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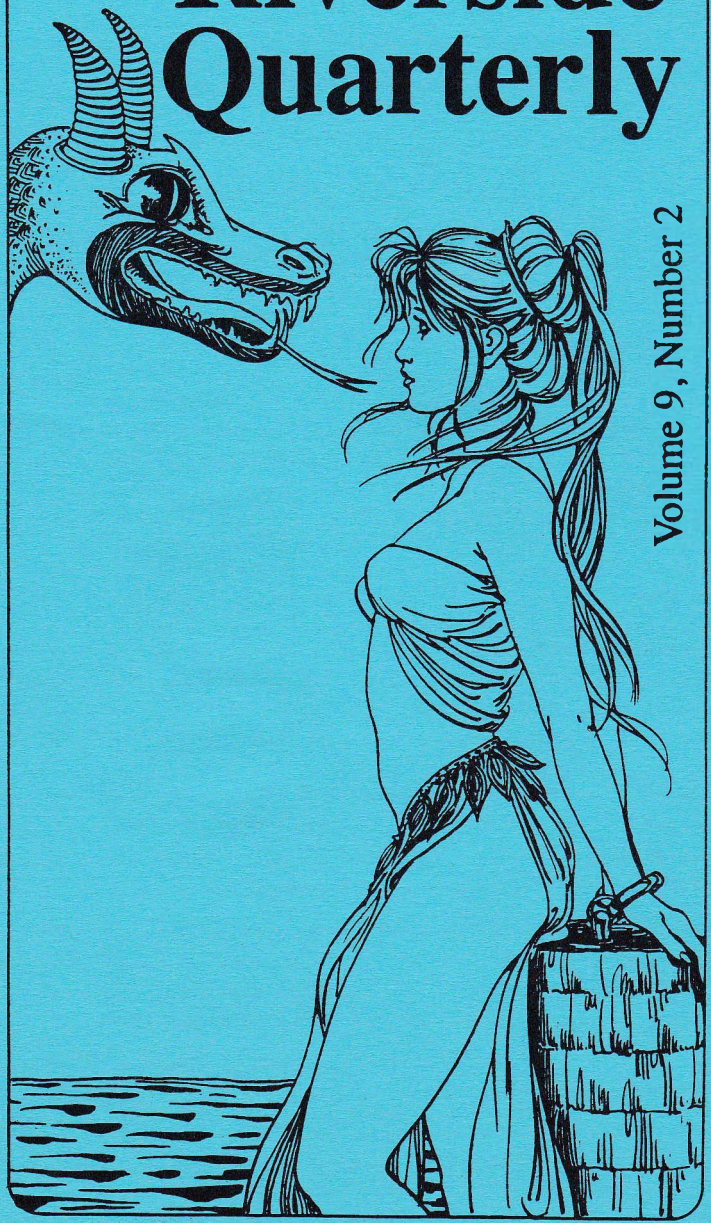
Riverside Quarterly



Volume 9, Number 2

RIVERSIDE QUARTERLY

Volume 9 Number 2 (whole number 34) August 1993

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Subscription rate: $8/4 issues. Back issues are $2.50 each.

RQ Miscellany

ALL'S WELL THAT LOOKS WELL

RQ's art editor, Sheryl Birkhead, considers the present MS unfit for submission to the printer, so your editor must take responsibility for all its artistic defects--irregular boundaries, letters abutting on border lines, etc.--and must credit Sheryl with all its improvements, like better balance in layout and classier title headings--plus the new department, Artist Showcase. RQ seems to look like a semi-pro magazine (several reviewers having mistaken it for one) but it'll be a year or so before it can assume the fully professional appearance of a publication like AQ (Astromancer Quarterly).

STOP PRESS ANNOUNCEMENTS

Postponed are scheduled editorials on Necessary Pollution and Texas Theft in order to announce a Best Seller by each RQ columnist: Jim Harmon's Radio Mystery and Adventure and Peter Bernhardt's Natural Affairs: A Botanist Looks at the Attachment between Plants and People.

Some RMA chapters appear to duplicate those in this author's Great Radio Heroes (cited by Joseph Major's letter in this issue) but this later text discusses not only the programmes themselves but also their writers, producers, actors, sponsors, etc., plus their extensions in films, comics, and television. For the benefit of those fans not acquainted with Old Radio I quote the foreword by Carleton E. Morse:

> There has never been anything to stimulate [mind] the way radio affected the imagination in the heyday of audio entertainment. Listening alone made it possible... to build [your] own illusions. What the eye sees limits the mind to what TV places on the screen. Radio opened the imagination to wonders beyond everyday living into new, vivid adventure and excitement.

An RQ subscriber can obtain a personally inscribed copy by remitting $45 directly to the author at 634 S. Orchard St., Burbank, CA 91506.

Since the publishers (Villard Books) sent me no copy of Bernhardt's text, a didactic note is required. I once told my students on opening day (at McNeese State University) that Algebra will be a dull course--one reason being that it lacks the sex and violence so popular with a U.S. audience. Those into S&V were then referred to the departments of English, where they can study novels on these topics; Drama, where they can "act it out"; History, whose subject ultimately reduces to S&V; and Psychology, which cites still other reasons why S&V are so popular. But the New York Times reviewer (3/29/93) promises that I can add the Biology department--in particlar, Botany--tothe list.

> What is the secret of this botanist who teaches at St. Louis University, who wrote a previous book called Wily Violets and Underground Orchids and who has done fieldwork all over the world? Sex and violence are surely part of it.

I'll omit Bernhardt's account (quoted by the reviewer) of S&V in pollination of greenhood orchids as being unsuitable for readers under the age of seven--and just note that plants are eaten, smoked, and admired--and that these aspects are discussed too. Thus (to quote the reviewer again) "Peter Bernhardt has produced a collection of essays that may well entertain even readers who lack any particular interest in flowers."

Fourth Person Singular

by

Leland Sapiro

Harold Hayes ed., *Smiling through the Apocalypse* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1987), $12.95

Even at its original price, Esquire's "History of the Sixties" is a bargain; at the $3.98 asked at a remainder sale it's like a Rolls Royce sold at a Ford price. Besides reminiscences of America's royal family (the Kennedys) by Tom Wicker, Gore Vidal, et al., we find Tom Wolfe's evocation of Las Vegas insanity, an account by each participant of the Gore Vidal vs. William Buckley non-title fight, an assessment of American novelists by one of their number, Norman Mailer, and in the trade jargon, much, much more.

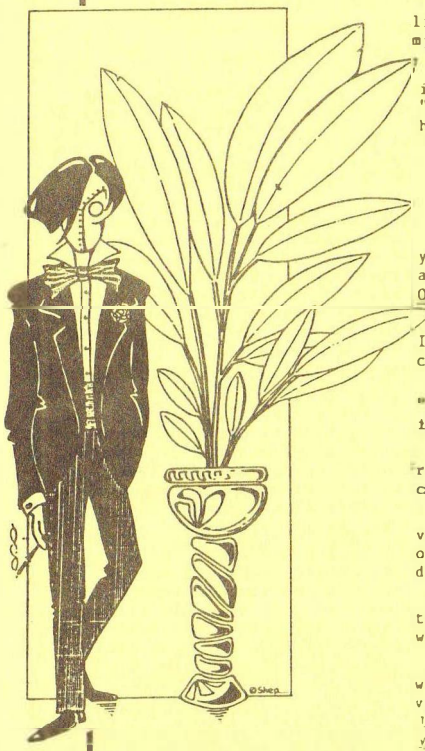
Most relevant in an s-f context is Gay Talese and his capacity for self-deception, first manifested in "The Champ," on prize-fighter Floyd Patterson. Here this author states that the boxer's children "do not know exactly what their father does for a living"--yet he concludes with a scene where one of these kids picks up a microphone and mimics a ring announcer: "Ladiees and Gentlemen...tonight we present..Floydie Patterson.."

But the prime example is Talese's second article, "Frank Sinatra Has a Cold," with an initially placid scene in a private Beverly Hills drinking club.

> It was obvious from the way Sinatra looked at these people in the poolroom that they were not his style... The younger men...accustomed to seeing Sinatra at this club, treated him without deference...They were...very California-cool and casual, and one of the coolest seemed to be a little guy, very quick of movement, who had a sharp profile, pale blue eyes, blondish hair, and squared eyeglasses. He wore a pair of brown corduroy slacks, a green shaggy-dog shetland sweater, a tan suede jacket, and Game Warden boots...

The wearer of the boots is Harlan Ellison, described as "a writer who had just completed work on a screenplay, The Oscar."

> Finally Sinatra could not contain himself.
>
> "Hey," he yelled...Those Italian boots?"
>
> "No," Ellison said.
>
> "Spanish?"
>
> "No."
>
> "Are they English boots?"
>
> "Look, I dunno man," Ellison shot back, frowning at Sinatra, then turning away again.
>
> Now the poolroom was suddenly silent...Sinatra moved away from the stool and walked with that slow, arrogant swagger of his toward Ellison...Then, looking down at Ellison . . Sinatra asked: "You expecting a storm?"
>
> Harlan Ellison moved a step to the side. "Look, is there any reason why you're talking to me?"



> "I don't like the way you're dressed."
>
> "Hate to shake you up," Ellison said, "but I dress to suit myself."
>
> Now there was some rumbling in the room, and somebody said, "Com'on, Harlan, let's get out of here."
>
> But Ellison stood his ground.
>
> Sinatra said, "What do you do?"
>
> "I'm a plumber," Ellison said.
>
> "No, no, he's not," another young man quickly yelled from across the table. "He wrote The Oscar."
>
> "Oh, yeah," Sinatra said, "well I've seen it, and it's a piece of crap."
>
> "That's strange," Ellison said, "because they haven't even released it yet."
>
> "Well, I've seen it," Sinatra repeated, "and it's a piece of crap."
>
> Now Brad Dexter, very anxious, very big opposite the small figure of Ellison, said, "Com'on, kid, I don't want you in this room."
>
> "Hey," Sinatra interrupted Dexter, "can't you see I'm talking with this guy?"
>
> Dexter was confused. Then his whole attitude changed, and his voice went soft and he said to Ellison, almost with a plea, "Why do you persist in tormenting me?"

Talese doesn't describe what happens next--Ellison's disabling his attacker (Brad Dexter) with a billiard cue into the solar plexus--but at least this author has put on record Sinatra's noxious habit of touring the town, accompanied by one or more hired thugs (aides de camp, in Talese's phrase), starting arguments with total strangers, and after tempers reach a certain pitch, stepping aside and letting his thugs "work 'em over." (The unexpected outcome here scarcely diminishes his guilt.)

No blame is assigned for the poolroom incident, the reader being told only that "Ellison had...an unexpected moment between darkness and dawn, a scene with Sinatra." Talese's resolve to see no evil also was manifested in his earlier reference to "Sinatra's possible [emphasis mine] friendship with Mafia leaders." The existence of Sinatra's gangland connections is well-known--see, e.g., Antoinette Giancana and Tom Renner, Mafia Princess (Avon, 1985)--and one must assume that Talese knows no less than other cognoscenti of the movie industry.

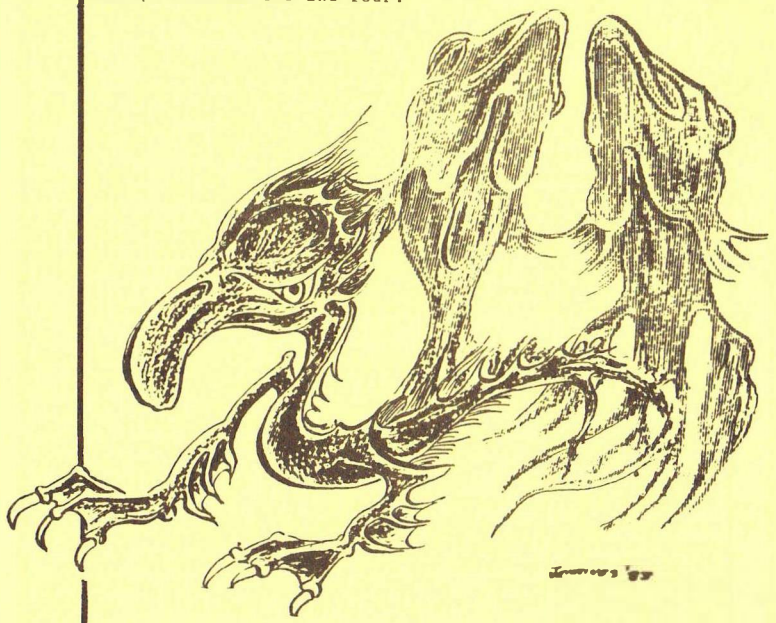
I once read how Emperor Nero arranged for the murder of his mother and then assigned the dramatist Seneca to write a justification of this action. Our twentieth century author was under no such compulsion, so his essay need not have been written --nor should it have been written, since it's just an apology for a gangster.

Science Fiction Eye, issue #11 (December , 1992), Box 18639, Ashville, NC 29914 ($10/3 issues)

A highlight this issue is Paul Di Filippo's "Eye to Eye" encounter with Tom Disch. This is less an interview than a conversation, ranging from the role of cyberpunk "as a way of realizing comic-book and movie visual fantasies" to the role of God, "a fiction that has to be maintained for the sake of the social order." There is also Charles Platt's "Freeze" article on a cyronic City of the Living Dead and Di Filippo's account of Rupert Sheldrake's A New Science of Life and its sequels. My only objections here are that it's not new--but a mixture of 19th century vitalism and Henri Bergson's élan vital--and in the 20th century sense, certainly not science. Equally instructive is Jack Womack's "The Cannon Are Silent" trip to Russia and, in particular, his visit to GUM, "the Macy's of Moscow," where a customer making a routine purchase must stand in three consecutive lines, while being targeted for verbal abuse by indignant sales personnel.

Other Eye pieces are not quite so successful. Ernest Hogan's "Greasy Kid Stuff from Outer Space" just repeats the old plea to put s-f back in the gutter where it belongs; John Shirley's "Deception as Usual"--on lies by classified advertisers, chemical corporations, and by an ex-President--says little we don't know already; and Gary Westfahl in "The Sequalizer" passes up a chance to analyze the oeuvre of Phillip J. Farmer in order to play a pointless word-game.

But everything this issue is fun--especially the letter column, the best anywhere--so a reader who wants the excitement so long absent from s-f is urged to subscribe and to order those back issues still available--at this writing, all except numbers two and four.



William Ramseyer, *Jellyfish Mask* (Box 2994 Atascadero, CA 93423; 1993), $9.95

Sometimes an entire story can be capsulized by/a sentence or two at its very end (the classic s-f examples: John Campbell's "Atomic Power" and Robert Heinlein's "Goldfish Bowl"). But such a Joycean epiphany requires a minimal amount of preparation for which the short-short story mode used here is not adequate.

One third of the items in this collection concern the importance of memory. Without memory (as shown in Orwell's 1984) there is no past (and hence no anticipations of the future, which are based on a remembered past), so that life, in the author's phrase, is just "a hole in nothing." But no clues exist in the preceding narrative, where a motorist is unable to tell a cop where he has been, so we must accept the author's say-so. Other stories about memory--its surgical removal ("Robot Divorce"), its persistence in mechanical organisms ("Robot Dog") or its inexplicable removal ("lifeguard")--are no more convincing than the example, "Hole in the Darkness," quoted above.

Perhaps the only successful attempts are "Conveyor Belt"--recording the assembly-line mentality encouraged by social emphasis on conformity--and "Museum," where a room exhibited as such contains only a couch, a television set, and some common books and magazines. I'd take all this as representing our mindless esteem for trivia, as echoed in the anxious words of the "curator": "Who's going to mind the museum when I'm gone?"

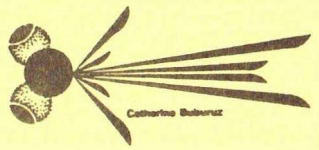
Potentially successful is "Train Station," where a lonely man is isolated amidst entering and departing crowds and has a relationship to only one member: the lady he's assigned to kill. But he bungles his assignment, and after two days in the station is arrested for vagrancy.

Recall Ernest Hemingway s "The Killers," another tale of intended murder, where two gangsters at a country diner wait for a victim who fails to show up. In its two scenes we receive insights into the impersonality of hired gunmen (neither of these being acquainted with his assigned target) and the omnipotence of the Mob: after being warned, at home, the victim exhibits only resignation and apathy, since he realizes that his violent death has not been prevented, merely postponed.

But such information about people or organizations can be found nowhere in Jellyfish Mask, with its short-short format and consequent lack of sustained dialogue.

Other items in the collection seem pointless, e.g., "Nuts," where a soldier is jailed for thinking exactly what the army wants him to think (that others are out to kill him) or "People Pound," where humans are sold as pets, since the buyer of one such pet is herself a human--and there's no indication of how she differs from the other human animals in the shop.

However, the high quality of the layout and of the impressionistic graphics may compensate some readers for the lack of completeness in the text itself.



Jani Anderson, ed., *Bringing down the Moon* (138 W. 70th St #4B, New York, NY 10023, 1985), paper $7.95, cloth $15.95

The lead item, R.E. Klein's "Mrs. Rahlo's Closet," is plainly an H.P. Lovecraft derivative--complete with degenerate seaport town, diary extracts in archaic English, and hints of "visitors from beyond the stars"--so it will serve as an excuse to apply HPL-type evaluations to the rest of this volume.

Rejected at once, then, are Larry Baukin's "Jar Boy," where tots are kept tiny by being stuffed into a jar, and Elizabeth Massie's "Sick 'Un," where a country schoolteacher, investigating the disappearance of a student, is locked inside a woodshed for her later use as hog food. As with the example cited by Lovecraft (William Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily") these are "dark and terrible [events] which could happen, whereas the crux of a weird tale is something which could not possibly happen." In such a story the "sense of fear and evil" arises from "the darker and more maleficient side of cosmic mystery," so that if

> ...any unexpected advance of physics, chemistry or biology were to indicate the possibility of any phenomena related by the weird tale, that particular set of phenomena would cease to be weird in the ultimate sense because it would become surrounded by a different set of emotions.[1]

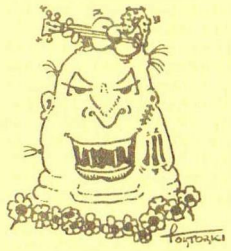
Thus a connoisseur of the macabre (in August Derleth's phrase) avoids a "literature of mere physical fear or the mundanely gruesome," such events being not only possible but in our time highly probable.

Also excluded is Gordon Linzner's "The Independent Fiend" for its forced attempt at the ultimate incongruity: a humorous terror story. (A similar verdict applies to Kevin Anderson and Ron Fortier's "Skeleton in the Closet," a silly story about a silly ghost.) Rob Hollis Miller has shown that a weird tale may contain elements of comedy,[2] but there can be no sustained overt attempt to be funny. As Mark Twain once explained, the author of a humorous story must pretend to see nothing funny at all.

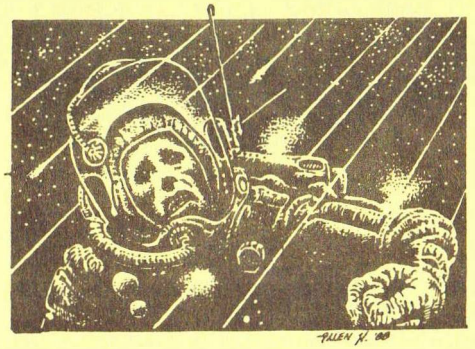
Deficiency in logic and technique is likewise found in John Trebelo's "La Cueva del Circulo sin Fin," which specifies a correspondence between a circular path and a closed timeline. A General Rojo traverses the Circle Cave and emerges, several years before his own birth, with a new identity, Flamante. Years later, Flamante shoots Rojo to complete the cycle. Logical difficulties are avoided here by denying that anything ever happened: after the gunshot, "...no one ever heard again of Rojo [or] ...of Flamante. Nor did anyone hear of any of them prior to that sound." This is not an ending but in Jim Blish's words, "simply an evasion"--a fantasy equivalent of cancelling a story by having the protagonist discover it was all a dream.

Still another failure, in my view, is Daniel Barber's "Wings of the Hunter," which begins with an aviator's horrified glance at an unspecified something that's about to end his flight and his life. From such an opening I expected an airborne Lucifer or a flying Frankenstein--only to learn at the end that it's simply another plane without a visible pilot. Despite HPL's stricture on "prosaic disillusionment,"[3] I think even "a laboured mechanical explanation" (e.g., an automatic pilot) would have been preferable to the one actually given: that the controls were manipulated by the spirit of Baron von Richtofen, the "Red Baron," mystically transported to the USA.

From a more positive viewpoint, Michael Perry's "Stumps," a tale of bayou vengeance, would have been more convincing had the author avoided pulp-style references to the protagonist's "dirty hair," his "yellowed cracked teeth," and other unpleasing bodily characteristics--since such visible correlatives to internal states elicit disgust rather than fear or wonder. It would have sufficed to show the murderer's glee at having his companions ingested by cypress trees (aided by other swamp vegetation) and later being spewed out (and sold) as wooden images that "looked like actual faces or bodies."



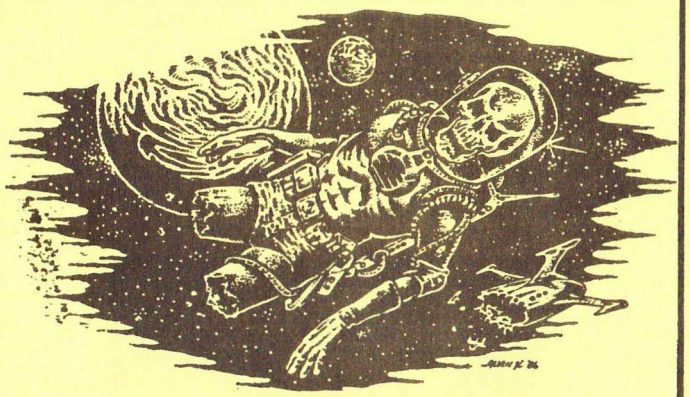
More successful are Douglas Murphy's "Roller" and Ed Kratz's "Poppa," which might be called s-f terror or weird terror, depending on whether or not the reader accepts psychic "action at a distance," i.e., control of one mind by another through direct command, projection of images, or modulation of dreams. In Murphy's story, realistic aspects of nightmare converge with nightmare aspects of "reality"--with an ever increasing difficulty of separating them--while Kratz's is distinguished by its happy-sad ending, which implies that the well-meaning protagonist eventually will become a duplicate of the monstrous evil (his own father) he has just destroyed.



Here we must note HPL's more positive judgments on the weird story. As seen earlier, physical injury is not an allowed subject; instead the aficianado seeks news "of the hidden and fathomless worlds of strange life which may pulsate in the gulfs beyond the stars, or press hideously upon our own globe in unholy dimensions which only the dead and moonstruck can glimpse."[4] However, the weird tale, as we learn elsewhere, is not only a record of events, "but a skilful transcript of a certain sort of human mood."[5]

In this collection perhaps the most vivid expression of evil is Bentley Little's "The Backroom," with its gladiatorial combats between killer infants, armed with spikes or knives. The world revealed here (from a Los Angeles ghetto) does not "press hideously on our own" but *is* our own, translated backwards some millions of years. We're reminded of our own jungle ancestry by the brutish appearance and animal behavior of the spectators--and transported still further back via the gladiators themselves, which are infants aborted so prematurely that they still retain scales and fin-like components indicative of our phylum's amphibian origins. Biological difficulties exist here--not just in the training of such foetuses but in their initial survival--but at least their geographical location is accurate. For where except Los Angeles could such beastly experiments even be contemplated?

Taken in its entirety, then, *Bringing Down the Moon* will be viewed by connoisseurs as a failed attempt to penetrate the weird--and by others, as a successful attempt to exploit the horrid.



FOOTNOTES

1) August Derleth, ed., *Selected Letters of H.P. Lovecraft* (Sauk City: Arkham House, 1971), III, 434.

2) Rob Hollis Miller, "On Humour in Lovecraft," *Riverside Quarterly* VII (1980), 50-53.

3) H.P. Lovecraft, *Supernatural Horror in Literature* (New York: Dover Publications, 1973), 28.

4) *Supernatural Horror*, 14.

5) *Selected Letters*, III, 429.

I'm indebted to Dr. Langley Searles (editor: *Fantasy Commentator*, 48 Highland Circle, Bronxville, NY 10708) for documenting HPL's views on mood and possibility in the weird story.

BAUDELAIRE

I can see him walking the streets of Paris
searching for his Jeanne Duval.

It is night and she is doing it for money
in the pit of a hotel.

He walks into a cafe and quietly sits down at a table.

Finally she enters after his third glass of wine
and looks into his eyes.

He wishes he were a painter instead of a writer.

The glow of her skin reminds him of fire,
beautiful yet dangerous...

and he can't turn away.

-- Jeffrey Zable --

AUBADE

(for Sergei Esenin 1895-1925)

White fairy tale you tell comes true
each morning as they go to sleep
these poets tired of red turned blue
through staccato shearing of sheep
one lone peasant has no defence
in line naked but for his cap
while gold brocade canopies queens.

For Doctor Pasternak you seem
some wooden Russian Ryazan
fresh with what tree stumps cannot say
or badly like Mayakovsky
familiar with bird names to fill
forests but afraid to sleep there.
If unknown sounds kept you awake

there is no trade of it in words
but the call of slick city birds
praising old branches and new sprouts;
puffy flesh of Isadora
flashing off the face of midnight
gave you safe pale Mother Duncan
to take your stripes and offer breast

while the skinny wolves howl for blood.
Lyric poets quickly outlive
their welcome in a molting world
where bony fingers stir the tea
dribbling from the Great Samovar
so you hang genius out to dry
with dawn's light music in motion,

a bleach rinses heavy sun drapes
putting rouge on the cheeks of play.
A revolution gone astray
slicking home to convalescence
telephones hunching hard handles
preparing to pierce again ears
of workers pencils and tan legs

impressed by dull Baltic pebbles
since they learned the sand-throat of fear
and will not be home for the call
and I coax a far voice to cheer
the gaunt Russian without rubles
dangling but unable to fall,
parting sometimes without entry.

-- Thomas Kretz --

A SWIMMING VIOLATION

the lake is slabbed with glass
cattails pierce the air
the shore's fingers reach toward their reflections
he throws a rock at the surface
and waits for the shattering the glass slides side to side
rings appear widen fade the surface rebounds
absorbs the rock
into itself a slight sucking sound
is all he hears

somewhere in the lake the rock
will land gently in the mud
making for itself a quiet couch
it will lie there like a nipple on a breast pointing
to the sky through
blending layers of light

the glass surface resumes its flatness
his own reflection is invisible now
each time the lake wins
he runs out of stones
he is too distant for his aim
stripping off his clothes he plunges
at the surface and feels the edges slice
around his skin with long overhand strokes
he swims toward the centre
the mirror will never be whole again

-- Ottone M. Riccio --

HARMONY

by

Jim Harmon

"Getting Personal"

My new book is just out from McFarland--Radio Mystery and Adventure and its Appearences in Film, Television and Other Media ($45.00, 308 pages). Like all writers, I suppose, I went through the usual dance with my copy editor about changes in my text. He seemed to think anything I said about myself, anything personal, was unprofessional. I should stick to only things I could copy out of other books and reference materials. I don't see any reason for writing a non-fiction book if it is only to recycle material previously available. I have always tried to add new material basically available through personal experience and interviews. I managed to thwart the hide-bound editor most of the time by condensing the material, moving it to another place, or paraphrasing it so it sounded as if from a previously published account. But one personal experience he absolutely refused to let me get through (and I re-read my contract to find that McFarland did have the final say-so, since they deal with some non-professionals writing about some special interest of their own).

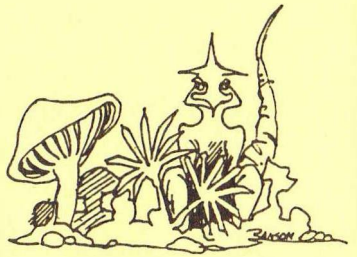
The cut material dealt with my meeting with Orson Welles, one of the greats of the Golden Age of radio (and of movies). How any editor could think that buyers of a book on radio (and partially on films) would not want to read an anecdote about such a prominent figure, offering some insights into his character and working style,escapes comprehension. Over the years, I have functioned as an editor myself and I hope I have never been this impenetrable to any writer whose work I processed.

The story went like this:

I have met a number of the actors who played The Shadow. The original in the role (as a full-fledged central character) was Orson Welles. Several years before his death, he was trying to get a TV talk show on the air which he would host. My late friend, Bob Greenberg (a man who fitted the description "gruff but lovable" better than anyone I ever met) was working for his idol, Welles, and lured me to the show to be a guinea pig for the Great Man under the proposition that I would be called upon from the audience, identified, and allowed to ask the G.M. a question. That never happened. But Welles did go through a lot of business with the audience (including me). I think it safe to say he "over-produced" the pilot, taking what should be essentially a live show, only delayed on tape, and tried to edit and rearrange it like a movie, to make it better. Long after the original guests, including Burt Reynolds and Dolly Parton, had taped their segments, Welles recruited a studio audience to produce audience reaction shots to non-existent guests. A number of people in the business or connected to it got invited. It was somewhat interesting to see the G.M. direct and in fact be directed by him, but after awhile, it become excruciatingly boring. Moreover, we were being asked to perform on cue, and we were not being paid for it. Many people deserted. I heard Welles mutter in a stage whisper that could have reached Peoria, "It's like a bad play."

Welles singled on me and asked me to come down in front, and for some reason, asked me to sit on an apple crate, my knees touching his. It was a silly position, but I felt Welles must have had some particular shot in mind. For several hours, I sat toe to toe with the Great Orson, his glare daring me to interrupt his concentration with some remark. My thought was that I was a pretty hefty guy and that Welles wanted someone in front of him who wouldn't be too great a contrast to his bulk. Later, from someone who saw the completed tape (actor Tony Clay), I found that I had actually been doubling the back of Burt Reynold's head. Apparently our hair and jackets were similar. As time went on, Welles berated the crew and constantly dwindling audience to produce some vision he had of the perfect talk show. Finally, an end was called and after hours of non-paid crate-sitting, I asked a question of the G.M. for my radio research. He turned and stalked from the room without a word. Even though he said not a word to me, my "interview" offered insights. I learned something of Welles's genius, and a lot more about his manners.

I met Bret Morrison a number of times over a 20 year period, but never got to be friends with him the way I have with some radio era actors. His voice was beautiful but Bret was the opposite of The Shadow in appearance. Not tall and lean and black haired, Morrison was of only average height and rather plump, and bald. He signed a number of autographs to me over the years. The first one said, "May I be the the only Shadow in your life."



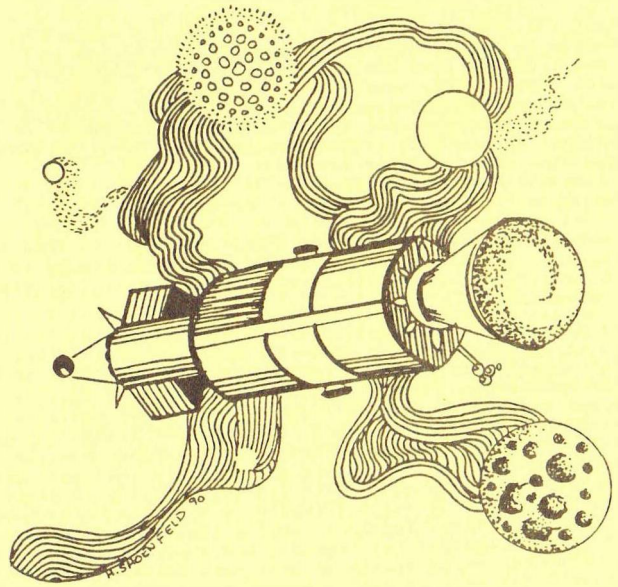
I see his adopted son, Ed Morrison, from time to time at meetings of the Chicago radio actors club, "The Bridge is Up," (the drawbridge over the Chicago River, an excuse for being late to a broadcast).

One of the actors who replaced Bret Morrison for part of a season of The Shadow was John Archer, who appeared in Anthony Tollin's Shadow re-creation for the convention of the Society for the Preservation and Encouragement of Radio Drama, Variety and Comedy--SPERDVAC--in 1987. Also a well-known movie actor, Archer is certainly more visually like Lamont Cranston than Morrison and his vocal performance was excellent too. He projects a sincerity and very masculine kindness that many stars of the Forties had. Although I only got to say hello to Archer and get his autograph, it was a pleasure to see this full-scale dramatization with other regulars such as Leslie Woods (Margot), Dwight Weist (Commissioner Weston), and announcer Andre Baruch. (I was also fortunate enough to have seen Morrison perform as The Shadow, but only in parody sketches for various Frank Bresee productions.)

I was never able to see Orson Welles perform as The Shadow, but from what I did see it was clear that he always considered himself "The Master of Other Mens's Minds."

****

In other news (as they say on TV) I have just completed producing and directing a 1993 audio performance of the original twenty chapter script of Carlton E. Morse's I Love a Mystery: "The Fear that Creeps Like a Cat." Original recordings of this and many other serial stories from the classic mystery/fantasy series are not known to have survived. For many years I have tried to get Mr. Morse, in his ninety-second year at this writing, to license me to do this. We finally convinced Carlton and his attorney, Rick Ferguson, to let us go ahead. Our hope is to do all forty-seven serials over the next few years. They will be released on "talking book" tapes, fully dramatized, with music and sound effects. Several major labels are in competition for distribution. We have from the old days, Les Tremayne, who played major supporting roles in ILAM and did leads for Morse and many others on different series as "Jack." Among the new young actors is Tony Clay, who does a wonderful "Doc." Among the supporting players are my wife, Barbara, and I. If you are interested, check your book and record stores or write me at the address listed by your editor in "RQ Miscellany."



THE FARMER'S WIFE

turning
stone cakes
stale walls

stirring
burnt milk
churned leaves

shining
butter

lighting
ashes

returni g
borrowed fire

-- Rhea Sossen --

ONE IMAGE: THE LUMBER OF ROSES

See with me
Ungentle, scattered light by
Welding sparks falling as
Fierce blendings into
Burns' Red Flower --
Now, not to be picked and so dead,
Stuffing vanity vase mouths;
But strongest, Lumber of Roses.

-- Stanley Fellman --

PATIENCE

Sitting in a car with a cigarette
looking out toward a vacant lot
a man coughs into a cupped hand.
Beside the car beside the road

the gnarled roots of an elm search
for a foothold in a sliding embankment.
Beside the elm

a heron perched on one leg beside
a pond gazes into the water
impassively, is motionless...

A field cricket finding its way
into a house, lodges behind a
kitchen refrigerator, intermittently
serenades a washing machine for 3
weeks --

-- Peter Brett --

Fictions at an Exhibition: A Review of J.G. Ballard's *War Fever*

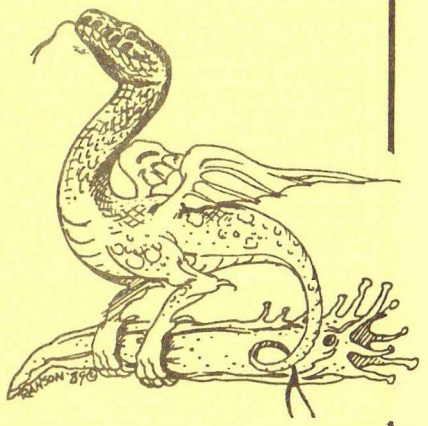
(Farrar, Straus & Giroux); 182 pages; $18.95

by

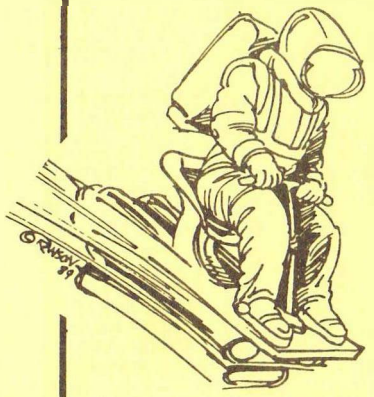
Charles John-Arnold

War Fever is J.G. Ballard's first collection of stories since the oddly nostalgic Memories of the Space Age, and perhaps his most representative since the Terminal Beach stories of some three decades ago. Though often mentioned in the same breath with Brian Aldiss, Michael Moorcock, and others of the British New Wave, Ballard has always managed to stay one step ahead of the tedious and pretentious sentimentality of most contemporary British s-f. With his elliptical style and his extraordinary ability to identify the latent mythological content of a burgeoning post-technological world, Ballard has become one of the first mythographers of the next millennium. Like his closest lineal compatriots Burroughs and Lem, Ballard detonates the crumbling monoliths of a pre-industrialist consciousness, leaving in their wake the emerging myths of a near future more terrifying than any Sophocles or Ovid could have imagined. Not surprisingly, his best short stories, with their images exploding off the page like streaking missles off a desert landscape, read like the futurist manifestos of an incendiary linguist of dreams.

Ballard's near obsessive desire to recast the exhilarating and self-confident post-World War II years of a newly inaugurated space age as a kind of mythic fulfillment of a common manifest destiny is especially evident in the Cape Canaveral stories. In these unnerving sketches of crashed airships, derelict gantries, and abandoned cities Ballard envisions the final collapse of the American Dream and the nightmare machineries of its technological civilization. With the rapid decline of the Age of Space there emerges a new race of Beautiful Americans released on a voyage to discover the inner horizons of their own subjective space-time and the collective memory of the species. Thus, in "Report on an Unidentified Space Station," a deserted space depot becomes the setting for a supposedly marooned astronaut's startling discovery of the hermetic nature of existence. Similarly, in "The Object of the Attack," a young Palestinian terrorist, obsessed with freeing himself from the embrace of a new messiah of the world's first "Church of the Divine Astronaut," discovers the cure for clinical psychosis in the systematic deconstruction of the three-dimensional illusionist space of reality. In both "Memories of the Space Age" and "The Man Who Walked on the Moon," Ballard compounds the archetype of a new Everyman of the space age: a radically decentred consciousness unstrapped from the gravity of temporal relationships and set adrift in the "empty and infinite spaces of the self." For Ballard, the mythic image of the mirror-faced astronaut becomes an eerie metaphor for everyman's voyage through the absolute loneliness of the self. Through all of the Canaveral stories, Ballard persistently reiterates that our flights through space--in whatever form they may take--are generally doomed to disaster: as disguised attempts to escape the omnipresence of time, they lead inexorably to the collapse of the individual through the more frightening aspects of the self.

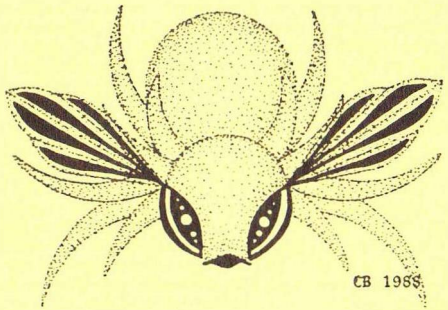


Another, somewhat lighter side of Ballard's mythologizing is his exploration of the ultra-chic amusement park atmosphere that he suggests is rapidly replacing the more rigid environment demanded by the Puritan ethic. As humanity verges closer to that twilight realm where the decadent perversities of instinct and desire are capable of being gratified by a "benevolent" technology, the regimen of leisure will replace the rigours of labour. In "The Largest Theme Park in the World" Ballard anatomizes this new social philosophy of the rich, the irresponsible, and the uninhibited. In a liberated post cold war Europe, with its bronzed citizens transfigured in the collective rapture of a millennial holiday, the Puritan ethic gives way to the ethics of pleasure and a new dark golden age. In somewhat of a different spirit, "Love in a Colder Climate" offers a serio-comic 21st Century where AIDS is the real threat to world tranquillity.



In what sounds like a cinematic vehicle for Marilyn Chambers, the rigours of military service have given way to compulsory sexual activity, aimed at reducing the ranks of an increasingly celibate -- and thus socially destabilized -- world. In this new age of sexual conscription, churches are transformed into the baroque sex shops of a hyper-libidinal culture; clergymen do double time as both confessor and pimp; and nuns become the eager coaches of participants in a new world Olympiad of the amatory arts. In the near hallucinogenic "Dream Cargos," a mysterious chemical spill of the coast of Puerto Rico transforms a barren lagoon into a surreal Eden of the unconscious. In this phantasmagoric paradise, all the yesterdays and tomorrows of the human condition converge and become reflected in a dazzling spectrum of possibility and fulfilment.

While War Fever serves well as an index to Ballard's more explicit technical mythologies, it also serves as a general catalogue of his private obsessions with language and the expansion of narrative technique. As a sort of mythologia futura, "The Index"--a painstaking compilation of influential 20th Century figures--glosses the birth of a new generation of Oedipuses and Jocastas, their fates scribbled by the word of the text and brought into focus by the eye of the camera. In "Notes Towards a Mental Breakdown," Ballard proposes a radically terminal art of criticism: by relentlessly glossing an 18-word synopsis of a murderer's lost autobiography, he succeeds in constructing a fictional text that threatens to efface the authority of the original altogether. In these hyper-lingual fantasies, wet dreams for pubescent grammatologists everywhere, Ballard re-establishes his unswerving belief in the apocalypse of language and the scattering of the human subject across its ever expanding horizons. In Ballard's fictional labyrinths, the conjunction of the written word and the cinematic image produces a distinctively modern dramaturgy, where the arts of politics and mass merchandising are each staged as a new form of theatre.



Ballard's term for such practices, in which the marriage between the art of the machine and the life of the subconscious goes all but unnoticed, is "invisible technology," and in "The Secret History of World War III" (originally written in 1988) he devises a comic scenario that depicts with chilling alacrity its relentless grip on the image-conscious 20th Century imagination. In 1992 a lobotomized Ronald Reagan returns to the White House for a third term (apparently Ballard is unaware of constitutional restrictions on third terms for U.S. presidents) amid the jubilant adulation of an adoring nation and an obsequious media. With the President's final act in office being a formal declaration of World War III, the crisis comes and goes unnoticed by an American public transfixed to the Presidential Channel, which broadcasts non-stop, detailed information about the state of the President's health.

In what is ostensibly the set-piece of the book, the title story, Ballard ingeniously combines his hyper-realist narrative mode, employed in such later novels as Empire of the Sun and The Day of Creation, with the obsessive translucence of his early visionary technique. With the rest of the world wrapped in a perpetual peace, a near-future Beirut is transformed into an elaborately stylized experimental war zone, where factious malitia-families are bred like laboratory mice to revolve through endless cycles of vengeance and controlled bleeding. To contain the virus of the "martial spirit," Ballard envisions a "benevolent" arena of perpetually renewed hatred where the virulent strain of the human instinct for violence and aggression is deliberately nurtured and anatomized for the continued security of an ever tenuous world order.

With its blend of neoteric grammars and surrealist images, War Fever anthologizes unsettling tableaux of the future that shimmer with the lucidity of truth while yet retaining at their edges the vague chiaroscuro of dreams not yet fully exposed to the light of the present. Fervently romantic and fashionably pessimistic, topically satirical and timelessly tragic, Ballard's gallery of nightmares exhibits the mesmerizing art of a master illusionist. In his incantatory prose, which is always slipping toward the margins of poetry, fictions often seem more factual than the things they represent.

BLACK PROPHECY

Lightning sparkles
weaves to sting
through blank orbs
emerald fixation
soulless

blood will roll its tongue
bone marrow gleaming
in raw
wise stations
as sure as winter grey

springing
steel gristle faith

blinding bush night
neon

-- Malcolm Scott MacKenzie --

SATURDAY NIGHT

Sunday waking
I dream Easter,
talk blood evergreen woods...
pump physics
Saturday night
before love.

Strolling couple
barefoot heel touching toe,
walk without impression
September wet sand.
Passing streams moved
multi coloured winds,
cinnamon trees
phosphorus hue
rustle valley greens
revealing mirrors
reflecting vacant view.

Melting sonnet gathered pair
float clear seamless web,
share glimpsing shadows
never lengthened
revolver sun.
Pink mountains undivided,
moistened flesh shining dark,
dissolve
soft liquid eyes
unburdened
earth's stone-ladened self.

Sitting oceans still
waiting Buddha's triple heart,
bathers soak electric clear rain.
I dream,
pump blood evergreen woods
before love.

--William Passera --

Theatre of the Fantastic

by

Peter Bernhardt

Genius Squashed?

Terry Gilliam enjoyed his first taste of international recognition back in the mid-seventies when the BBC exported "Monty Python's Flying Circus" to most English-speaking countries. Gilliam was the only American on the Python team and the only animator. He claimed that his cartoons were unappreciated in America, but they found a wide audience through the Python shows. Gilliam's cel-animation was combined with live actors or used, most effectively, to tie surreal sketches together. Gilliam borrowed avidly from both Victorian illustrators and classical painters. His most enduring creation was a giant white foot (derived from a Renaissance painting of Cupid) that came down from heaven to squash all life beneath it.

By British standards Gilliam's work was "too clever by half." He should have vanished after the series ended but the Python troupe had bigger plans, trading television for large budgeted films. Throughout such early efforts as "Monty Python and the Holy Grail," "Jabberwocky" or "The Life of Brian" Gilliam's influence rises from animator and bit-player to set designer and director.

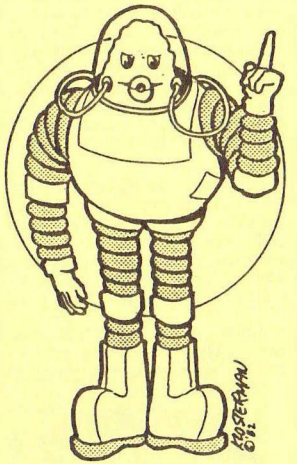
While these early films are collaborative efforts it's obvious that they were formative to themes and images Gilliam would use obsessively in his own films of the eighties; e.g., the random universe, the gaudy personification of evil and the entertainment of cruelty. While the quality of such "python-esque" ventures proved rather variable, Gilliam's response to criticism indicated he was a sophisticated fantasist inspired more by historical trends in art than a naughty desire to shock.

When reviewers balked at the rampant scatology of "Jabberwocky" Gilliam replied that the jokes were inspired by illuminated manuscripts he'd viewed in archives and were based on doodles drawn by bored monks to frame sacred texts. Every self-rightous person found something to hate about "Life of Brian," as it equated the New Testament with the revolutionary politics of the twentieth century. However, when Gilliam was attacked for his crude sets of Jerusalem he argued from archeaology that Roman colonizers had forced their own tastes on the city, leaving a heritage of ugly architecture and coarse mosaics.

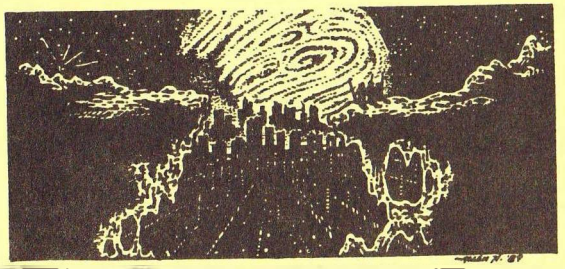
Over the past twelve years there have been four films directed independently by Gilliam, and he has often been a co-author of the screenplays. In order of release they are "The Time Bandits," "Brazil," "The Adventures of Baron Munchausen," and "The Fisher King." All four are worth watching but it's quite possible that the middle two, in particular, represent two of the finest pieces of cinematic fantasy of this century.

The Gilliam films follow a pattern similar to that of the work of Stanley Kubrick (yet another American expatriate in Britain). They do not attempt to expand their cinematic genres. Rather, the genres serve as templates on which the director stamps his own distinctive style. This is the only way that each film can transcend the limitations of the plot and subject matter. Each Gilliam film starts as just one more Hollywood trip down the path well taken and then develops into something unexpected and welcome.

"The Time Bandits" is yet another boy's own adventure, but the stakes are far higher than in anything by Lucas or Speilberg. A bored little boy joins a troupe of dwarves who have stolen the map of time and space from God. "Brazil" criticizes the ills of our time by setting the tale, as usual, in a future dystopia. You cheer when the hero conquers his own daydreams but realize that he has escaped his real-life enemies only by retreating into a state of grinning catatonia. "The Adventures of Baron Munchausen" is one more opulent costume drama but the plot is both a delicious parody and expansion of the 1939 version of "The Wizard of Oz," complete with a dream-become-reality ending. (It's the mirror image of "Brazil.") "The Fisher King" has tremendous charm but, as we will see, it represents a pair of clipped wings.



There are always two high pleasures of any Gilliam film. First, special effects are so seamlessly blended into both the plot and "look" of the movie that they enhance the aesthetic quality of each scene and heighten interest in the fate of the characters. You are not meant to spend extended periods gazing in awe over miraculous rays of light or cringing at monsters. When the giant King of the Moon mounts his three-headed condor, in "The Adventures of Baron Munchausen," and pursues three tiny earthlings the effect is startling but wildly fun. The king, after all, is a lunatic and his ride through the aether encourages more outrageous babbling in his commands to his favourite head on the clockwork bird. When the Supreme Being of "The Time Bandits" first pursues his employees his physical aspect is dreadful to behold. Once he catches up with them, though, he turns into an urbane and dispassionate elder (Sir Ralph Richardson; "Oh, what a tiresome manifestation but I suppose it's what's expected of Me").



Second, despite (or because of) the broad sweep of the story Gilliam has become an actor's director and it's a joy to watch his characters interact with each other. This is one aspect that most film critics miss entirely. They tend to whine that Gilliam takes a cold approach to his chracters and that viewers have scant opportunities to develop sympathy for the protagonist. Some critics complain that each of his films is devoid of a protagonist. Is that so? Why then do I recall Sean Connery's interpretation of a warm, fatherly King Aggamemnon in "The Time Bandits"? Why is the fury of Vulcan (Oliver Reed) and the flirtation of Baron Munchausen (John Neville) with Venus (Uma Thurman) so irresistible in "The Adventures"? Finally, has anyone made a funnier observation of first dates between ill assorted pairs than in the Chinese restaurant sequence of "The Fisher King"? Robin Williams and Amanda Plummer are so happily inept with their chopsticks that they giggle while chasing dumplings across the tablecloth, and he later serenades her with a chorus of "Lydia the Tattooed Lady."

It was too good to last. Gilliam succumbed to Hollywood money to make Munchausen but then committed the greatest sin known to that dreary town. He let completion of the film run overtime and over budget. While it was possibly his finest effort, the backers would not give him his final cut* and further punished him by showing the film without any real publcity so that it continued to lose money at the box office despite fine reviews.

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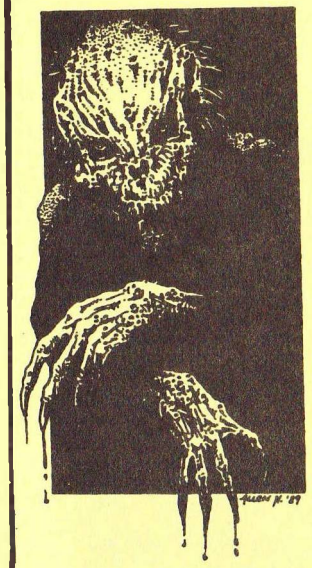
*"Final cut" is the final version of a film, edited by the director (i.e., the version seen by the public) and is usually granted a senior director in his contract. But Munchausen's final cut was determined by the film moguls.

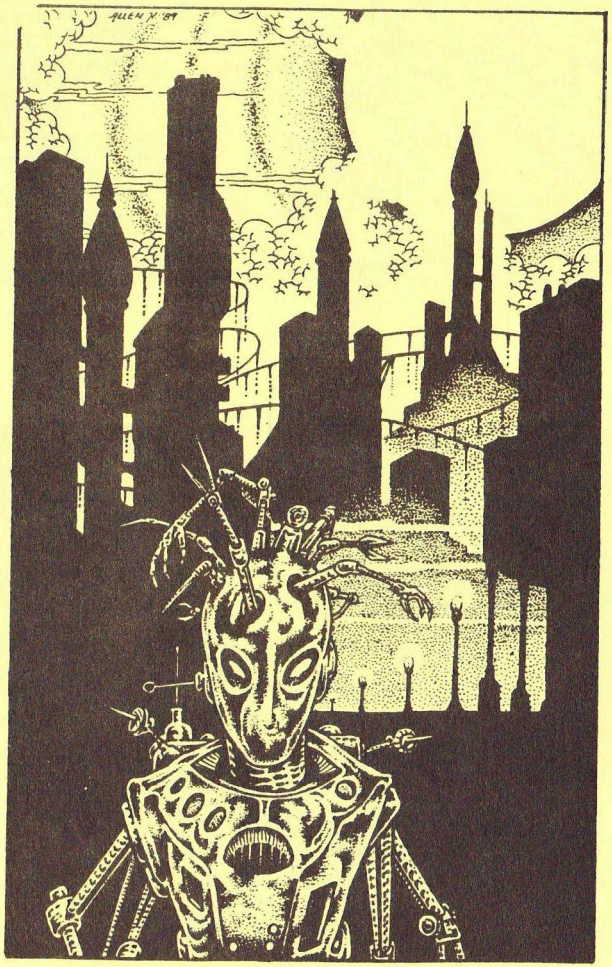


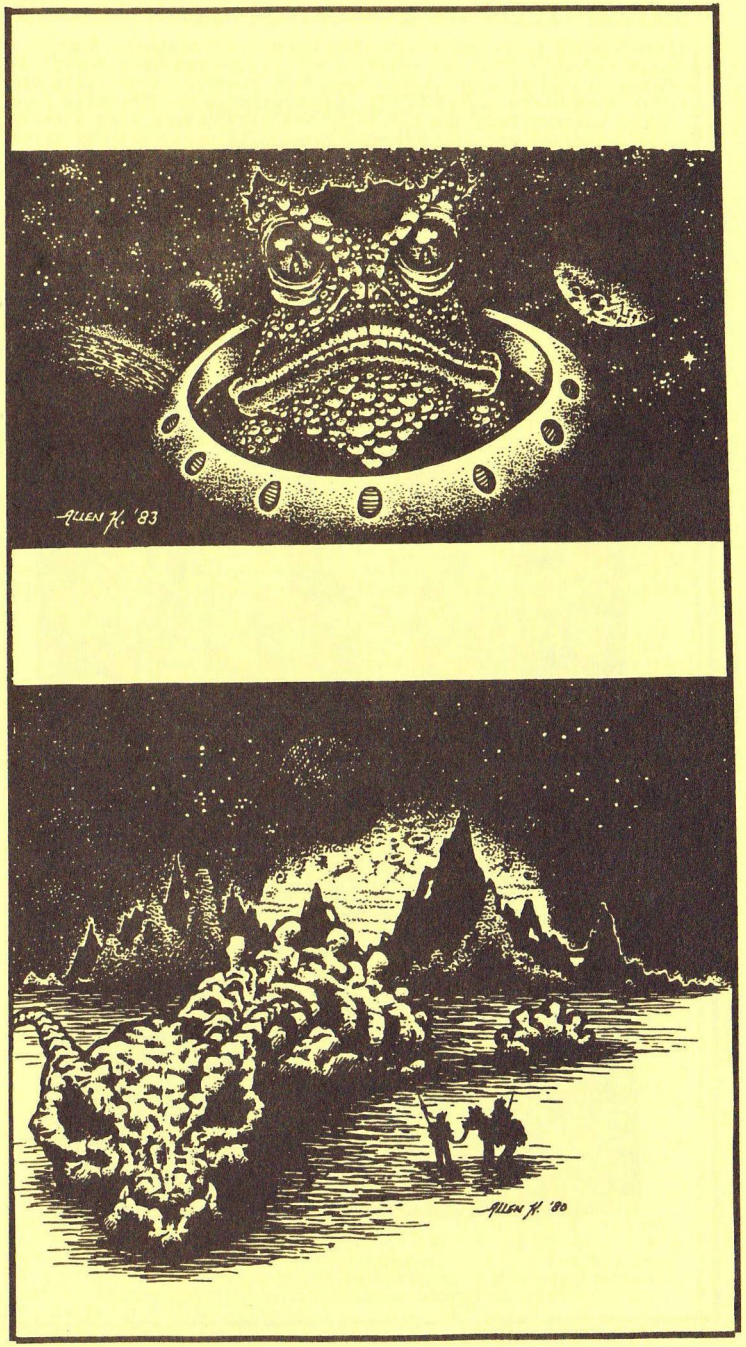
That should have been the last film he made in the States, as such a crime is usually unforgivable by Hollywood law. Instead they gave him another chance and assigned him to a project exploiting their favourite can't lose genre, the buddy film. "The Fisher King" is unfortunately a model of restraint. Gilliam is forced to spend too much time showing his audience that his characters are lovable and that they care about each other. It's still worth watching because clever insights survive, but you are now forced into the downward spiral of a predictably happy ending instead of concentration on a plot involving the mediaeval theme of redemption through an act of heroic contrition. I'd like to think that the last scene in which the two heroes (now released from guilt) lie on a a Central Park lawn and look up at the stars (they're both completely naked and hairy) is really Gilliam's last attempt to thumb his nose at the cloying predictability expected of him by studio owners, but that's doubtful.

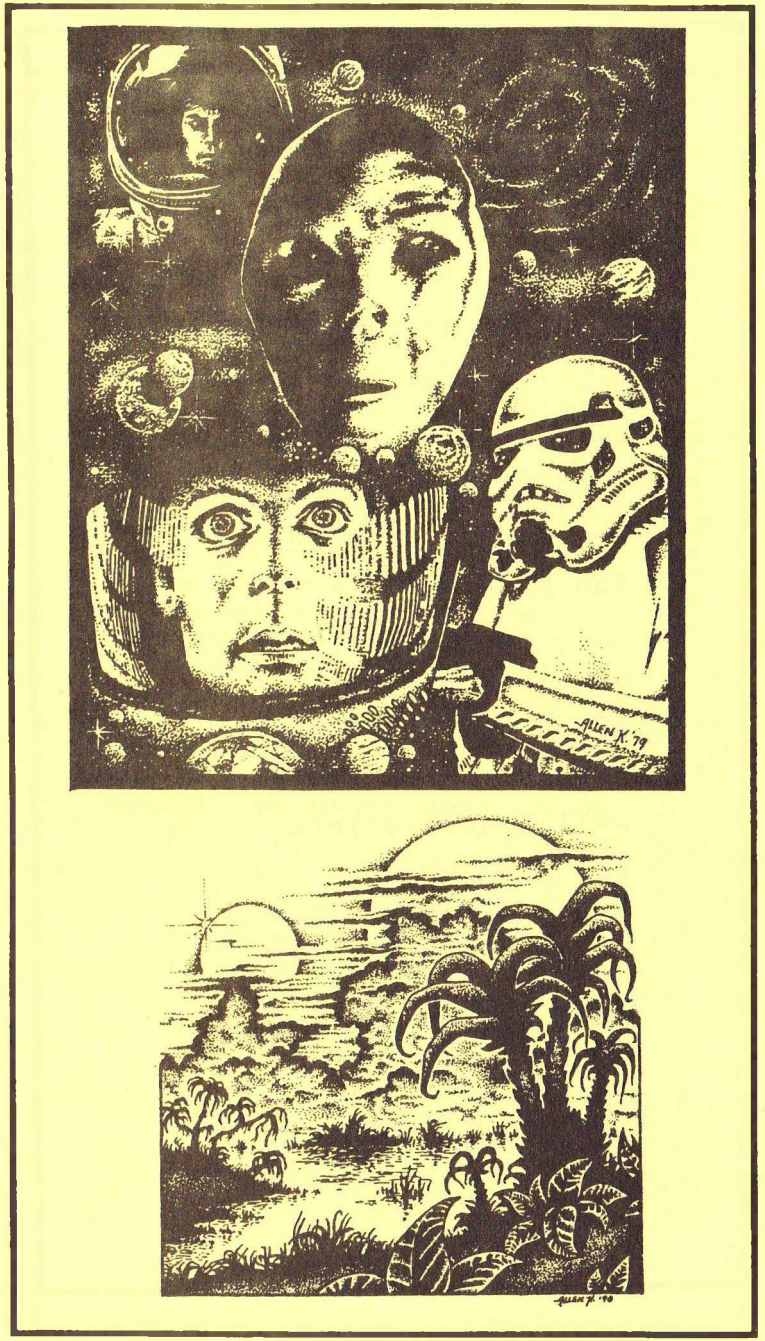
What was it that Dean Swift said about recognizing true genius? It has something to do with the arrival of a real genius always precipitating the synchronous arrival of "a confederacy of dunces" who will try to stop him. Gilliam has met his confederacy and he has attempted to adapt to their expectations. Still, do you think it's too late to speculate what Gilliam would do to a film version of Gulliver's Travels?

Artist Showcase

Allen Koszowski




ALLEN K. '83
ALLEN K. '80


ALLEN K. '79
ALLEN K. '80

LOVE AT FIRST BYTE

Access my floppy
Call up my file
You've got my password
Run me awhile

Post computation
(When output's complete)
Return to the system
--I'll self-delete

-- B. Ware --

EXHIBIT AT A HIGH TECH FAIR

This rose was cloned in Salt Lake City:
There are reams of petals just like that,
Identical puffs of December breath
As precise as paper sliced to size.
Genetic mirrors made ten thousand thorns,
Congruent triangles which wickedly prick
A planned collection of similar thumbs,
And stretch out beyond Macbeth's worst dreams,
Till the thing itself is its own succession
And the ghost is alive in a machined procession.
For the vegetable mystery at the garden's heart
Has become a revelation as simple as sums,
While the cells that held our secrets close
Have been broken open in the name of the rose.

-- Ace Pilkington --

BLADE RUNNER: The Subversion and Redefinition of Categories

by
GRACE RUSSO BULLARO

"I think, Sebastian, therefore I am." These are the words with which Pris defines herself when asked by the genetic engineer animated-toy maker J.F. Sebastian, "to do something" in Ridley Scott's film, Blade Runner. If we bear in mind that Pris is a replicant we begin to understand the mechanism which Scott uses to set up definitions in order to subvert them later on.

The Cartesian cogito is one of the two relevant quotations in Blade Runner. The other is from William Blake's America: A Prophecy:

> Fiery the angels fell; deep thunder rolled
> Around their shores, burning with the fires
> of Orc...

and, significantly, it is deliberately misquoted by the super-replicant, Roy Batty. What is Scott suggesting by introducing these two quotations? The Cartesian cogito can be considered as the basis of the classical definition of humans as rational beings.

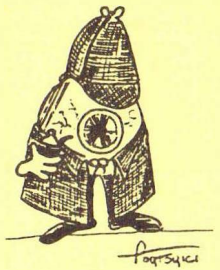
The category of human/non-human is problematic right from the outset. Rich Deckard, the ex-blade runner reluctantly pressed into service by his former boss, has retired from the profession of replicant-hunting precisely because the androids had become so indistinguishable from the humans that he could no longer accept the euphemism of "retirement" when the reality was actually murder. We know that the replicants are visually indistinguishable from their human counterparts, but there the similarity is supposed to end. Replicants have been given a limited life span of only four years as a safeguard against the possibility of their developing emotions -- and since they also have no past, they have no memories and of course no family ties.

But in many ways what replicants are supposed to be is not what they actually are. They definitely do have emotions: fear, love, concern for others, and even an attachment to a non-existent past. The problem facing both the viewer and Rick Deckard, then, is to define human and non-human in the face of evidence that replicants are not only physically indistinguishable from humans but also possess at least as high an intelligence and have "human" emotions as well.

I have suggested that Scott's introduction of the Cartesian cogito and the Blake quotation is meant to set up the cogito as the concept to examine or redefine. But while thinking may prove existence, it cannot constitute humanity. The replicants think, not only in the simple sense of possessing intelligence but also in the more significant sense of possessing an individual self-awareness. They themselves are as aware of their "I" as any human can be and they evidently have unique and individual personalities. The only thing about them that suggests the anonymous is their collective appellation of "Nexus." Again, this merely amounts to a matter of word choice. Roy and Leon are as different as any two human beings could be, and so are Zhora and Pris.

Ridley Scott discredits the idea of human superiority by questioning the supposed humanity of the humans and the supposed lack of humanity of the replicants.

To begin with, the proposed human model, Rich Deckard, hardly conforms to the standard definition of a human. He is clearly an alienated, isolated, and detached figure whose emotions have atrophied. He appears to be suffering from emotional and mental burnout, and it is only by the use of threats that his former boss is able to get him to "work" again. Furthermore, although he seems to have emotional ties to a past (as evidenced by the photographs that he keeps on the piano), he appears to have no human contacts in the present. He is no more firmly attached in an emotional or social present than the replicants that he is obliged to hunt down. For Deckard, the so-called human qualities of warmth and caring for others do not exist. Scott's suggestion that Rachael, a replicant, is to lead this "human" to an emotional reawakening, is therefore highly ironic.



Other human models presented in Blade Runner, such as Deckard's boss and the "origami man," are only secondary characters whose role is either negligible or not developed. Clearly, Scott is interested in scrutinizing the replicants rather than the humans.

Nevertheless, Rick Deckard is the ostensible hero of this film in spite of the flaws in his humanity. In the human/non-human opposition that Scott sets up in this film, Roy Batty plays Deckard's "non-human" counterpart.

On first sight of Roy Batty we notice that his image conforms more readily to that of the traditional hero. Roy is obviously intelligent and articulate, quoting Blake as his "introduction," (compare this to Deckard's Chandleresque platitudes) and is most definitely a more dynamic figure than Deckard. These characteristics, plus the barely suppressed threat of violence emanating from Roy's presence make him a more compelling figure, especially when contrasted with Deckard's apparent physical, mental, and emotional burnout. Deckard as the hero is undermined and Roy is proposed as an alternative. The theme of the replicants' humanity versus the humans' lack of it is developed until the very end.

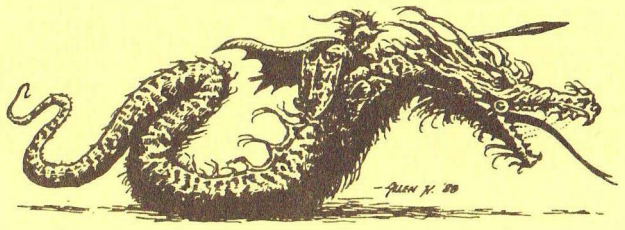
The Blake quotation deals with the theme of rebellion. We already know that the current status of the replicants as outlaws results from their earlier rebellion; and we are obviously being prompted to identify Roy Batty, leader of the Nexus rebellion, with Orc, the epic Blakean rebel with a just cause. This scene serves several purposes. The first is to introduce Roy as the ostensible adversary to Deckard. Also, it establishes subversion overtly as a theme and covertly as one of Scott's subliminal devices. Roy's deliberate misquotation of Blake ("fell" should be "rose") illustrates this subversion. Thus the viewer is made to extend to the other replicants this identification of Roy with Orc and his just cause--thus lending credibility to the struggle.

Scott's strategy--of developing the replicants' human characteristics and undermining the humans' inhuman responsiveness --is implemented in the very first scene, as Leon takes the "test" administered by a human police officer. It is evident that of the two it is Leon who is more fraught with emotions of fear, insecurity, and hostility which finally build to a murderous crescendo, triggered by Colden's mention of the word "mother." Colden, on the other hand, remains merely condescending and mocking towards Leon throughout the scene.

Nor does Rick Deckard fare any better than Colden in his confrontation with Zhora. After having tracked and hunted her to the sleazy club where she dances, he eventually ends up chasing her through the streets and then shooting her in the back. To his credit, it must be said that he does appear to be shaken and goes for a beer after Zhora's "retirement." But again Scott manages to swing the viewers' sympathies to the side of the replicants by having Deckard commit what is generally considered to be an unpardonable crime: shooting an attractive woman in the back.

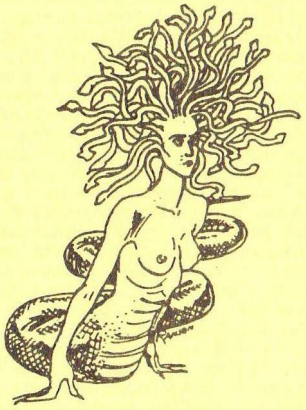
So much for Scott's treatment of the humans. The development of Pris's character is the most puzzling among that of the replicants. She appears to be the most machine-like of the androids both because of her doll-like body perfection and because of the way she is associated with the inanimate toys in J.F. Sebastian's apartment. At one point, in fact, she passes herself off as an inanimate doll. Shortly after, when she attacks Deckard, her movements are very suggestive of a wonderfully acrobatic mechanical toy.

Pris seems to be a curious mixture of the deliberately mechanical and the faintly human. There is little doubt that her affection for Roy is genuine yet there is not much else that is human about her. At first this fact may be puzzling, but I suggest that it is not by accident that it is Pris, the least "human" of the replicants, who utters the Cartesian cogito.



The characterization of Rachael presents a more bizarre problem, since she is a replicant who is not aware of being one. Hence her consciousness is completely human, as is her loyalty. This is proved by her killing a fellow-replicant, Leon, in order to save Deckard's life. Under these conditions it is interesting to speculate how consciousness of being human contributes to one's humanity. After all, can any other creature have that consciousness and articulate it? So if an android is not only visually, intellectually, and emotionally indistinguishable from the human model but also has the consciousness of being human, surely the problem of definition becomes compounded.

According to Tyrell, Rachael is "more human than human," a statement with which Scott seems to agree. Rachael is one of the deluxe models who have been gifted with memory implants in order to more fully conform to a human reality. Initially we are told that memory of a past history is what distinguishes humans from replicants. However, we later learn that Rachael has, in fact, been given memories from Tyrell's nieces's childhood. We then learn from Tyrell that the purpose of memory implants is for an easier and more complete control over the replicant. The double-edged nature of this "gift" (as Tyrell calls it) then becomes apparent. It becomes clear that the element which makes them the most human is also the weakness that allows them to be most controlled.

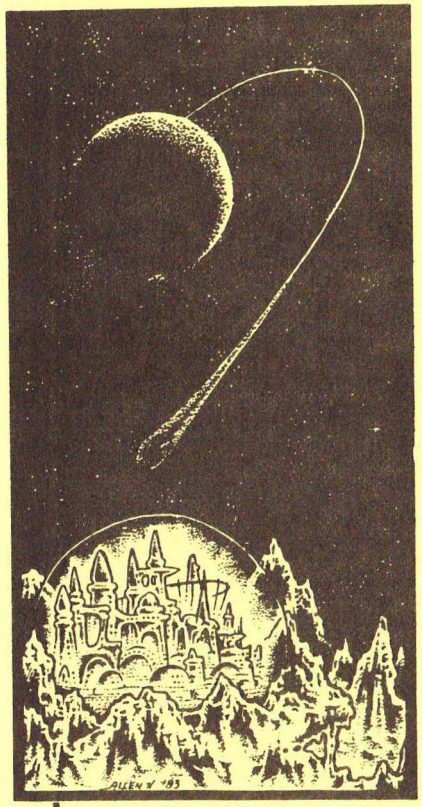


Thus past history is presented both as a bridge between the human and non-human and as a control mechanism used against the replicants... We then see that the photograph is an agent of destruction throughout the film. Leon's possession of photos and the return to his apartment to retrieve them leads to Deckard's tracking him and his own subsequent death. Zhora's identity is discovered through the photographs found by Deckard and this also leads to her eventual termination. Rachael's emotional security is shattered when she realizes that the photos and the genuine memories that they are supposed to represent are actually fake.

Just as Pris's principal function is to illustrate the irony of the Cartesian cogito, Rachael's primary purpose is to negate, through the use of the photograph and what it represents, the concept of origin and by extension, history.

In many respects Roy Batty is the most developed of the characters in Blade Runner. He has relationships that are crucial to the film's thematic statements. The first of these, to Pris, serves to discredit the initial claim that the difference between replicants and humans is the former's lack of emotions. This is contradicted by the apparent strength of the attachment between the two replicants and most especially, at Pris's death, where we see a grief stricken and weeping Roy tenderly kiss and embrace the shattered body. Also, in an atavistic gesture of attempted assimilation of the loved one, Roy takes a drop of Pris's blood to his own mouth. This is all the more striking if we bear in mind that replicants, having no history, ought not to be capable of evoking atavistic rituals of this kind, which would be reserved exclusively for humans, whose history or pre-history does include rituals suggestive of cannibalism.

Roy's relationship to Eldon Tyrell is equally significant. As creator of Roy Batty and other replicants, Tyrell represents both a father figure and a god/creator figure. In addition, he is also mistakenly perceived by Roy as the only person who can extend his life. The confrontation between Tyrell and Roy, or, the creator and his creature, or again, between father and son, is a powerful statement of rebellion. It is from this point that we begin to fully understand the significance of Roy's deliberate misquotation from Blake. The words introduce the themes of rebellion, of the divine, and of the hero (and also suggest an identification between Roy and Orc). All three of these themes will find their full development in the final part of the film.



The initial hope for a prolonged life that spurs Roy to confront Tyrell turns to rebellion as he realizes that the genetic solutions that he is frantically suggesting to Tyrell will not work. The roles that the two have been enacting up to that point are then reversed, as he who has been the child (both metaphorically and literally since Roy is only four years old) now turns into priest, (i.e., "father"), judge, executioner, and a mocking false god. Roy places his hand on Tyrell's head as a priest might to a penitent and as Tyrell utters, "I've done questionable things," the two of them enact a mock confession. Roy's answer, "The God of Biomechanics wouldn't let you in heaven," suggests that now he is in a position to make these eternal judgments. But of course, the God of Biomechanics is an ironic fiction, a suitable god for a civilization suffering from rampant technology. Finally, the hands that Roy initially placed on Tyrell's head in a gentle and priestly gesture turn into the executioner's murderous vise as the pressure steadily increases to the point of ultimately crushing Tyrell's skull. Roy's rebellion has reached epic proportions as he has both killed the god/father figure and put himself in his place.

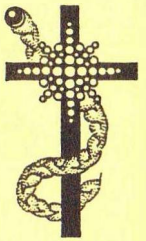
If Pris's function was to undermine the rational notion of humanity and Rachael's to negate the concepts of origin and history, Roy's so far has been to shatter that of ultimate authority.

The final confrontation between Roy Batty and Rick Deckard is built around a number of reversals. Up to this point, Deckard has been the hunter and Batty, the prey. Now we see that these roles are reversed as Roy hunts Deckard through the deserted Bradbury Building. At the beginning of the scene Deckard is the character possessing all the advantages. Besides having a rifle, he is armed with the knowledge that he has the moral right to retire this replicant. Of course, the strength of Deckard's inner conviction is unclear. He seems to be ambivalent about his misssion, having accepted it reluctantly and then getting emotionally involved with one of the future would-be victims. Nevertheless, he is armed with all the weapons that authority can confer.

As the scene unfolds Roy's power and magnetism steadily grow, even in a physical sense. Shot from low angles in order to suggest increased stature, both physical and moral, Roy's image gains in prestige and credibility, while Deckard's steadily diminishes as he cringes and hides.

Just as Roy's physical superiority and emotional stamina serve to reverse the hunter/prey role, his mocking taunts put in question Rick's sportsmanship and his moral superiority. "Aren't you the 'good'man?" Roy asks.

This is an ironic question as well, since we are prompted to think that Roy has gone from being a sub-human replicant to something more than "merely human." His forgiving and forebearing spirit in the chase might be meant to recall to the viewer's mind Christ's forgiving spirit on the cross. Certainly the spike that Roy drives into his palm (in order to keep his hand from clenching as the muscles atrophy at the approach of death) is a rather obvious symbol. Although the dove released by Roy in his final gesture can be interpreted as a continuation of life and freedom, it can most assuredly also be associated with the Holy Spirit, frequently depicted as a white dove in Christian iconography.

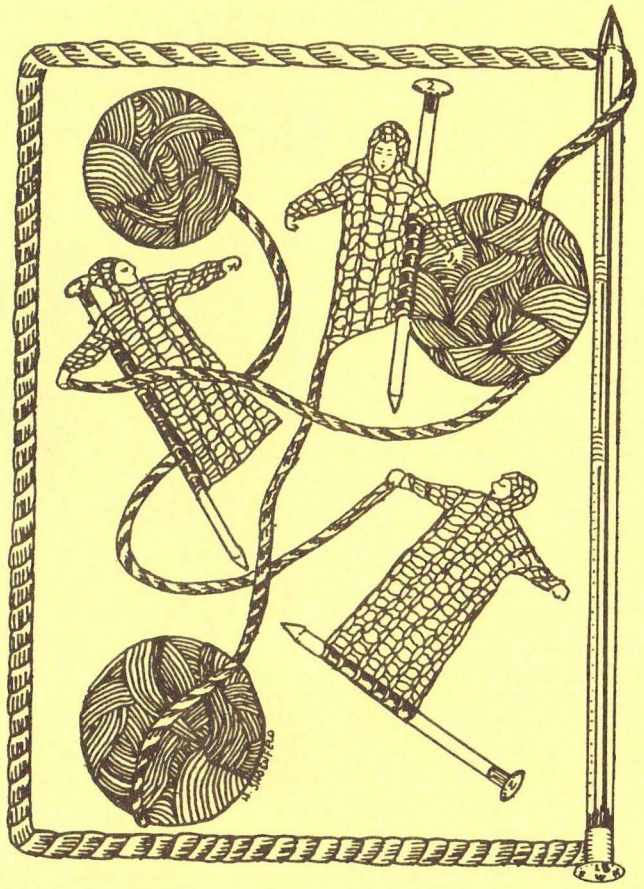


Catherine Bubinas

These clues, combined with Roy's last words, "I've seen things you people wouldn't believe...Attack ships on fire off the shoulders of Orion..." (note the similarity to the Blake quotation) imply that in this final confrontation Roy has not only gone from prey to hunter but also from less-than-human to more-than human.

In the end, it is Deckard himself who gives his antagonist the ultimate accolade that a human can give. He recognizes Roy's humanity. "He had asked the same questions as the rest of us...Where do I come from? Where am I going? How long have I got?" Deckard proposes this as a definition of humanity. Being human means asking the right questions. One of Roy's final gestures has been to save Rick Deckard from certain death and to release the white dove. The reversal in this final scene suggests that boundaries between rigid categories are all blurred. Roy is both life-taker, Tyrell's, and life-giver, to Deckard. He is the bad man, the good man, and possibly the "divine" man. His desire for life, as the mawkish voice-over says, "anybody's life," transcends all boundaries, categories, and definitions.

Hume and his successors have denied the possibility of a "timeless human essence." Existentialists such as Sartre have also denied any precious "human nature." To define a human as the being who asks the right questions, as I am suggesting that Blade Runner does, is consistent with the definition espoused by Sartre. To ask questions means to be always in a state of flux, always in the making. This, in turn, means that humans must not passively accept previous categories and definitions. Rather, they must subvert the old ones and propose new ones that will fit the times in which they themselves live.



SHINJUKU

I had a squid
for breakfast.

But I didn't feel
like eating.

I placed the cold thing
in a basin of water.

I noticed a small quivering
of tendons,
a flowering of blood,
a movement like indolence
in a rainstorm,
and then death again.

And I thought of you,
Nobuo,
Will we walk tonight
in the moonlight?

--George Gott --

YOUR WORDS

hammers between
the veal calves
eyes the
red stain, head
less chickens
stagger in wet
grass where
a child will
dream about
them twisting
in a night sweat
running to a
mother's arms
in the moon
who sees her
father sitting
on her glitter
ing like the knife

-- Lyn Lifshin --

Selected Letters

P.O. Box 83
Manhattan Beach, CA 90266

Dear Leland,

I was very affected by the story you ran in your latest issue about the poet who, apparently, plagiarized Sylvia Plath's poem and then killed herself. I feel I have to say a few words about the situation the way I see it, in the hopes of trying to reduce the number of doomed young poets driving into rivers.

It is very sad that we live in an era and in a society where poetry is not considered an important part of literature. But people who write poetry must not make poetry their whole lives! You have indicated that the poet did not have children or significant other of any kind, nor, apparently, though she had odd jobs, did she have a career. Apparently she also did not reach out to others--or she would have found that there are, in every community, other writers who can be there for support. These are important clues that indicate to me that the importance of poetry, in Elizabeth Ann Burton's life, was blown way out of proportion.

Young people need to know that they cannot grow up to expect to make a living out of poetry. Most poets, like myself, write other sorts of things such as fiction, criticism, magazine articles, plays, screenplays, and the like. Many poets can go into careers that are very fulfilling and have close ties to literature, such as teaching, librarianship, archival work, journalism, and the like, and then pursue their art on the side.

[Burton's family] must have had some clue that she was depressed. In this enlightened age there is no excuse for not recognizing some of the warning signs of depression. Depression is a serious disorder that claims many of our best and brightest, but this does not have to be! Fortunately, it is treatable. Any qualified doctor can make the diagnosis and send the person to the right specialist.

It is dangerous for young women to identify too strongly with disordered female poets such as Sylvia Plath and Anne Sexton. There is nothing glamorous about being neurotic and depressed. Those women were great poets in spite of--not because of--their emotional difficulties. People need to know that, and they need to see that though depression is a problem for many creative people, it can and should be dealt with.

I certainly hope you will realize that this situation is an unfortunate but very atypical event. I hope it will not cause you to distrust other poets or to discontinue publishing poetry. I feel very, very bad about what happened to Elizabeth Ann Burton--but if we poets continue to speak out and try to prevent this from happening to others, then we've done our part. You've done a service to the poetry community by letting us know about her death.

Sincerely,
Denise Dumars, editor: Dumars Reviews

Classification of so-called functional disorders extends from Antiquity—with mania, melancholy, and dementia —through the 19th-20th century labeling of dementia-praecox and manic-depressive psychosis up to modern diagnosis of schizophrenia. Unfortunately, classification isn't cure—and in this respect we're not much beyond the ancient Romans. According to her mother (herself a physician) Elizabeth suffered "bouts of hallucinations and severe depression," was "hospitalized numerous times...and was under the care of several psychiatrists through the years." That there are schools of psychotherapy—from Behavioral to Psychodynamic—attests to the infant state of the art, since in a relatively advanced discipline (like Physics or Chemistry) "schools" don't exist. But in Elizabeth's case I think the realization of similar misfortunes elsewhere and the search for a poetry-related job might have accompiished what psychotherarpy could not.

4701 Taylor Blvd. #8
Louisville, KY 40215

Dear Mr. Sapiro:

Before I comment on "Harmony" by Jim Harmon, I want to thank the author of a book I have greatly enjoyed, The Great Radio Heroes, with its entertaining and informative descriptions of such great radio heroes as the Lone Ranger, the Green Hornet, the Shadow, Little Orphan Annie, Sherlock Holmes, and the author's lovingly-described favourites, Jack, Reggie, and Doc Long of "I Love a Mystery." The author's admiration and enthusiasm for the shows is movingly and firmly conveyed to the reader. I am pleased to see that Harmon is still at it.

One could wish the same for the harmonious topic, but then Harmon would have to harmonize about something else, something I feel sure he himself would rather do. While I never had his good fortune to meet Asimov in person, I can empathize with [Harmon's] feelings about Asimov's later works. It seemed so sad to see the decline of a once-great writer.

"Objects Are Closer than They Appear in Mirror" says something, I suppose, about the glorification of violence in society. Some political activists who pride themselves on how gentle, sensitive, aware, and understanding they are also pride themselves on how violent, harsh, and cruel they can be. (They also are opposed to logic, of course.) Looking at how they act, I can see proof of the latter assertion but not of the former.

[In] Joe Christopher's essay "On Future History as a Basic S-F Literary Form" it is interesting to see his argument on how the form dates back to Wells and has such reputable figures as Shaw to support it. Could Wells's future history have stemmed from his exploring facets of a common theme, rather than an explicit desire to write connected stories? Given that series stories were not all that uncommon even at the time (I think, for example, of H. Rider Haggard's roughly contemporaneous series of novels featuring his African hunter Allan Quatermain) surely Wells would have known of the concept and could have considered it explicitly as well as subconsciously.

One might be careful about detecting themes in Heinlein's Future History, though. For example, most of the stories in The Green Hills of Earth really come from another future history. In Grumbles from the Grave there is a letter from Heinlein to his agent Lurton Blassingame where he discusses his new series for the Saturday Evening Post. Heinlein had the usual disagreements with editors, and then shifted over to the more lucrative novel market. So these stories published in the "slicks" in [the] late forties were retroactively grafted onto the stories published mainly in Astounding in the early forties--[although] not [until] after Heinlein had written at least two juvenile novels that were sequels to those stories: Space Cadet, following explicitly after "The Long Watch" and Farmer in the Sky, which mentions Rhysling.

Part Two of "Fritz Leiber--Swordsman and Philosopher" lived up to its expectations, with its discussion of the surprising philosophical underpinnings of Leiber's work. I wish I could say as much for its subject, whose death during the Worldcon cast such a pall across that meeting as has not been seen at one in nineteen years.

The Janus-vision of technology in SF and fantasy writing that Lloyd Penney cites can have its good and bad aspects, appropriately. On the positive side, it can evoke strange and refreshingly different approaches to situations in danger of tiredness--one has but to think of the engineering solution to mediaeval problems found in Three Hearts and Three Lions or the mythic resonances of Zelazny. On the negative side, it can throw in wildly inappropriate responses from characters, which at best shatter the reader's suspension of disbelief and at worst can make the story unreadable. (To take a recent example, note with wonder how in All the Weyrs of Pern people who had not until the previous month even had the concept of computers are discussing the merits of their various keyboards.)

So is this cross-fertilization of concepts and methods good or bad? Well, yes and no. (There is a nice firm answer for you!) Like actually anything else in the world, it has advantages and disadvantages; everything has a price as well as a use. For those skilled enough and willing to try, this Janus-vision can provide great returns; for thse less able or willing it can lead to great disasters.

The Elizabeth Ann Burton story is so sad. As you said, she wrote her own coda tc her life.

Namarie,

Joseph T. Major

Sometimes we excuse a factual error—as in Jean Anouilh's Becket, where Henry II refers to the jacquerie, a peasant uprising that didn't occur until two centuries later—or explain a contradiction, as when the Genesis I author depicts God first creating "beasts of the earth" and then "man in his own image"--while the second Genesis author has a man created (II,7) before the other beasts (II, 18-19). (Perhaps the rabbinical editor could not reconcile these conflicting stories in time to meet a deadline.) But an impossibility that's also implausible--like computer keyboards changing in the first thirty days--can't be forgiven.

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

Dear Leland,

Thanks for the latest RQ. I was upset to read the full story of Elizabeth Ann Burton's false submission and suicide. Self-dramatising, tragic, unnecessary...and for a poet, surely an ultimate statement of failure to have to borrow someone else's words to encompass one's own death...

Very much enjoyed the poems by George Gott and Brian E. Drake. Powerful, economical and lucid.

Sue Thomason

As noted by Denise Dumars on a preceding page,"It is dangerous for young women to identify too strongly with disordered female poets such as Sylvia Plath..." Elizabeth not only owned many books by and about this poet but (as her mother writes me) even named her own horse "Ariel" (the title of Plath's last collection of poems).

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428 Sagamore Ave
Teaneck, NJ 07666

Dear Leland,

RQ#33 had much good material. You couldn't lose, of course, with the lead story; terrible as it is, it is the stuff of drama. A gifted young woman emulates her favourite poet, appropriating an actual poem, then commits suicide like that model! And by driving her car into a pond, where it is discovered only because the pond is pumped out! In other circumstances it would be disbelieved. It is something from the mind of Stephen King, or since it is death by drowning while driving at 55 mph, one is reminded of the dramatic murder scene in Robert McCammon's Boy's Life. Her own life, apparently asocial, certainly asexual, adds to the drama. This is TV documentary-drama material, if I may be excused for appearing callous. Even now I find it difficult to believe the entire story is not a fabrication. However, the undeniable fact of the newspaper story reprint makes it all too real, and too sad.

I've never read Orson Card so I can't really comment. Imagine basing his work on Mormon teachings! What would Mark Twain have said? I enjoyed visiting the fantasy world of Temple in Salt Lake City years ago, but innumerable people find it quite up their alley so who am I to criticize? Especially when each time I drive to visit my daughter in Virginia I pass the glorious "Emerald City of Oz" on I495! This is what we label the Mormon Tabernacle, which is not green at all, but sparkling white with gold spires, rising above the trees like a vision, deco enough to remind one of MGM's Oz capital city. I have yet to visit it, and as a "heathen" will not be allowed in, but, gauche, ridiculous, silly. it is still wonderful.

Ben Indick

Since Mark Twain regarded all religion as fiction, he would have viewed Orson Scott Card as just one fiction writer copying others. So I think his attitude would have been that of cynical approval.

---

713 Paul Street
Newport News, VA 22605

Dear Leland,

The local paper probably carried some report of the death of Elizabeth Ann Burton, but I don't really remember it. There have been so many murders in this area in the last few years that a mere accident gets little notice--kids killing their parents or their playmates, murder-suicides, couples vanishing on the local highways, etc. The secretary in the next building over from where I work was murdered by her husband, who then killed himself; our secretary's sister just killed herself; and last year one of the engineers in our office lost her husband in a bar brawl.

Odd that Elizabeth Ann Burton thought she could get away with copying out Sylvia Plath poems. A sad business.

Ned Brooks

Elizabeth knew there was zero probability of her being undetected, which is why her suicide, to quote Sylvia Plath again, assumed "the illusion of a Greek necessity."// Big numbers do not really matter here, since only one of these many thousand fatalities was that of a poet--and this type of event is what we wish to anticipate and prevent.

11675 Beaconsfield
Detroit, MI 48224

Dear Leland,

In the letter column of V9N1 Joseph Major mentions the appearance of a Mickey Spillaine story in an early issue of Fantastic (not Amazing). Howard Browne, the then editor of Amazing, Fantastic Adventures, and Fantastic expanded on that story at a recent Pulpcon. At that time Browne was trying to launch Fantastic as an upscale alternative to the crap he was publishing in Amazing and Fantastic Adventures. Mickey Spillaine apparently had an early fantasy story that his agent kept trying to sell. Thinking that having Spillaine's name on the cover would help sales, Browne bought the story sight-unseen only to discover it was terrible. So Browne himself wrote a new story and ran it under Spillaine's name, daring Spillaine to complain.

Robert Silverberg tells another story about Amazing Stories, and I believe Howard Browne, again, was the editor involved. From the 40s on, much of its fiction had been produced by a stable [of] contract writers whose stories were published almost without editorial review. One day Rog Phillips had to be fired because one of his stories could be read as endorsing communism--this during the heyday of McCarthyism. As the editor put it, "I can't use you if I have to read your stories first." The 2/53 issue of Amazing Stories with the Western disguised as s-f by "Guy Archette" was undoubtedly another contract story sent to press without even a copyediting.

Regards,
Brian Earl Brown

For those interested in straight, place, and show -- Howard Browne easily wins the prize (beating Harry Bates of Clayton's Astounding) as worst s-f editor of all time. Bates at least worked at his job, coaxing s-f from pulp adventure writers (or inserting the "science" himself), while it's obvious from the above that Browne worked as little as possible. In 3rd place is Ray Palmer for literally devoting his Amazing Stories to insanity; in 4th, out of the money (in both ways) was Paul Hornig (of Wonder Stories), a 17-year old kid who didn't know what was going on, in either the literary or financial sense.

P.O. Box 18539
Asheville, NC 28814

Dear Leland:

Thank you for RQ#32. I appreciated your comments about Nabakov. Many "mainstream" writers dabble in s-f, usually with an attitude of slumming. Who can forget Doris Lessing's awful multi-volume foray into our little field? Why is it that these writers,who would never dream about writing a book set in the court of Louis XIV without doing the requisite research, think they can write s-f in blithe ignorance of eighty years of literary history? Marge Piercy, an otherwise fine novelist, irreparably damaged her current s-f novel, He, She, It, by her attempts at reinventing a wheel that was already in an advanced design stage. In fact, the only successful s-f novel written by someone outside the genre is Walter Tevis' Mockingbird, in my opinion.

Yours,
Steve Brown, editor, Science-Fiction Eye

Steve's mag is reviewed elsewhere in this issue.// I am relieved that he doesn't agree with the estimate by Eye columnist, Paul Di Filippo, whose list (in the 2nd issue) of the 10 greatest s-f novels includes only two names (Ballard and Delany) from within the field proper, with one of the listed titles, Empire of the Sun, making no pretense at being s-f.

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20 Shirley Rd, Stratford
London E15-4HX, Great Britain

Dear Leland:

Riverside Quarterly Vol.8 No.4 and Vol.9 No.1 [are] much appreciated.

Mapping the Mainstream: The only problem with trying to study the boundaries between the "Mainstream" and "Fantasy" is that they are constantly changing, full of overlaps, chaotic... In short, you could spend a lifetime and a half trying to define these things and get nowhere. Hell, we can't even come up with a consensus on what constitutes reality any more. The comparative approach is possibly the best compromise we can hope for. You can see their common points, their shared heritage and so forth, but as to getting a clear definition of either...No chance.

Miller's Anti-Utopian Vision: ...A very thorough and in-depth analysis of the book. Maybe too much so...If I have any criticism of the article it is that there is quite a lot to absorb in one chunk--perhaps it might have been better divided into, say, two parts, and published in consecutive issues...

Objects...: This reminds me somewhat of Chip Swift Cocoons, in the previous issue. Again dealing with "Virtual Reality" with the space programme as the background, questioning the interface between reality and fantasy. It develops well along these lines, to the point where the "dream" Margo starts to acquire a greater reality than the original--to the extent that the reader starts to wonder to what extent Margo has become the creation of Jagger's own mind. After all those manipulations of the holopsych records, one wonders how much of the original remains. This makes [Jagger's] feelings at the end all the more understandable. His Margo is someone else's creation now.

On Future History: There is the view that the future will be radically different [from] the past, more often than not [suggestive] of better things to come. Then there is the view that the future consists of an endlessly repeating cycle, or set of cycles, more often than not presenting a dystopian vision. The positive views show people aspiring to better things, hopeful that changes will come, making everything better for all. There is some fear, but everyone is nervous of change. The real fear lies with the repeating cycle approach, the fear that we will never learn from our mistakes, that we will forever go on repeating our errors···

Passion vs. Will: A very interesting analysis, thoroughly carried out and well argued...In showing both sides of the coin in that particular book. Card is effectively questioning the orthodox view of the Mormon faith. This would suggest that he is by no means certain of his own position, in relation to their view--at least at the time when he wrote this book. The later work ["The Hypocrites of Homosexuality"] would indicate that he has made a decision on the matter.

Best,
Alan Sullivan

As Karen Michalson says on the very next page, distinctions give academics something to write about.// I had originally planned to split the Canticle essay into two parts, but decided that the overall picture--of how technology gives us new ways of making ourselves miserable--would be lost if it weren't printed all at once.// Don't forget: all we ever know about other people is our re-creations of them inside our heads.// I don't think Orson Scott Card made a decision: I think the Mormon church made it for him.

---

26 Denfield Rd
Charlton, MA 01507

Dear RQ Readers:

Many thanks to all who wrote kind letters concerning my article "Mapping the Mainstream: Surveying the Boundaries Between Reality and Fantasy" (RQ Vol 8, No 4 August 1991). I agree wth Joe Christopher's comment that my piece really shows that "works written by human beings have common themes and common motifs." Due to obvious space limitations, I could not present a more detailed argument, but I hoped to show precisely because human beings write fantasy and realism, the kind of formal distinctions academics tend to draw between the two make little sense. Literature is literature. Academic cricism is the game of pretending otherwise for the sake of getting tenure.

By the way, I have recently explored the historical reasons for the literary establishment's traditional privileging of realism over fantasy in a book entitled Victorian Fantasy Literature: Literary Battles with Church and Empire (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1990). Anyone with an interest in the subject of why fantasy has been given such short shrift by academe's guardians of culture might want to check it out.

Best Wishes to All,
Karen Michalson

The Literature vs. Society conflict has never been documented so thoroughly as in Karen's text, which ought to be consulted even by those frenzied Anglophiles who terminate their letters with phrases like "There'll always be an England" or "Long live the Queen!"

5051 Greenleaf
Skokie, IL 60077

Dear Leland:

Age must be creeping up on me without my noticing it. I'd been reviewing past issues and find that my eyes were having difficulty with the very reduced type font against the yellow background of the page. My glasses are new, and my reading light is most adequate. I don't think I'd like to use a magnifying glass.

I appreciate that reducing type size permits your packing "more punch" to the page, but I don't know for how much longer my eyes will cope.

In his Harmony column, Jim notes, in eulogizing Asimov, "Neither Asimov nor myself were the type..." Shouldn't Jim, or you, as editor, have caught the glaring ungrammaticality? It should have been "Neither Asimov nor I was the type..."

--A "neither--nor" construction takes a singular verb--true?

--The reflexive "myself" does not fit this usage.

What say you?

Sincerely,
Melvin S. Merzon

You're dead right! The irony here is that just 5 days earlier I'd written to another editor that he should watch grammar in his magazine. The examples (of a dangling participle and garbled syntax) were: "Having said all that, there is no doubt in my mind that Madison Davis's book is definitely better..." and "As a wide-ranging yet penetrating literary history of both SF and the Fantastic, I recommend Bozzetto's study." I won't list names of the guilty parties: suffice it to say that these particular errors will have been spotted already by alert scholarly RQ readers.

---

5 Cross Farm, Station Rd., Padgate
Warrington WA2-OQG, Great Britain

Dear Leland,

Many thanks for RQ 32 [and 33]. By the way, I notice a lot of USA mags go in for this vol.75 no.46 stuff--why? It's surely easier to find any particular issue if you've only one number to look for, rather than have to find both the year and issue numbers. Is it supposed to make it look more "respectable"?

Karen Michalson's article was excellent--I've long been annoyed by the attitude to s-f and fantasy the literary mainsteam has. I'm glad she notes the trend to pinching s-f themes, then marketing them as mainstream. While a good many s-f novels could happily win the Booker, to have an overtly s-f novel included would raise cries of horror from the literati--yet just look at the turgid rubbish that does win prizes! Funnily enough, when I first read A Canticle for Leibowitz way back in the 1960s, it was in a library edition that made no mention of s-f on the cover--it wasn't even shelved with the single row of Gollancz that was the library's "s-f section."

One quibble about Karen's piece--where was the rest of it? It suddenly comes to a halt--is there a part 2? She just seems to be getting into her stride and wham, footnotes. I was waiting for the remedy to be given to the problem that had been so eloquently stated.

Enjoyed the Leiber piece, though I got lost in the philosophy. Ted Harvia's witty little cartoons helped as well--though he's using the wrong eye in the telescope cartoon.

Biggest problem in constructing a future history is to make it consistent--especially if stories are slotted in retrospectively/ not in sequence. Do you then do a wholesale rewrite to iron out any inconsistencies? This kind of writing (what Brian Aldiss calls "widescreen baroque") seems largely to have moved over into the fantasy field, where instead of future histories you get imaginary histories, thus absolving the author of any real need to build consistently upon a known base.

I'm a bit disturbed by the thought of Canticle 2--sequels don't have a high performance rate--Asimov's reruns of the original and brilliant Foundation [series] are decidedly dodgy, and then there's A.C. Clarke's endless follow-ups to 2001. I think Canticle is a one-off, like The Paradox Men and Limbo 90--or even Lord of the Rings--nothing else I've read by Miller, Harness, Wolfe or Tolkien can hold a candle to the one book by which their names will live for at least a couple of hundred years. Maybe it's just my age, but when did you last read a book that screamed 24 carat gold at you? Actually, it was called Consider Phlebas and was by Iain M. Banks, and together with the sequels, The Player of Games, Use of Weapons, and State of the Art proves that future history is still possible.

Cheers,
John Francis Haines

My reaction to Karen's article was something like yours. I think the endless war against Church and Empire (see preceding page) plus several rewrites (requested by your editor) of her RQ article made Karen weary of extending the Victorian Era still further.// Issue numbers are avoided by listing pages consecutively through each volume. E.G., if each issue has 76 pages, the reference "vol.8 no.2 (1988), p.6" can be shortened to "vol.8 (1988), p.82." // I share your misgivings about Canticle 2. Taking off from Earth, the nun + monk crew probably lacks the navigational skills to find another habitable star-system, while remaining on this planet just gives another post atomic-war story.

4846 Derby Place
Klamath Falls, OR 97603

Dear Lee--

I love the cover. It's difficult to get a complex subject into a small space, but Transue certainly succeeded. Makes a person want to write (or at least read) the story that clearly goes along with the illo. But I was sorry to hear of the death, both spiritual and physical, of Elizabeth Ann Burton. It is a great tragedy, the extent of which most of us will never appreciate.

I know that we will also miss both Asimov and Leiber. I only wish I could have met both of them before it was too late. The torch is being passed to a new generation, but that does not mean we can't miss the old when it is gone. How many are left of that Golden Age? Clarke, Van Vogt, Pohl, Anderson, Jack Williamson--the number dwindles every year. As for Asimov himself, it's interesting to wonder what would have become of him if he hadn't become an s-f writer. He wasn't that much interested in research, but loved drama and comedy. In fact, I have this bizarre vision of him hosting a Friar's Roast and skewering the pretensions of the Rat Pack (ought to be an anthology called Alternate Asimovs. Mr. Greenberg, please note my address...).

"Origins" was a fascinating poem. Kretz leaps along the wild spirals of history and technology like a dolphin (flesh or metal, take your choice). Perhaps one reason the Romans were never quite comfortable with the sea was because iron rusts. I really enjoyed "On Becoming Lovers" by Thomas. Ah, isn't love a bit like being reborn? "Night" by Pettee is also expressive of the mysteries of night, that spinning darkness that can bring heaven or hell. [Sheryl] picked some really good poetry this time...

"Objects Are Closer than They Appear in Mirror" by Orr starts out letting us know subtly that something is dreadfully wrong with the space programme. Talk of murders and Senate investigations only add to the malaise. Margo and Dr. Jagger are fascinating characters, and the rise of the space cult a very interesting outgrowth of the murders on the station. Weird story, but I liked it.

"Travellers" by Kaplan was mildly interesting as a metaphor for life (if I interpreted this correctly). "Stalking" by Belsheim left me with a few confused impressions, but nothing more. "Festina Lente" and "Future" by Gott were okay."Driving West" by Green appears to impute hostility or at least wariness on the part of a landscape--but hey, the West is for tough people, right?

"On Future History as a Basic SF Form" by Joe Christopher takes a look at a common form for s-f and/or political commentary (it's difficult to tell which one is winning in some efforts). I see the discussion is limited to story series (which lets out such works as Looking Backward, by Bellamy, as well as various other examples). I didn't realize the Wells work was connected, but it's easy to see once it's pointed out. I might add the works of Edgar Pangborn (Davy, The Company of Glory, and Still I Persist in Wondering) as a connected possible future [history] series as well. I think there's a lot to be said for both innovation and repetition in human cultural development. Those who don't study history are doomed to repeat it, it is said, and I hope the German government is paying attention to this; however, changing technology and other events bring new wrinkles that start new spirals.

Serfdom was doomed once the Black Plague reduced European population levels to two-thirds of their pre-plague levels (supply and demand works on people, too, when it comes to payment of the labour force); the Romans had steam power but no reason to use it when labour was so cheap. In S.M. Stirling's works (Marching through Georgia, etc.) the Draka have no reason to develop technology save in war machinery, and thus are blindsided by a culture with other objectives. Yes, they theoretically win in Stone Dogs; but the free peoples have the stars, and the Draka are likely to celebrate their victory over the Earth by tearing each other apart. There are some cultural imperatives likely to persist as long as humans remain recognizably human: hierarchical structures, however modified by circumstance, some form of family structure, bureaucracy (however benevolent in intent), all generally appear in most human societies. Basic ethical principles do vary quite a bit, but they often remain for long, long times after the society that launched them has bitten the dust. Resurgence of archaic forms often takes place in unsettled, insecure periods of transition (hence the fundies here, in the Arab world, and in what's left of the Eastern bloc. Yes, they come in different flavours--Islamic fanatics, Christian right, and the last of the true Marxists, but their aim is the same--a return to a simpler world).

"Zombies" by Drake reminds me of when I was working the assembly line at the cherry processing plant for 12 hours at a whack. Be nice if someone could revive these folk! "The Incubus" by LaMountain is a nifty horror story on one page, because the maiden could have driven him away, but didn't out of vanity.

I really enjoyed the article on Leiber by Leiber. I especially liked the discussion of The Big Time, one of my favourite books (by the way, the song in there is sung to the tune of "Lili Marlene"--at least that's the tune that works for me). Justin Leiber's discussion is reminiscent of "The Mandarin's Butterfly." [From] the premises of quantum mechanics and chaos theory, the prospect of really knowing the universe completely appears to grow dimmer each day--but the bits we've picked up so far certainly add scope to any would-be writer.

"Jerusalem of My Dream" by Elkin might well have been written in the 1st century AD as today--and that is part of its charm. Beauty is in the eye of the beholder, and it's clear what Elkin sees. "Forced Passage" and "The Trader" by MacKenzie are short and to the point--sharp vignettes with a drop of blood at their tips. "Beyond" by Miller speaks of longing for the exotic--when exotic is simply that which you're not used to. Rural North America is a dreamland for half the world, you know.

"Passion vs Will" by Townsend is difficult for me to discuss, what with all the controversy regarding Measure 9 (which failed, hallelujah!) here in Oregon. Reality battles with dogma in Card's heart--and though dogma always wins, you can tell Card is not always terribly happy with the victory. Wilful blindness and malice is something Card is not comfortable with, yet he's faced with that from his fellow believers, especially in this area. Oh, Card's a true believer--but sometimes you can tell it doesn't sit on his stomach too well.

Jean Lamb

I'll be pedantic and list three negatives: (1) discrimination against Gays, (2) constitutional prohibition of such discrimination, (3) nullifying constitutional prohibition of such discrimination. Fans should not confuse Oregon's rejection of Measure 9 with Colorado's recent passage of an Amendment that's best summarized by item (3). The American Mathematical Society and the Mathematical Association of America recently cancelled a Denver confab scheduled for '95, and non-mathematical RQ readers are likewise urged not to visit Colorado—or at least to spend no money there if they do.

1511 Stewart St
Oceanside, CA 92054

Hello Riversiders,

Just a quick note to let you know that I received and enjoyed the latest issue of Riverside Quarterly. It got off to a great start with the picture on the cover and got even better on the inside. Several [pieces] deserve special mention.

"Harmony" by Jim Harmon was a nice look at the man I consider the best s-f writer that ever lived, Isaac Asimov. "Objects Are Closer than They Appear" was interesting, but [I] felt like I was missing something. Or am I being nit picky? The pictures that accompanied the story helped a little though I still feel that whole sections of the story were missing. "On Future History as a Basic SF Literary Form" by Joe Christopher was interesting and informative. I really enjoyed all the author's digging and footnoting, and the article showed a lot of hard work. I have read many of the stories cited, but Mr. Christopher really tied them together in a new way I hadn't seen before.

I really enjoyed the poetry. [For] a frustrated poet it is always nice to see any poetry, and to see a lot is a real treat.

The rest of the zine was fun to read and well worth the time spent. The only discordant note in the whole issue was "Passion vs Will: Homosexuality in Orson Scott Card's Wyrms." As a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Mormons) I was not happy to see the Church position on homosexuality brought into the article. I really do not see why it was necessary to put that in the article. The LDS Church is no different [from] most other churches in that we see the act of homosexuality as a sin, but we love the sinner and in that we are just following Paul's admonition in Romans.

Before I close I have to mention how much I enjoyed all the little cartoons by Ted Harvia that appeared throughout the zine.

Adios,
George E. Williams, Jr.

For me, the only missing item in Leonard Orr's story was an explanation of Margo's "last and fatal trip" back to Earth, during which (the author tells me) she committed suicide.// Trouble is, members of the Christian Church are such poor Christians. (Cf. Jean Lamb's remark on the preceding page about "wilful blindness and malice.") Your assertion about Christians still loving the sinner made me happy--but there is no love manifested, for example, by Card's statement, quoted last issue, that Gays "cannot be permitted to remain as acceptable, equal citizens" --which undoubtedly represents official Mormon opinion.* The Church views homosexuality as something a person does, whereas biological data (see,e.g., Chandler Burr, "Homosexuality and Biology," The Atlantic, May 1993) indicate it's something a person is--in which case the religious idea of sin makes no sense.

---

* As noted in Jim Kepner's letter, which arrived too late for publication in this issue, such was not the view of Mormon founder, Joseph Smith, so "the hetero-conformity of the Latter Day Saints was a later development."

P.O. Box 569
Columbus, MS 39703

Dear Leland--

I'm glad to see the cyberpunk gaining a foothold in your magazine. Leonard Orr's "Objects Are Closer..." reaffirmed my suspicion that there is something inherently tragic in the best of the cyberpunk school of s-f. As in Aeschylus or Sophocles, the characters in a well-wrought piece of cyberfiction seem overwhelmed by forces (fate for the Greeks, technology for the cyberpunks) over which they have no control. I would like to point out something though. In his letter (RQ 33,p.62), Lance Robinson states that

> In Western society there seems to be a widespread belief that mores are persistently becoming more liberal (or more decadent, depending on one's point of view). In the literature of the cyberpunk movement...the near-future societies presented tend to conform to this belief.

Now some have argued that writers such as William Gibson and Bruce Sterling (the doyens of cyberpunk literature) work from a far more conservative ideological platform than most think. For instance, compare Terrence Whalen's comments on the movement:

> Arising out of the general context of Reagan's America, cyberpunk celebrates a "hardness" that is both stylistic and ideological...In its depiction of near-future fashion scenes, renegade technologies, and multi-national corporate intrigue, cyberpunk repeatedly invokes the concept of information to account for the emergence of post-industrial society and the simultaneous exhaustion of all hopes for human enlightenment.

("The Future of a Commodity," SF Studies 19 (1992),p.75.)

Actually, I think some kind of compromise position can be reached here. Cyberpunk seems to effect a synthesis between the "hard" s-f of Niven or Heinlein and the "soft" or new wave s-f of Ballard or Dick, between ideological conservatism and a more liberal social policy. The essential tension produced by this conflation is no doubt responsible for the critical polarities represented above. It is precisely this ideological conflict that William Gibson reinterprets in terms that make so much more sense to the politically apathetic late 20th century American citizen: not conservative/liberal, but rather technology/humanity. Political distinctions disappear in cyberpunk altogether, replaced by the distinction between those who have information (the corporate being) and those who don't (the human being).

Best,
Charles John-Arnold

I can't buy Whalen's thesis--that cyberpunk reinterprets "tendencies implicit in an information-driven economy"—since his basic distinction between an industrial and an information-based society is meaningless. Just ask: Information about what? The author lists "schedules, consumer preferences, trade regulations, patent laws, new manufacturing techniques..." So there is no qualitative difference, just a faster exchange of info about what we're doing already: travelling, buying and selling, inventing, manufacturing, etc. One might argue there's a quantitative difference in the greater emphasis on "department I," creating "means of production,"—here listed as "computers...office-machines...and other instruments"—as opposed to "department II," the creation of "consumer goods"—which I assume to mean TVs, autos, fridges, etc. But this distinction can't bear any kind of analysis. since various "means of production" (like typewriters) are also "consumer goods." I used to have some idea of what cyberpunk does; after Whalen's article I don't even know what it means.

412-4 Lisa St.
Brampton, Ontario L6T-4B6

Dear Leland:

It's been over nine months since the death of Isaac Asimov, and since then I've read reviews saying he couldn't write, he was a hack, he went for quantity rather than quality, etc. I haven't believed any of those reviews. Granted, Asimov's classics are different from those of s-f today, but classics they were. Dr. A. wrote on everything because he could research to fill in whatever gaps there were in his knowledge. He could speak to everyone, from the general public to literary fans to Trekfans, on just about any topic, and make [it] clear, concise and entertaining.

The story "Objects Are Closer than They Appear in Mirror" by Leonard Orr is well-written, but it reminds me of the movie "Brainstorm," in which the technology used was a neural headset attached to a tape player. The tape being played was a wide silvery tape upon which was recorded the experience of others, such as skydiving, riding a roller coaster, sexual experiences, and others. The experiences on the tape substituted for the sensory input of the moment, and played directly onto the brain. The tech in the short story is quite similar to the movie, almost to a disturbing extent. The movie goes beyond this story, however, in outlining the side-effects of this tape/headset arrangement.

Future history is a fascinating plot device of writers, but today, an attempt at guessing any future advnces in science may mean the story will wind up classified as fantasy, rather than s-f. Many modern readers demand that their s-f contain total fact, which eliminates any scientific speculation, no matter how educated it is, which eliminates things like matter transmitters and ansibles.

This issue contains many mentions of death, and evokes some mention of others. It is a poignant touch that Justin Leiber's continuing essay on his father's fiction comes after Fritz's death during the Worldcon weekend, where it was announced over the public address system. I attended the last convention the senior Leiber attended, Rhinocon in London, Ontario. There, he looked ill and tired in his wheelchair, a shadow of his usual self. One evening, I saw that paramedics had been called to a room just up the hall from mine; I later learned that room was Fritz and Margo's room, and Fritz was rushed to [the] hospital. This convention was in mid-August, and early September was Worldcon.

The next mention of death is that of Australian fan Roger Weddall. After some years of on-off correspondence, Roger and I met for the first time at Magicon, in his capacity as DUFF winner. Not long after Worldcon, I'd heard about his death, and was unhappily able to confirm it with Mike Glyer. Worldcon was his last trip, and he had informed few people about his losing battle with cancer.

In the letter column, both my last name and address are wrong. I'm sure it was just a typo, but getting people to spell Penney with that second "e" has been pretty difficult. Penny is the English spelling, and Penney is the Welsh.

Yours,
Lloyd Penney

The transition to virtual reality (sometimes called "cyberspace") involves much more than just a set of headphones--which is why Orr's story possesses credibility lacking in the movie.//If a story is s-f when written it remains so even when outdated by later technology.// My apology for the mis-spelling, but now you know how Isaac Asimov felt when an extra "s" was inserted into his last name (or your editor, when an extra "h" is inserted into his).

P.O. Box 1350 Germantown
MD 20875

Dear Leland,

Jim Harmon's remembrance of Isaac Asimov in your August issue (as well as other remembrances of Asimov published elsewhere) only enforces my feeling that only a very few people really knew the man. To the rest of us, he was just a caricature: Asimov the workaholic, Asimov the human encyclopedia, Asimov the lady's man, etc. It's ironic that only now, after his death, with the publication of these various remembrances, that we're finding out more about the human side of the man.

Best,
Dick Lynch

Let's just say that the totality of all these outlines (or caricatures, if you like) is what's required to put together the entire individual. There are always pieces missing, but I think Harmon's reconstruction -- if not the longest -- was the most complete.

---

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

Dear Leland.

As usual, a nicely produced issue and I especially admired the illustrations by Ted Harvia.

I enjoyed Harmon on Asimov. I've always regaded Asimov as a better science writer than s-f author. In particular, his science books for children were in a class of their own.

Leonard Orr's story was superior, with echoes of Ballard.

Anything on Fritz Leiber is welcome. I recently read "The Sinful Ones," having missed it first time around. A fine fantasy, spoilt by having pulp-style sex dragged into it.

Orson Scott Card is not one of my favourite writers but I might now take a look at Wyrms, a book I have on the shelf, as yet unread (along with a lot of others; time doesn't seem to stretch the way it used to).

Your cover reminds me of a Victorian painting popular as a print many years ago in this country; it may have been called "Raleigh's Boyhood." I wonder if your artist used this as a model.

Your poems are so serious. How about a limerick sometimes? Asimov wasn't above writing them, so why should your poets be? Asimov was also a fan of the Gilbert and Sullivan operas--and Gilbert wrote a lot of his stanzas in the form. I like Ogden Nash and whoever it was [that] wrote archy.

Yours for more humorous verse.
Sidney J. Bounds

Let's face it: Asimov wrote doggerel because that's the only thing he could write. (Poetry just wasn't among the good doctor's many talents.) There's no comparison to Ogden Nash or Don Marquis, who despite the irregular metre were bona fide poets.

23629 Woodfield Rd
Gaithersburg, MD 20882

Dear Leland,

Ah, yet another bubblegum coloured zine cover--glad to see such "tasty" colours up these days. The font is attractive but tends toward becoming solid black at the sizes you used. My personal choice would be upper and lower case--not all upper case, but this is personal choice!

After two glances through, several things popped out visually--Ted Harvia's cartoons, Cathy Buburuz' pieces on pages 42, 50, 52, and Kevin Duncan's piece on page 55--all these seemed to have the open space needed to appeal to me in the size you use. I'm not saying that [the] other artwork isn't good, just that these pieces really appealed to me. One or two pieces I would have oriented in other directions, but...

It doesn't look as if my style of art would fit in RQ--but I am willing to give it a try if you have some ideas--especially for on-going (continuing) column titles--if you are interested, let me know.

Thanks for RQ,
Sheryl Birkhead

As a result of her inquiry, Sheryl received from your editor a letter that went something like this: "How would you like to be Art Editor of RQ? Lots of work, no pay, plus bad-mouthing from fans who don't like your style? In short, an offer you can't refuse!"

---

415 Landings Blvd
Inverness, EL 34450

Dear Sapiro,

The article by Justin Leiber on his father's work surprised me [due] to his mentioning of his cocaine use. He's lucky; most of the people I know who used it are either dead or in prison. The remark brought to mind an event that happened a few years ago in a fanzine. A fan, writing an article about Gordon Dickson, praised his past use of "recreational chemicals." Gordon almost sued the guy, and the writer had to spend the next two issues exampling and apologizing. In fact, this is only the third writer I read that wrote about his drug use (the first being Thomas Hunter, "the Gonzo Journalist," and the second, a rather rambling article in an old issue of Izzard).

I would like to keep writing more to you and your zine, but my writing style seems juvenile and stilted next to[that of] your other contributors.

Sincerely,
Elizabeth Osborne

Your style looks okay to me. but if you think you can improve it the only way is to keep on writing.

WAHF (in nearly alphabetic order)--

Robert Bloch (2111 Sunset Crest Dr., Los Angeles, CA 90046), who found Justin Leiber's article "both perceptive and saddening. This has been a year of loss to the field--let's hope '93 will be better."

Paul DiFilippo (2 Poplar St, Providence, RI 02906), with "fond memories from years ago of perusing Don D'Ammassa's copies of your zine ...You seem to be keeping up your high standards--I particularly enjoyed Justin Leiber's piece."

Lee Hoffman (3290 Sunrise Trail NW, Port Charlotte, FL 33952), who regrets her inability to respond more frequently. "It is simply that since my health has begun to deteriorate, I have become really rotten about letter writing. RQ is one of the harder ones to make comments on. It is one of the classier zines that I've received and I lack the expertise to make erudite observations about most of the contents."

Rhodi James (25 Wycliffe Rd., Cambridge CB1-3JD, Great Britain) with the confession that "I'm afraid RQ is a bit literary for me. I did enjoy the articles, but the fiction and poetry left me cold."

Lyn McConchie (Farside Farm, R.D. Norsewood, New Zealand), who sent cash for a back copy of RQ#31, with its article by Pat Hodgell. "As one who has read and loved her two books, and also managed to obtain a couple of the short stories, I am interested in seeing this other work."

Dave Panchyk (9022-92 St., Edmonton, Alberta T6C-3R2) whose "level of involvement in fandom has dropped off to such a point that faneds would be best served by dropping me from their lists."

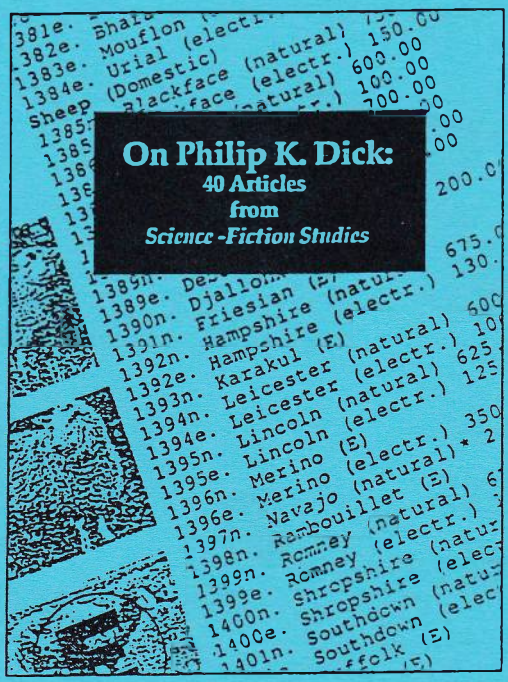
Gloria McMillan (428 E. Adams St, Tucson, AZ 85705), who lacks "time for fanac" owing to her activity with "several peace groups in ex-Yugoslav republics." Gloria send a list of various U.S. groups working to end the war, so I'll repeat what I think is the most important one: Balkan War Resource Group, c/o War Resisters League, 339 Lafayette St, NY, NY 10012.

Andy Robson (c/o Krax Magazine, 63 Dixon Lane, Leeds LS12-4RR, Great Britain)who "didn't like the book critiques--I prefer not to be given a plethora of character interpretations (especially if I might want to read the book later)--but that's a personal bugbear (I never like lit. crit.). Tributes, memoirs, reports--all good stuff. So it's a nice mixture--I like its wallet-size format."

Lisa Thomas (1672 Bruce, Henderson, KY 42420), with a "hope to see more of the Yugoslavian correspondent and [a] hope that he makes it through his country's troubles."

Jeffrey Zable (1327 17th Ave, San Francisco, CA 94122), with an appreciation for the poetry,"'The Sleepers,' 'Becoming Lovers,' 'Zombies'--good stuff."

Enninder Krause (c/o Jack Ruby Slippers 1800 Market St#258, San Francisco, CA 94102), who "read it front to back even though s-f is not a strong interest in my life. I passed it on to an insanely talented fan so that it would not rest without referentiality."



By
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Jean-Pierre Barricelli
Roger Bozzetto
Philip K. Dick
Jean Noël-Dumont
Scott Durham
John Fekete
Peter Fitting
Daniel Fondanèche
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Ian Watson
Gary K. Wolfe

Introduction by Istvan Csicsery-Ronay Jr.

A Census of the Manuscripts and Papers at CSU Fullerton
by Willis E. McNelly and Sharon K. Perry

Primary and Secondary Bibliographies by the Editors

Edited by R.D. Mullen, Istvan Csicsery-Ronay Jr.,
Arthur B. Evans, and Veronica Hollinger

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