improve things. Unfortunately, some of the Japanimation styles have rubbed off on us so thoroughly that there'll probably never be another toon with a properly proportioned face. A notable exception to the big-eyed style is a 2½ hour mini-series that came out in February; Dark Water, a fantasy quest tale with a coherent, adult story-line and some of the finest animation I've ever seen from anybody except Disney. The funny thing is that it was produced by Hanna-Barbera, the pioneers of the quick'n dirty toon. I'm waiting to see what Peter has to say about the current crop of toonery from Warner and Disney.

Tell Harmon he sold me. I'm heading out at my first opportunity to hunt up a copy of Killer at the Wheel. It sounds great. For him, if he likes mysteries, I recommend Poodle Springs, by Raymond Chandler and Robert B. Parker. Broke as I am, I still bought a copy new, and I've read it five times.

Well, I've gotta motor. Brokaw's about to come on.

Best,

Michael Harper

For more on heroism see the letter that follows. Meantime, I'll suspend judgment on Zelazny's novel for an original reason: I haven't read it yet. // Hunting down a Carlton Morse book in second-hand bookstores seems impossible--all its readers evidently want to keep it--so any copy ($16.95+$1.50 shipping charges) must be ordered directly from the author @ Star Route Box 50, Woodside, CA 94062.

---

190 Coach Rd, Sleights, nr Whitby
North Yorks YO22-5EN, Great Britain

Dear Leland--

I didn't mean to say or imply in my LoC that I support militaristic heroes and ignore people who have actually made creative contributions to their society, often while overcoming considerable personal handicaps.

On the other hand, the more I think about it, the more dubious I feel about what heroes are for. I started out by wondering who my personal heroes are, and ended up with a bunch of fictional characters:

Spock--My affection for Trek is based on memory; it was the one TV series I watched regularly during my adolescence, the one visual input I knew that took all those exciting ideas about space exploration both excitingly and seriously. And the Spock I admire is not the stock series character but someone who has come to personify non-violence, empathy, integrity, perceptiveness...and hope, someone who doesn't need to prove (i.e., test and demonstrate) his strength through dominating or intimidating others.

Sparrowhawk, in LeGuin's Earthsea trilogy, is someone else who seems to have taken on an independent existence inside my head. Him I admire as someone who's ended up being in tune with the universe, with the Balance, with what is. Someone who allows power to flow through him, who has avoided becoming possessed by power. Someone who's been badly hurt, but who's used that experience to develop his sensitivity and awareness.

And some women, too. But there are fewer women than men in the literature who strike me as both heroic, worthy role-models and fully rounded human beings. Paxe, in Elizabeth Lynn's The Northern Girl is one. She's a genuinely strong, competent, skilled sensitive woman [who] lives in a society which has lost its original vision; the central art has been split into a pair of opposites, fighting and dancing. Paxe can claim the fighters skills, but not the dancers'; full authority hasn't been passed to her. Her mirror-image in the book, a male dancer, has become what our society would have called "womanish"; a plotter, a concealer, a deceiver, someone who can't let go. Paxe has inherited all the integrity of the unbroken art.

I did an exercise recently designed to evoke "the inner Shaman," a figure inhbiting the imagination who can be turned to for comfort, help and advice when confronting personal problems. I had to list the qualities that might make someone an inspiring model for me: Integrity. Creativity. Strength. Empathy/insight. Wholeness. Commitment. Vision.

I guess if I really found a hero to worship (which is what people originally did with heroes; they formed a bridge between ordinary people and the true gods), that person would display these qualities.

But the writing I find most inspiring at the moment turns away from the idea of individual heroes. LeGuin's Always Coming Home, for example, doesn't have any heroes at all. The idea of concentrating the power of a whole people in one person for anything other than a comparatively short and ritually circumscribed time, is abhorrent to the Kesh, the people of that book (nice resonance with the power of the phrase "People of the Book" there). Perhaps I will be a stronger and more effective person myself if I can learn to live and act in a world without heroes.

Best Wishes,
Sue Thomason

In the collective (military) sense, what's required (besides a capable leader) is an army trained to execute orders (individual heroics safely being left to the opposition, fighting for a lost cause), which is why Caesar's Legions were so successful, even against physically superior troops. In the individual sense, fictional characters can't be useful role models, since there exists no bona fide information about them. Because we can emulate desirable characteristics of a real person (while rejecting any others) it's easiest to examine these separately without trying to manufacture a "hero." E.G., (to consider two people once admired by your editor), we can praise the honesty and courage of Bertrand Russell or Vince Lombardi's ability to endow others with his own enthusiasm--while disliking the philandering of one or the anti-semitism of the other. So I agree that it's best to "learn to live and act in a world without heroes."

3550 Pacific Ave#604
Livermore, CA 94550

Dear Leland,

Overall [RQ] was a well-balanced mix of education and entertainment.

I don't seek out critical articles like those by Pat Hodgell and Colin Manlove, but usually find them absorbing and informative, and am therefore usually pleasantly surprised when I come upon such pieces unlooked-for. I may even be tempted to try some Dickens, whom I have previously regarded as sentimental and ineffectual by comparison with his near contemporary Emile Zola.

[Since I am] thoroughly fed-up with reading articles claiming that scientists are emotionless and therefore both inhuman and inhumane, it was refreshing to find Colin Manlove dealing with the subjects of emotionless intellect and potential scientific narrow-mindedness in a mature fashion. (How has the need for scientists to be impartial--i.e., to not prefer their own personal theories above others or above the facts--been translated in the minds of many non-scientists into the belief that scientists are unfeeling and callous?)

Poetry is no favourite of mine but most of the poems in RQ bore multiple re-readings. Only "Memory" jarred--it struck me as trying to be too clever by half.

I finished RQ with the desire to re-read the poetry, perhaps read The Old Curiosity Shop, see some of the previous issues referred to in the letters and see something of the Coneheads. All in all, a highly worthwhile 'zine.

Yours sincerely,
Stephen Rothman

Inevitably, the public equates disinterest -- lack of self-interest -- with being uninterested, i.e., lacking any interest. Hence scientists are regarded as lacking emotional commitment, i.e., as carrying only professional-type judgments into non-professional (personal) affairs. All this leads directly to the pulp writer's "mad scientist." For the passionless academic (S.P. Wright's "white-skinned, stoop-shouldered laboratory man") can become a dangerous Bad Guy only by a sudden transformation of his whole personality, i.e., by "going crazy."

---

30 N. 19th St
Lafayett, IN 47904

Dear Lee:

Dickens has of course written a noted ghost story, "A Christma Carol"; other than that he doesn't leave a whole lot of room for fantasy, what with the down-to-earth Cockney attitude expressed so often in his stories. I have always regarded his fantasy affinities as being of the ghost-story genre, which is the most elementary form of fantasy, I should think. Ghosts are found also in Shakespeare, and I think the fantasy of London and surrounding England favours them, with William Hope Hodgeson, at a considerable distance and [with] Arthur Conan Doyle's introduction of science causing [something] more modern in English literature.

I don't see for certain which definition of Gothic Pat Hodgell favours of the ones she introduced, though the last seems to be the most closely followed if it is to include "The Turn of the Screw," which seems to me more Victorian than Gothic, more in a class with Wilkie Collins. But I am considering a term which has been completely unfamiliar to me. The only knowledge I have had of the term is that our town has what is called "Gothic architecture," and surely enough it is neo-German--and we have also been assaulted with "Gothic romances," notable for embossed covers. Sincerely, John Thiel

---

From a rationalist viewpoint, Conan Doyle represents a step backward, his belief in Spiritualism being right in line with British ghost traditions.//As Pat observed, Gothic originally denoted those qualities attributed to Germanic tribes taking over the Roman Empire, so it's a "natural" term for neo-German architecture. An equally natural picture (what Pat called the "archetypal Gothic image"), the distressed maiden in the spooked house, is, to be sure, on "every paperback 'Gothic' on the newsstands"--although the uniqueness of this situation is still being questioned, as in Harry Warner's letter.

P.O. Box 516
Wauseon, OH 43567

Dear Leland,

Received RQ #31 and enjoyed it very much. I especially liked Jim Harmon's Harmony on the Air Adventures of Jimmie Allen. When I was a boy in school in the 30s I rushed home to listen to this on the radio. In our area it was sponsored by the Hitchock Oil Company (Hi-Speed Gasoline). Jimmie Allen and Hi-Speed gasoline are both long gone, but the memories linger on.

Island Airlines (out of Port Clinton, Ohio) was the last airline to regularly fly Ford tri-motors. They flew them up until a few years ago, and of course I took a trip to Put-In-Bay with them. I was a licensed pilot, but as a scheduled airline, they couldn't let a passenger pilot the plane. So Jim is one up on me.

After the first of the year [1991] I will have the first issue of the "new series" Pulp Era out. I will, of course, send both you and Jim a copy and hope you enjoy it as much as I enjoyed this issue of RQ.

Best to you,
Lynn Hickman

Alas! Pulp Era seems to have gone the same route as the Pierce Arrow, the Dodo bird, and the Ford Tri-Motor, since the end of '91 is approaching--and still no magazine.

---

27 Borough Rd., Kingston on Thames
Surrey KT2-6BD, Great Britain

Dear Leland,

Undoubtedly, the star turn this issue is Pat Hodgell on The Old Curiosity Shop. This had me blowing the dust off my copy to refresh my memory.

Way back when I was young, I read the first page of Bleak House at the counter of Woolworth's and ordered a whole set of Dickens on the strength of that. He was the first of the classic writers to fire my imagination, and I still think he's good.

The poems I like this time are "Synthesizer Suzie" and "The Invention of the Frisbee." "Late Flight across Nevada" comes close behind. Some of your poets need to be reminded that a poem is more than an arrangement of words; it should also say something to the reader.

Harmony was good and the short story not, as they say, half bad; quite well handled, but rather lacking in the originality department.

Science-fiction trash? Aren't you being a bit hard on the writers who do try? For instance, I consider that some of Fred Pohl's recent work is among the best the genre has produced.

I agree that the future lies with the small presses, and am pleased to report that they are booming even better than before over here.

With every good wish for the New Year,
Sydney J. Bounds

That different verse was preferred by different readers indicates that these other poems said something to them.// Recall the Established Opinion, as exemplified by Vladimir Nabokov, who "utterly spurn[s] and reject[s] so-called 'science fiction,'" finding in it only "dismally pedestrian writing" with the same clichés as in "all cheap reading matter."

WE ALSO RECEIVED --

notes on pix from Shep Kirkbride (42 Green Lane, Belle Vue, Carlisle, Cumbria CA2-7QA UK), this issue's cover artist, who notes "the beautifully crafted Koszowski illos" and the "striking cover by Teddy Harvia,"

memos of the good ol' days from "Blaster" Al Ackerman (208 Routt St, San Antonio, TX 78209), who "was esp. delighted to see Jim Harmon's Harmony,"which "along with Willis's The Harp that Once or Twice was my favourite regular feature back over 35 years ago when I was receiving Chas. Lee Riddle's Peon,"

praises of poetry from RQ contributor Ottone (Rick) Riccio (Box 9645 Warwick, RI 02889), who still hasn't had leisure time "to dip into the prose" but has enjoyed Hal Daniel's "Aldous Huxleying" and Stanley Fellman's "Error by Bad King Literate,"

praise for everything from Martha Beck (8024 W. 127th Ave, Cedar Lake, MO 63102), who gives assurance that when RQ arrives, "everything stops so I can read from cover to cover,"

discouraging words from Dorothy Davies (Ty Hydref, 126 Marines Drive, Faringdon, Oxon SN7-7UG, UK), who is not sure she'd "want to see [RQ] on a regular basis" and who quit reading "the somewhat heavy paper on Gothic work when I realised it was likely to colour the way I see The Old Curiosity Shop. It's one of my favourite Dickens novels, and I like the image I have of it."

A VOICE FROM OLYMPUS (continued from page 223)

Perhaps it's easiest to quote my previous remark (in RQ#6) on a William Styron story in an early Vintage collection. "In any s-f anthology the worst contribution will be from the big-name (non-fantasy) writer, who is furnished an excuse to dig up an earlier work that would be rejected if submitted by an unknown." Of course, this wasn't an s-f anthology; and instead of being dug up, the Nabokov seems to have been written specifically for The New Yorker--since not even this writer's current reputation would have enabled him to jettison this piece anywhere else.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

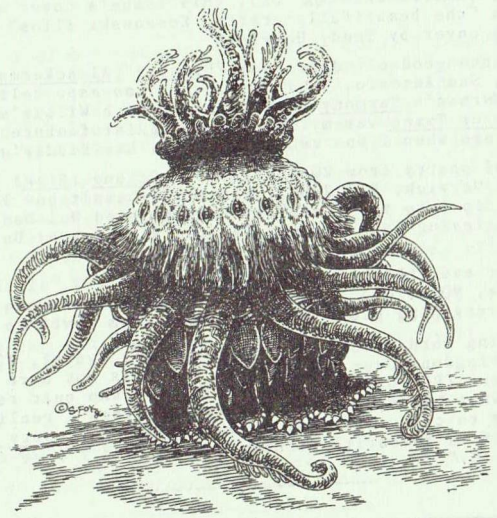
Dave Austin, now teaching at Camden County College, New Jersey, has published poetry in The English Journal and in Quintessence, and is currently at work on a mystery novel.

From the Philosophy department, University of Houston, Justin Leiber in his Invitation to Cognitive Science (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1991) explains how various functions of the human brain can be duplicated via non-organic processes.

Karen Michalson, an editor of the (adult) journal Children's Literature, teaches at the University of Connecticut @ Storrs. Her Victorian Fantasy Literature (Lewiston, New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1990) shows how British Church and Empire politics helped to exclude fantasy works from serious consideration in academic circles.

FROM PIG-PEN TO PENTHOUSE

I must express gratitude to Mary Emerson for her many hundreds of hours work as RQ Art Editor. It would be impossible to recount in this space her many good deeds--from pulling RQ#24 out of the dumpster to changing the magazine's general appearance from hog-house sloppy to ritz-room respectable--so I'll just wish her success in whatever fields she wants to concentrate her future efforts.



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