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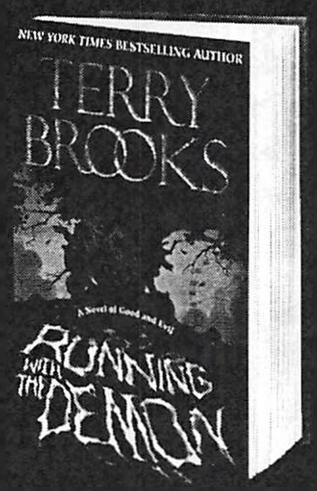
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READERCON 9

KIM STANLEY ROBINSON 3

- Michael Bishop 3
- Karen Joy Fowler 5
- A Table of the Elements 6
- Bibliography 14

ALGIS BUDRYS 17

- Damon Knight 17
- Ed Ferman 17
- Barnaby Rapoport 17
- Living Alone in the Jungle 22
- Bibliography 24

CYRIL M. KORNBLUTH 29

- Michael Kandel 29
- Algis Budrys 30
- Mark Rich 31
- The Altar at Midnight 33
- Bibliography 36

THE COMMITTEE 42

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KIM STANLEY ROBINSON

First, let me admit that I haven't yet read everything Kim Stanley Robinson has published to date. Another writer could better catalogue, analyze, and explicate Stan's work for Robinson completists. Indeed, I'd happily read an essay from an astute reader who has encompassed the entire canon. On the other hand, I've read a lot of Stan's output – most of the short stories, two of the three Orange County novels, his insightful study of Philip K. Dick's novels, and all of his epic Martian trilogy – and I have more than a passing acquaintance with the themes to which he resonates and the reality-grounded optimism powering his vision and so the work itself.

I assume that elsewhere in this Readercon program book you will find a K. S. Robinson bibliography, listing each of the books he's published so far, if not each of the stories. Maybe it will inform you that in 1975 he first professionally saw print within the sf field in Damon Knight's *Orbit 18* – and not with a single story but two: "Coming Back to Dixieland" and "In Pierson's Orchestra." I regarded this debut as stunning. Stan had sold to Damon, an editor of legendarily exacting standards, at age 22 or 23. I hadn't broken through until 27 or 28, after so many cogent rejections that I had despaired of ever having a story in *Orbit*.

Most likely, the bibliography in this program book will note that Stan has a new novel forthcoming, *Antarctica*. If his Martian trilogy impressed you as it did me, I assume that you can hardly wait to lay hold of this icebreaking examination of a nearly local landscape that Stan himself, who has briefly lived there, calls a taste of white Mars here on Earth. Most sf writers simply write about extraterrestrial settings; Stan visits them.

But, then again, few writers have loved this planet in all its beauty and physicality as has Stan Robinson – not merely in the abstract, even obligatory sense of an Earth-born patriot (if not chauvinist), but in the attentive, even priestly sense of a naturalist. Stan hikes deserts, climbs rocks, maneuvers among mountains, maze-walks moraines, stalks across glaciers; he joyously confronts sun and ice, silence and wind. I imagine him in these activities as very much like the John Muir in his story "Muir on Shasta," who believes in "imagination over reason, action over contemplation"; who "learned long ago that there was a reserve of energy at the end of any long period of suffering."

Stan fills his work with the suffering that accrues in the wake of both natural disaster and humanity's inhumanity, but he nearly always redeems it with images of sun-soaked wildflowers or gleefully howling sea-winds, if not with deliberate acts of humbling human compassion. One can find this pattern in tales like "Black Air," "Venice Drowned," even "The Lucky Strike" and "A History of the Twentieth Century, with Illustrations," and certainly in each of the three Mars novels, the last of which, *Blue Mars*, concludes with the ringingly affirmative sentence, "Waves broke in swift lines on the beach, and she walked over the sand toward her friends, in the wind, on Mars, on Mars, on Mars, on Mars, on Mars."

As a kid growing up in Kansas and Oklahoma, I could not think of science fiction without thinking of Mars. Mars was science fiction. I first encountered it in movies and then in the delicately metaphorical prose of Ray Bradbury's *The Martian Chronicles*, which brought the red planet to life as a fantasy landscape of mirrorlike canals, chess-piece ruins of antique cities, sand-sailing ships, and golden-eyed telepathy. Few in the sciences believed in this Mars, of course, but few reading Bradbury's allegorical portrait of the planet could escape the power of this vision while actually reading it. Then unmanned spacecraft flew past Mars or landed on it, and suddenly we had not only telescope photos but computer-enhanced shots that Mars observers and cartologists could jigsaw-piece into maps, with the prodigious canyons, splosh craters, and shield volcanoes of the planet so unmistakably, amazingly there that the Mars of Bradbury turned almost overnight from speculative fiction into nostalgic fantasy.

Mars required a new historian. Kim Stanley Robinson, with his innate grasp of and love for landscape, stepped forward to accept the challenge. In fact, writing about *Red Mars* in late 1992, I called it "the best pure sf novel I have read in years, a book so full of credible human drama, breathtaking historical sweep, and hard-nosed spiritual uplift that I regard it as the prologue of a brand-new *Martian Chronicles*. If Ray Bradbury owned the red planet from the early 1950s to the arrival of the Viking probes, Kim Stanley Robinson may well own it for the next quarter century or more."

Almost two years later, writing about *Green Mars*, I noted that I could not imagine anyone else "staking out any portion of this immemorial dreamscape with the same elegant detail and thoroughness" as Stan has in his annals of the colonization and terraforming of Mars. In a third piece, I balked a bit at the baby-in-the-kitchen-sink comprehensiveness of *Blue Mars* – Stan's brave attempt to write about everything from "the unreasonable effectiveness of math" to the mortality of reality; from "the careless power of the female nude over the male eye" to brain degradation; etc. – but in retrospect I stand in awe not only of this capstone volume but also of the sheer degree to which Stan fulfills his ambition in the entire project. His Mars trilogy is our *War and Peace.*

If you lack the time to read the Mars books in sequence – and of course we never have time for that which we do not make time – read Stan's story "A History of the Twentieth Century, with Illustrations," which in several subtle ways prefigures the grandeur, sweep, and optimism of his off-planet trilogy in a poignant narrative meditation on the human-spawned disasters of our own age. "A History" reveals Stan's sense of history, his compassion, and his ability to look beyond the cruelty that humanity so often perpetrates to the hope by which we live and through which we may yet redeem even the terrible holocausts of our baser selves – or, as Stan himself might say, the part of us that fails to love.

What else can I say about Stan? I don't know him as well as I would like to. However, when I wrote to him after reading *Red Mars* to complain that the Christians in his novel did not much resemble professing Christians I knew (a gored-ox sort of gripe, but a legitimate one), Stan wrote back to thank me for the criticism – a turn-the-other-cheek reply rare among writers, whatever their spiritual posture – and to note that he might be able to rectify the problem with a few changes in the American edition, if time permitted. He also asked me to read "The Part of Us That Loves" in his collection *Remaking History,* a copy of which he sent along, inscribed. And a more moving take on the New Testament miracle of the loaves and fishes I've encountered nowhere else in contemporary fiction.

A year or two later I ran into Stan at an ArmadilloCon in Austin, Texas. On one evening of this convention, Stan danced with glee and grace to the music of Brad Denton's rock'n'roll band. (My favorite number? A song of Brad's called "Down in the DNA.") I got into the spirit of the evening and, with Mary Rosenblum as my own good-sport partner, tried to keep pace with Stan, Mary, and the music, dancing so uninhibitedly in my socks that twice I nearly fell. For two days, my calves ached from the unaccustomed but joyful exertion.

At this same convention, Stan asked me what I was working on. I told him that I had just turned in *Brittle Innings,* a baseball fantasy, but that I didn't seem to qualify in my own mind any more as an sf writer. This struck me as regrettable, for I was (and to some extent still am) struggling to discover what sort of writer I really was. Stan, who has little use for labels, said gently, "You're following your muses aren't you?" This question triggered no mystical epiphany in me, but it did pare away a lot of self-questioning guff, leaving me – briefly, at least – grateful and serene. Stan may not even recall this exchange, but I cherish it.

What else? I should mention that Stan's doctoral thesis in English at the University of California, revised and published as *The Novels of Philip K. Dick,* proved immensely helpful to me in thinking about and writing my Dickean novel, *Philip K. Dick Is Dead, Alas.* In his critical acumen, Stan joins the company of some impressive writer-critics in the sf field: James Blish, Damon Knight, Algis Budrys, Brian Aldiss, Joanna Russ, Ursula K. Le Guin, Norman Spinrad, etc. I don't regret that he has not written more criticism, however, because he would then have written less fiction.

Stan has won awards, of course, including a World Fantasy Award for "Black Air"; a Nebula for his novella "The Blind Geometer," which I had the good fortune to showcase in my first stint as a Nebula Award-anthology editor; a John W. Campbell Memorial Award for his novel *Pacific Edge;* a second Nebula for *Red Mars;* a Hugo for *Green Mars;* and surely other regional and specialty awards of which I have no knowledge. The work would matter intensely, though, even without them.

Two final points. In the introduction to his first story collection, *The Planet on the Table,* Stan imagines an interview at the grave of James Joyce in Zurich. The iron statue of Joyce awakens in the snow – squeak, squeak – and talks with Stan about writing. When I first read this fantasy, I hated it; it struck me as smarmy and self-congratulatory: an embarrassment. Although some youthful excess does mark the piece, I was wrong about it. Joyce, waving his walking stick, tells the 33- or 34-year-old Robinson, ". . . you must press yourself! You must go beyond what you thought yourself capable of. . . ." Stan has taken this advice – not only to "[go] back down there, and try again," but to grapple with challenges that repeatedly and rigorously test his mettle. So few of us do that. (I have not done that.) And yet in this first collection Stan deliberately set himself that goal, taking from Joyce and his regard for a book as uncompromisingly prickly as *Finnegans Wake* this lesson: "faith in [the] work, fierce, unshakeable." The Orange County novels, the three Mars novels, and now *Antarctica* stand as irrefutable proof that Stan has not yet backed off from Joyce's challenge. I do not argue that he consequently represents the perfect novelist, or the perfect sf writer, but I do contend that he plays for the highest stakes, with a seriousness and a joy that exalt not only him but all of us who believe in the sf enterprise and in literature in general.

Finally, in Blue Mars, one character says, ". . . of all the humans who ever existed and ever will exist, these people are the only ones alive at the same time we are. Just being alive at the same time, that makes us all contemporaries. And your contemporaries are the only ones who are ever going to really understand you." The woman spoken to takes no comfort from this observation for reasons that I don't wish to untangle here, but I find great solace in the fact that my life has, by cosmic accident, overlapped that of Kim Stanley Robinson. And you here at Readercon – with a chance to see and talk to Stan, as well as to read his novels and stories – should find a like solace in that miraculous coincidence.

– Michael Bishop

There is a place up toward Lake Berryessa, not far from my home, a vantage point from which, on a clear day, you can see across the entire state of California. You can see the Napa area, and San Francisco, the Tahoe area, and the mountains. The view is dizzying, heady stuff. But the spot is not easy to find. It's on an unnamed road; you have to have memorized the turns. You have to ignore several signs posted to keep you out, drive on past the Private Property, No Trespassing, and Trespassers Will Be Prosecuted and Armed Response warnings, up into the hills. And then you get out of the car, climb over a small fence and scramble up the last little bit. On a cloudless day, the scenery is worth the jail time.

I only know about this spot, because Stan Robinson showed it to me. People ask me sometimes why I have settled in Davis. For me, the answer is more a matter of chance than choice. But, standing on this look-out, the Pacific to one side, Reno to the other, I know why Stan lives here. Davis is halfway between the ocean and the mountains. Where else would Stan Robinson live?

This is just one of several magical places I've been to with Stan. I've been hiking in Tasmania and to the top of Horsetail Falls. I've been to cities under water and to cities in the future. I've been to Orange County in several of its manifestations, and to Mars, in several of its. And to Antarctica (yes, I've read it, and you haven't yet. Another advantage of being a friend of Stan's.) In his essay on setting in Robin Wilson's *Paragons*, Stan suggests that stories merely provide the excuse to visit the landscapes in our imaginations. He quickly modifies this with the more usual recipe – a plot in a place. But the radical version is the one that I prefer.

I knew Stan first as a writer, second as a teacher, and third as a friend. He excels in all three capacities. And it would be nice if, from the vantage point of friendship, I could offer some insights that would illuminate the work. But all I can do is to confirm that Stan represents himself quite accurately on the page. Most of the things I would want to tell you about Stan are things you might intuit from his books.

As a writer Stan does everything well – his characters are vivid and memorable, his plots satisfying, but surprising his prose meticulous, spare and poetic, his wisdom startling and transforming. That he is brilliant is indisputable; that he is disciplined can be discerned from the volume and steadiness of his output. That he is perceptive can be seen in his creation of his own characters; that he is generous can be seen in his treatment of them. That he loves the world, loves his family, and loves being alive is evident in every word he writes or says. And still the heart of Stan's work, the element with which I most clearly identify it, are the landscapes of his imagination. "He has mountains on the brain," another friend said to me once. And then revised it – "He has a mountainous brain."

As a writer, as a person, Stan is always absolutely *present* in his surroundings. His commitment is to the body of the world, the body of mountains, rivers, trees, and rocks. He has a great love of the physical earth. As far as I can see, this love is returned. Stan has that gift of lucky capability that belongs to the athlete. He has balance. His own athleticism gives him access, a familiarity with the world, that the fainthearted and lazy miss. He climbs mountains, so he see the lakes beyond the peaks. He surfs so he sees the undersides of waves. He swims. He gardens. He plays softball. He jogs out beside the agricultural fields of the University of Davis, so, in the spring, he gets to see the burrowing owls.

This physicality makes him something of an oddity in science fiction, where we tend toward the sedentary. Among the rest of us rocklike writers, Stan's heartiness is already the stuff of legend. I recently heard a typical story about Stan. At a convention, at the breakfast table the morning after a late night, the poor, pale, blinking, sedimentary science fiction writers struggled to re-invigorate themselves by foregoing food, sipping orange juice, holding their heads in their surly hands. Stan, up as late as anyone, appeared in his usual California glow, pulling up a chair. "Muffins!" he cried eagerly.

As a field, science fiction often leans away from the natural world. The settings are frequently urban, the bodies mechanical. In a period where the fictional tendency has been to plug into computers, or to climb inside the great imaginary television set known as virtual reality, Stan has provided the steadiest, most eloquent spokesman for the wilderness. The field would be a much sadder one without his voice. He transmits the joy of the geological, of the botanical.

And he takes such joy in his physical achievements, as much, or maybe more as in his written work. He and I meet, when our schedules permit, for lunch. He has usually just had a swim and he is just as likely to tell me about his last softball game or his next camping trip as about anything he is writing. The most excited I ever remember seeing him was on an evening after he had decisively pulled himself out of a batting slump, hitting two homeruns in a single game. I can easily bring to mind his expression, telling me this. Stan lives his life as a celebration. To be his friend, is to celebrate.

Stan was the first writing teacher I had, and very possibly the best. Since then, his commitment to my work has kept me going during some difficult times. It is sadly hard for two writers to provide each other with support; paradoxically, it becomes harder when times are good. The potential for jealousy is always in place. But I have been able to count on Stan absolutely to rejoice in my own successes and cushion my disappointments. I wish this generosity weren't as rare as I believe it to be, but it comes easy to Stan.

It has been my pleasure, then, to see his own work so appreciated. And yet, with all the awards and reviews and accolades, I feel strongly, that we have not yet understood the full extent of Stan's accomplishments. There is no need, and possibly no way, to fix this. It will take care of itself eventually. It simply requires the vantage point that comes with the passage of time.

– Karen Joy Fowler

A TABLE OF THE ELEMENTS

BY KIM STANLEY ROBINSON

> "The remotest discoveries of the chemist, the botanist, or mineralogist, will be as proper objects of the poet's an as any upon which it can be employed, if the time should ever come when these things shall be familiar to us. . . ."
>
> William Wordsworth, "Preface" to *Lyrical Ballads*

Science Fiction is a general term used to name and classify narratives which use a variety of topics, motifs, or image-systems – I will call them elements – which have little in common with each other, except that the situations they express do not exist in our world, and they tend to be placed in some future of ours. A partial list of these elements would include utopias and dystopias, postnuclear war worlds encounters with aliens, robots, time travel, colonization of other planets, alternative histories, spaceship travel, and psychic phenomena or expanded psychic abilities.

These elements are different in kind; the chances of the situations they express ever appearing in our actual future vary widely, as does their value as symbols for facets of our current society. Some of these elements – dystopian societies, robots, spaceship travel, colonization of other worlds – are fairly straightforward extrapolations of history and of our current understanding of the physical laws of the universe. Others – postatomic worlds and encounters with aliens, for instance – are physically possible, but there is no way to calculate the probability of them happening.[1] The expansion of psychic powers is likewise impossible to predict and present-day science would be at least temporarily unable to explain the mechanisms involved so that this element stands on the border of the impossible. Alternative histories, or parallel histories coexisting with our own, would exist in a metaphysical realm unavailable to us and so will presumably always remain in the world of literature. Lastly – both time-travel and faster-than-light travel are impossible for human beings, according to our current understanding of the physical laws of the universe. Nevertheless they are both staple elements of science fiction, commonplaces used to overcome the problems presented to fiction by the immensity of space.

The disparate nature of these elements is one of the important reasons that science fiction as a genre has proven so difficult to define, and is why it is so hard to distinguish the border between science fiction and fantasy. Time travel and faster-than-light travel are elements as fantastic as magic and witchcraft, but they have become an important part of science fiction through repeated use. It has become a convention to accept these modes of transport as possible, when they are described as technological achievements and placed in the context of "realistic" futures that is to say, futures with a history that leads back to us. Elements such as magic are labelled fantasy because their vocabulary is not scientific and because they are placed in vaguely medieval worlds that are not historically connected with our present. Yet time travel is just as magical as turning lead to gold. The distinction is in the history, or the lack of one. Any fantastic motif can be science fiction if a history is even implied that leads from our world to the world of the text. If this history is dispensed with the text is a fantasy. This, however, does not remove the differences between the various elements that have become conventions of science fiction. The elements are still disparate, and the appearance of more than one of them in the same text (a common occurrence) can result in that sense of generic discontinuity which Fredric Jameson first described in his study of Brian Aldiss's *Starship*.[2]

Dick regularly uses all of the above elements except for the spaceship, and typically he combines several in each novel. It could be said that the success of each novel depends on the appropriateness of the mixture of the elements; their compatibility so to speak. These elements do not exist in a vacuum. Each one implies a world that would allow it to come into being, and very often these worlds are different enough that they cannot be reconciled if the two elements are combined. This occurs fairly often in Dick's work; he cannot reconcile the differing implications of the elements he has combined (for instance, who could continue to manufacture robots in a world completely devastated by nuclear war?), and so the fictive world is not internally, logically consistent. By generic discontinuity, Jameson meant in his article to describe a shift from one set of conventions to another so that while reading the reader must shift with the texts and apply one new set of expectations after another. In Dick's works however these differing sets of conventions need to be applied simultaneously so that the reader must try to balance two or more at the same time. This creates for the reader a clash rather than a discontinuity. The unsettled feeling evoked by many of Dick's narratives is therefore created, in part, by the element combination. Objections to this unsettlement are couched in the terms "shoddy construction," "cardboard world," and the like. This tone can partially explain the popularity of *The Man In the High Castle*, which proceeds from a premise that uses only one element, the alternative history. In a similar fashion *Martian Time-Slip* concerns itself with the other-planet colony. These two novels exhibit that aesthetic wholeness that our generic expectations have taught us to appreciate. Several of the most important novels, on the other hand, contain a large number of elements and the clash of implications in these works is part of their effect. Certainty the overloading of elements impart of Dick's strategy for writing about the America of the 1960s (a strategy shared by many other writers), and its varying success – from triumphs of multiplicity to outright failure-deserves explanation. In the chapters devoted to the individual novels we will often return to this matter of a generic clash but first we will reverse the process and discuss each element in turn, attempting to isolate, if possible those elements that Dick makes the best use of, and also those that might be most consistently harmful to the novels.

Dystopias. Some elements form the background or setting against which the action takes place, while other elements are part of the foreground action. A dystopia is an element of the former sort, and it is the most common element in all of Dick's work. Even those works that have utopian aspects to them, *The Man In the High Castle* and *Dr. Bloodmoney*, take place in worlds where nuclear war is imminent or has actually occurred, so there is still something of the dystopia in them.

The Man In the High Castle marks a watershed in Dick's use of the dystopia that we will describe fully in the chapters to come. Briefly, in the novels before *The Man In the High Castle* the reigning dystopian system is overthrown by the book's protagonists. These novels are in that sense wish fulfillments, for the protagonists seldom have the power to accomplish these revolutions, as we have pointed out. In *The Man In the High Castle* and the novels which follow it, Dick acknowledges this difficulty, and increasingly his subject matter becomes not how to overthrow a dystopian system, but how to live within one, and his solutions change as the years pass.

Postholocaust worlds. The World Jones Made (1956), *The Man Who Japed* (1956), *Vulcan's Hammer* (1959), *Dr. Bloodmoney* (1964), *The Penultimate Truth* (1964), and *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1968), all take place in worlds that have recently experienced a nuclear war, and *Game-Players of Titan* (1963) takes place in a world devastated by a war with aliens. In most of these novels, especially the earlier ones, the atomic war serves only as a device to allow as many changes in the society as Dick wants for the purpose of his story. The distinguishing feature of this sort of story is that capitalism survives, even flourishes. *Vulcan's Hammer* is the best example of this development. The rare exception to this use of the element is *Dr. Bloodmoney,* and this is also – not coincidentally – the only novel that depicts the war itself and the immediate results of the war. In essence *Dr. Bloodmoney* is the only postholocaust novel in which Dick is seriously attempting to depict the effects of a nuclear war; the rest merely use atomic war as a device to disengage history and allow Dick to take it where he will. Paradoxically, he uses this freedom to construct dystopian societies much like ones that in other novels are linear extensions of our history, that require no cataclysm. Only when he takes the topic seriously does it lead him out of the dystopian cycle. Thus it could be said that while the postholocaust world is a fairly regular component of Dick's dystopian settings, it is not a very important element in Dick's work as a whole.

Aliens. Aliens do not appear very often in Dick's work, and when they do appear they do not fulfill the classic role of the Other. "It is not by chance that the classic figure of the Alien is almost totally absent in Dick's fiction; instead his humans are often endowed with paranormal qualities or they are poor madmen lost in a cruel and incomprehensible worlds or again, mechanisms, androids that reproduce not only the physical but also the psychological structure of man."[3] In other words, Dick prefers to locate the Other within his human characters.

Thus the aliens that do appear in the novels are typically more humane than a good proportion of the human characters sharing the stage.[4] The Bleekmen in *Martian Time-Slip* are a perfect example of this tendency: Struggling to survive either as servants of humans or aborigines in the desert, they are more compassionate and wise than Arnie Kott, more connected with the world than Manfred, and their words and actions are consistently helpful to the human characters. Similarly, Lord Running Clam in *Clans of the Alphane Moon,* a "Ganymedean slime mold," has nothing but helpful telepathic advice for the hero. In *Now Wait For Last Year* this move to humanize the aliens and make alien the humans is explicit. Terrans are in contact with two alien races, one exactly like humans, the other like huge ants. The Terrans are allied with the humanlike aliens in a war against the ant creatures. As it turns outs the ants are benign peaceful creatures while the humanlike aliens are evil and powermad, as anxious to dominate their allies as they are to defeat the ant creatures.

It is because of this desire to locate the inhuman in human activities that Dick's aliens are usually sages in disguise. One of the few examples of hostile aliens appears in *Game-Players of Titan,* and the result is a weak novel. *Ganymede Takeover,* echoing *Game-Players* without the latter's complexity is weaker still. The only other evil alien in Dick's work is Palmer Eldritch, a threat to humanity as so many aliens in science fiction have been. He is a human possessed by an alien, however so the figure is ambiguous in its otherness. Once again the alien has been placed within the human, and since the alien entity could be said to represent the spirit of capitalism, the alien becomes a very human institution, suddenly estranged.

By and large the aliens in Dick's novels serve to make comic, enlightened commentary on the action of the humans who are made to seem more alien than the alien. The use of this element, depending heavily on the reversal of the topic's usual value in the genre; thus gives Dick the opportunity to make comical thematic comments on the action of the whole, and has strengthened the novels in which it appears.

Robots and artificial humans. The image of the robot is another classic motif in science fiction, and clearly it is, or can be, an actualized metaphor, a metaphor made real in the context of the fiction. (We will discuss this use of metaphor further in Chapter 6.) In the use of this element the process of reification is vividly dramatized by the introduction of a character that is literally a machine human. In the positivist tradition of Golden Age science fiction the influential stories of Asimov and Simak contained the message "the robot is just like us." Their stories portrayed robots and androids as childlike, humorous, cantankerous – humans made of metal – so that they were slightly simpleminded, and dangerous if not properly controlled, but full of sentiment. To an extent they were portrayed in much the same way as were the slaves in the Uncle Remus tales and this was appropriate, for they formed a slave caste, and were the replacements for human slave labor. Dick's short fiction reacted against this comforting and patronizing image from the very start of his career but the novels only began to use the element in this serious way with *The Simulacra,* in 1964. Once again Dick reversed the element's value for the Golden Age. Instead of "the robot is just like us," Dick's robots – seldom robots as such but rather androids or simulacra, emphasizing their human exteriors – convey the message "we are just like the robot." Almost every novel written between *The Simulacra* and *We Can Build You* (1972) uses androids. Very often these are the political leaders, presented to the populace as human, but actually programmed by powerful behind-the-scenes people. Definitions of humanity become more and more difficult, until in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* it takes a complex psychological test to determine who is human and who is machine. The interpenetration of artificial and natural is complete. Cars and doors and stoves argue with or advise their owners, while artificial humans can love, and fight for their survival. The humans in these landscapes lose contact with reality in any number of ways, withdrawing into one-dimensional, mechanical relations to the world, or using machines to help them fight such reification. The larger role Dick assigns to artificial humans in the second half of the 1960s is, once again, the result of factors both artistic and social. The complications of this natural, artificial, interpenetration give opportunities for a whole range of thought experiments exploring and displaying the motif. At the same time. every one of them is a dark image or representation of what Dick felt were dark times.

Psychic phenomena and expanded psychic powers. In *The World Jones Made* (1956) Jones was precognitive (a "precog" in Dick's terminology) to this extent: he could see one year into the future with absolute precision, but could see only that one year. This bizarre ability (explained only as a mutation caused by atomic war) gave Dick as much trouble as it gave Jones, for Dick faithfully followed the premise to its logical end, which meant postulating an entirely determined universe, devoid of free will, since Jones could see what happened before it actually occurred. This made the ethical choices, indeed all the choices, of the characters meaningless. After that experiment Dick avoided the use of psychic abilities for several years, but they reappear in the novels of the 1960s as "psi powers," proliferating into an entire system of precognition, telepathy, telekinesis, inertia (the power to negate others' psychic abilities), and communication with the dead. Sometimes atomic war is the very unsatisfactory explanation for the growth of these powers, other times the growth is left unexplained. To avoid the problems created in *The World Jones Made*, precogs only see probabilities in later Dick. A common image is that of pigeonholes, with four holes filled by one eventuality, two by another; one by a third, and so on, so that the precog can only give odds, and free will remains in existence.

The change in the power of precognition avoids the problem of determinism, but it does little in a positive way to make psychic powers a useful element in the novels. In fact, the introduction of this element nearly always creates flaws of logic, philosophy, and aesthetics. The element is never the principal one in any of the novels, but is rather part of the overload effect. The origin of these psychic powers is not explained, and so the reader must accept them as givens. The implication is that "everything has changed, so this has changed too." But this lack of a history marks the element as not within the usual conventions of science fiction, and so the introduction of the element often helps to create the generic clash so prominent in many of the novels. When a history for the element is given, it usually involves an atomic war or a similar catastrophe; the contradiction between the negative effects of powerful radiation and the positive growth of psychic powers is ignored, thrown under the rug of the word "mutation." This barest of scientific rhetoric used to bring the element within the realm of the rational is insufficient to disguise the element's origin in the genre of the supernatural tale.

Even when the topic is made science fiction by providing it with a historical explanation, the implications of the new mental abilities are rarely worked out in full. They do not change the structure of society as a whole, as happens, for instance, in Alfred Bester's famous novels *The Demolished Man* (1953) and *The Stars My Destination* (1956). The paradoxes and contradictions engendered by such powers as precognition and telepathy are likewise ignored, or exploited only insofar as they aid the construction of the plot. This underdeveloped use of the element contributes to the impression of shoddy craftsmanship about which some critics of Dick have complained.

Lastly, paranormal psychic ability as such is a relatively weak science; fiction element, in that it has little of relevance to say about the society generating the text. Science fiction is a collection of funhouse mirrors, images that objectify some concept of the world. Earlier elements such as the artificial human or the alien are good examples of this function, which is chiefly metaphorical. Psychic powers, on the other hand, have little metaphorical power of that sort, no doubt because of their origin in an older genre, the supernatural or Gothic. They do little to help represent human existence in a technological society.

Dick evidently did not agree, and most of the novels after *The Man In the High Castle* include this element. The best defense for this practice is that it helps to create that sense of fantastic strangeness that fills the novels of this period. "Dick is among the few writers of sf who think of the future in terms of total change. Even the psychic, religious, sentimental sphere of man is modified. . . ."[5] This is true, and it constitutes one of Dick's strengths, but there is a danger inherent in the method, which is that the changes wrought may seem arbitrary if they are sweeping. A change is arbitrary if it logically contradicts other changes made in the fictive world. Also, in a fictive world totally changed, the reader has nothing to invest his understanding in, and cognition and affect are both lessened.

Time travel. Unlike psychic phenomena, which when introduced must be naturalized to science fiction to avoid a sense of generic clash, time travel is firmly within the realm of the genre. This is so despite the fact that time travel is impossible according to both the common experience of humanity and the theories of modern physics. Like faster-than-light travel, time travel has been made acceptable by repetition, by scientific rhetoric, and by the unspoken belief in the limitless power of human technology to manipulate nature. The technique for creating this acceptance has remained constant since Wells invented the subgenre in *The Time Machine*: a machine is described, its exterior impressive, its interior complex: a vocabulary is introduced into the syntax of present day scientific discourse. Thus explanations "sound right," but are rendered opaque at certain critical points by the new vocabulary. The readers are satisfied, for there are in existence today impressive, complex machines, performing tasks that were considered impossible before the machines were constructed, and the description of these machines is opaque to all but their makers. That travel either forward or backward in time is a task of a different order is a fact that can be glossed over by writer and reader alike, for the sake of playing with the concept, there more than in any other science fiction element, the intellectual play involved is obvious and undeniable. The concept is very much like a game, but as it is a game playing with ideas of history, it can he instructive, can have serious uses.

Stanislaw Lem has described what happens when the time travel element is used trivially.

> Thanks to time travel and faster-than-light travel the cosmos has acquired such qualities as domesticate it in an exemplary manner for story-telling purposes . . . the development of a totally false, domesticated universe was a gradual process of self-organization and therefore all together are responsible for the final deformation – and nobody. Thanks to the first sf invention all occurrences in space have become easily reversible, but the authors who "just" want to shine with a new version of time travel have forgotten the larger context. . . Nature was softened in the cruelty of the irreversible flow of time that is its hallmark . . . the universe of sf is not only minuscule, simplified and lukewarm, but it has also been turned towards its inhabitants and in this way it can be subjugated by them.[6]

This description of the underlying function and effect of time travel has much truth in it, but its argument is stronger when applied to faster-than-light travel. The latter's single function is to erase the immense distances between our solar system and any other, and thus as a convention it distorts the reality of space. Time travel, however, can be used in more than one way. Certainly one use it is put to is the convenient solving of plot problems. Another is the creation of meaningless paradoxes of the "what if I killed my grandfather?" type. Lem in this passage concentrates on the trivial uses: "As popular fiction; sf must pose artificial problems and offer their easy solution."[7] But the serious examination of time travel, beginning with Wells, nearly always ends up underlining the fact of time's irreversible flow, and the reality of entropy. Time travel can be used to prove its own uselessness, to spotlight that very aspect of nature that in its other function it is meant to obscure.[8]

Dick uses the element in both of these ways. In *Dr. Futurity* (1959) and *Counter-Clock World* (1967) the use of time travel (in *Counter-Clock World*, the reversal of biological time) as the principal element in the novel results in two of Dick's weakest works. This fact illustrates a principle that in application proves useful. In Dick's novels, when time travel is a real-world fact in the fictive world of a novel – something created by a machine, or by some other reliable, codified process that can be experienced by any of the characters – then the element is being used in its trivialized, domesticating function. It is when time travel is a private, uncontrollable, perhaps illusory experience, achieved by drugs or a descent into madness, that it is used as a method for a serious examination of the nature of time and the human experience of it. In these hallucinatory time trips the time traveler does not gain power over his destiny; on the contrary, he becomes more aware than ever of his entrapment in time, and is forced to relive segments of it repeatedly or to make changes in the past that only create the very future he is living in. Once again the popular and conventional use of the element during the Golden Age has been reversed by Dick. This has happened with enough of the elements to suggest a general principle: Dick reverses the value of any element that was given a simplistic positive value in the Golden Age. A corollary to this, another indication of its truth, is that when Dick gives his characters superhuman powers, they are not a blessing but a curse.

The Simulacra and *The Penultimate Truth* provide good examples of time travel created by machines. In both cases the element is inessential to the main action. In *The Penultimate Truth* especially, it is the element that, being least necessary to the book, most contributes to the confusing sense of information overload. *Martian Time-Slip, The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch, Now Wait For Last Year,* and *Ubik* are good examples of the "private cosmos" time travel. A rift in time as a result of d rugs or madness or both, the protagonists of these four novels learn to regard a return to the past as a horrifying regression into a dead, immutable world. These four emphasize the time travel element's relationship to the alternative history, a time trip of a different sort, for in their helpless jaunts through a hostile universe both protagonist and reader are forced to contemplate the nature of history itself. Infinitely mutable in the moments of its creation in the present, history itself is fixed, a return to it useless. Visits to any of the infinite series of "alternative histories" that represent the future only emphasize that our actions in the present determine which alternative history will take its fixed place in the past. No guides for those actions are provided, and the protagonists invariably conclude that the exercise of rational free will would be made easier if they were simply left in the present to make their choices moment by moment. Again, a superhuman power is revealed to be a curse, and so Dick's serious use of the element repudiates Lem's blanket condemnation of the element.

Other planet colonies. Alternative histories. These are two more setting or background elements, against which other elements can be placed. Both serve as relatively new worlds, clean canvases onto which Dick can introduce as many changes as he wishes. His other planet colony, Mars – used in *Martian Time-Slip* and *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* – is a representation of the America in which Dick wrote the novels, in which certain facets of the society have been augmented, others suppressed. This process creates that "cognitive estrangement" that Darko Suvin, borrowing a concept from Brecht, claims is the primary effect of science fiction.^{9} In this process the cultural givens of a society are displaced and made strange by giganticism or some other deformation, forcing the reader to acknowledge that the given is not a law of nature but a cultural creation; an artifact of history that, since it is changeable in the future, could conceivably be different now. This process constitutes the special power of science fiction for social criticism, for in these new worlds or other histories the possibilities for estrangement extend into every aspect of life, and the estrangements are not a matter of a character's private perception, but are part of a collective experience.

The Man In the High Castle is Dick's only serious alternative history. *The Crack In Space* (1967) is a skeletal, hasty effort, and the scarcely glimpsed alternative history in which Peking Man is the dominant human species is a simple pastoral vision. For that reason a detailed discussion of the alternative history is placed in the chapter on *The Man in the High Castle*.

Similarly, the closely related Martian societies of *Martian Time-Slip* and *The Three Stigmata* of Palmer Eldritch are the only other planet colonies fully realized by Dick, so discussion of this element will take place chiefly in the chapter on those novels. Other planet societies do appear briefly elsewhere in Dick: in the early *The Man Who Japed* there is a vacation resort placed on another planet, merely for the sake of exoticism: in *Game-Players of Titan* the crucial game is played in a nebulous fog on Titan: in *And Now Wait For Last Year,* the regressive private Disneyland called Wash 35 is placed on Mars, evoking strongly the two big Martian novels, and Manfred's autistic vision of an entropy-leveled American colony. More importantly in *Galactic Pot-Healer* another planet serves as the setting for a parable about the struggles of the creative process, but the planet itself is scarcely evoked. In a similar fashion *A Maze of Death* (1970) takes place on some poorly realized planet of the minds in a landscape reminiscent of that traversed by Childe Roland in Browning's poem.

One other planet remains, the Alphane moon in the novel *Clans of the Alphane Moon*. This distant little world is nothing more than a mental hospital, and the greatly increased distance between Earth and this moon corresponds to the increased distance between our lived society and this representation of it. In this novel the distortions, huge and grotesque, are made in the comic spirit of satire. The scope of the distortions make this novel a good example of the freedom given to the writer who uses the element of the other planet colony.

Spaceships. Dick does not use the spaceship element, and now that we have discussed the other elements it may be possible to say why. In an essay called "The Known and the Unknown," Gary K. Wolf has pointed out that many common science fiction images or elements – the city, the alien, the spaceship – separate the known from the unknown, and that the typical plot moves from the former to the latter.[10] In this schema the interior of the spaceship represents the known world – it is typically a microcosm of our society – and this microcosm is venturing into the unknown. The crew of the spaceship must eventually leave it to explore, and hopefully make known, the unknown.

Given this view of the spaceship element we can better see why it is not suitable for Dick's concerns. First, the spread of Dick's character system, encompassing as it often does ruling, middle, and working classes, needs more geographic and economic space than the spaceship can have. Often, too, the spaceship is manned by a military crew and Dick does not write about the military.

More importantly, as we have seen in the discussion of the alien, Dick prefers to locate the Unknown firmly within the human circle, reversing the pattern that Wolf has outlined. Thus if Dick were to use the spaceship element, we would imagine him populating it with civilians – perhaps passengers – and we would not be surprised to find the unknown appearing inside the spaceship – inside the humans, in fact – while the humane, comforting aspects of the known world would appear from the outside, where one would least expect it in works conforming to the convention. And indeed, in the very few instances of spaceships in Dick's work, this is very close to what happens In *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* the spaceship voyages include moments of possession by the evil Eldritch. In *Galactic Pot-Healer*, again during a brief spaceship voyage, the protagonist is seduced by a human who is the very image of the dangerous Other. Essentially, then, there are no privileged areas of the known in Dick's work. Any sphere of existence is likely to become, or to reveal itself as, the unknown.

The reality breakdown. This leads us directly to the consideration of an element that is in many ways Dick's own creation, which we will call the reality breakdown. No matter what the device – future drugs, hypnotic trance, time travel, post-death "half-life," the actions of aliens or androids, technological accident – the result is the same: the surface appearance of reality breaks down for the protagonist.[11] His assumptions about the nature of the universe no longer hold true, and he is forced to live from moment to moment, existing perhaps in a false reality, perhaps in the world of Platonic ideal forms that are revealed beneath the surface of our sensory reality. This reality breakdown occurs so often in Dick, from the accident at the Bevatron in *Eye in the Sky* (1956) to the beam of pink light in *VALIS* (1980), and so many of the other elements of Dick's science fiction are used to create just this situation, that it has often been considered the central experience of Dick's fiction. "The world gone mad, with a spasmodic flow of time and a network of causes and effects which wriggles as if nauseated, the world of frenzied physics, is unquestionably his invention. . . ." The insistent return to this element, the building of this element from the earlier ones we have described draws our attention to it, and requires explanation. Why is this experience the central one in Dick's work?

The first and most limited answer is that the experience is a reflection or echo of the experience of the science fiction reader. Just as the protagonists fall through their sensory realities to conceptual realities they are ill-equipped to deal with, so the readers fall through their lived reality, into a fictive world (another conceptual reality) that is radically different. The generic assumptions of the reader cannot be trusted to guide him in his reading of a Dick novel, just as the physical assumptions of the protagonist cannot be trusted to guide him in his actions inside the Dick novel.

A larger answer would concern itself with the relationship between the protagonist and his experience in the fictive reality, and the experience of the reader in the world at large. We live in a world in which modes of transport have changed from horse to spaceship in the span of a single lifetime, to cite only one very obvious example. Changes in our way of life as drastic as that have occurred in many aspects of existence. A literature that wishes to represent these rapid. shocking changes might well begin to speak in terms of a reality breakdown. In short, Dick's many reality breakdowns are depictions of human existence in a technological age. They are metaphors for our own experience.

Of course, all fiction can be said to be metaphors for our own experience, and one could add that human existence in a technological age is one of the central subjects of Modernist, realist literature. The difference between the tales of alienation and breakdown that we find in the realist works of Woolf, Faulkner, Salinger, Pynchon, and a host of others, and the reality breakdowns found in Dick and other science fiction, is that in the former the breakdown is essentially a private, individual experience. Characters, individual realities break down, and because of this the reader is free to conclude that the breakdown is a matter of individual psychosis, something with no direct relation to him; it is someone else's problem. In science fiction, however, this conclusion is taken away from us by attributing the breakdown to some external and collective force. To finish the quote cited above concerning "the world gone mad," Dick's fiction is "an inversion of our familiar standard according to which only we, but never our environment, may fall victim to psychosis."[12] The reader's identification with the protagonist can remain complete, for it is not the protagonist who is mad, but his world. This world being but an image of our own, its madness cannot be easily dismissed. Thus in Dick's reality breakdowns there are, three levels – the protagonist in his fictive world, the reader reading the text, and the reader in his world – and each reflect the other two, and this resonance lends the text significance.

Lastly, the reality breakdown in Dick invariably leads the protagonist to meditate on the nature of reality, and often his experience becomes not a reality breakdown, but a breakthrough *to* reality. This more basic reality that is revealed to him is the reality of the law of entropy, the gradual falling apart of all form. Much of our cultural activity could be called form building, and often it is meant to disguise the effects of entropy. Culture is reasonably successful in this enterprise, but in Dick's work the protagonist has all the successes suddenly stripped away from him, and nothing but the fact of entropy is left. So the reality breakdown that is depicted so many times in Dick is not merely a confusing hallucination, but the revealing of some basic truths. In the struggle against entropy we experience many local victories, but in the larger picture, on the sort of universal scale that science fiction is best equipped to portray, the tale is one of continuous defeat. This does not invalidate the attempt to create form, and indeed in Dick this is the activity that is valorized again and again. His novels represent this struggle between form creation and form destruction repeatedly, and for Dick, to struggle on after having all illusions of success stripped away is the greatest heroism. An acute awareness of entropic forces lies at the base of Dick's tragic vision, and impels him to use all of the other elements of the science fiction genre to tell this larger tale.

Dick's use of the above elements is therefore unsettling to some of the reader's most fundamental assumptions, both social and metaphysical: Dick accomplishes this unsettlement both by the content of his novels and by their form, which are mutually reinforcing. By combining so many of the elements into each work he often establishes a generic clash, a dissonance that the attentive reader takes away as the primary impression of the work. Peter Fitting, in an essay called "The Deconstruction of Bourgeois sf," has argued very cogently that Dick refuses to provide "logical" solutions to the plot problems he sets up in order to deny the reader's desire for reinforcement of his world view, to unsettle him in the course of the novel and to leave him so when the book is done.[13] The plot knot that is *Ubik* is one method to achieve this unsettlement; another is to bundle together elements from contradictory subgenres; and present this bundle of contradictions as a coherent science fiction novel. As we have said, a genre's function is to set limits on what the reader expects from the work, so a genre invokes a set of conventions that the individual text will then work within or against. But the science fiction genre is a sprawling one, with edges in fantasy and realism that do not match well. Any given text tends to stay within one subset of conventions in the genre. Thus robots are from the technological end of the genre, while mindreading comes from the fantastic, with strong ties to the older supernatural genre. To have both in one novel (or to have mind reading androids, for instance) is to stretch generic conventions to the breaking point – and this is what Dick does time and again.

Notes:

1. We should note, however, that in 1982 the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* had the hands of its doomsday clocks set less than five minutes before midnight; while on the other hand the CETI investigations, an organized international search for signs of extraterrestrial intelligence (principally by means of sensitive radio receivers); have found nothing in over a decade, causing some scientists to drastically reduce their estimates of the number of technological civilizations in our galaxy. These increasing and decreasing probabilities have little immediate effect on the science fiction written, although perhaps they should.

2. Fredric Jameson, "Generic Discontinuities in SF: Aldiss' *Starship*," in *Science-Fiction Studies*, ed. R. D.

Mullen and Darko Suvin (Boston: Gregg Press. 1976)
3. Carlo Pagetti, "Dick and Meta-SF," *Science-Fiction Studies* 5 (1975): 24.

4. This reversal of Dick's, relatively new to American science fiction, is very similar to a much older tradition of satire in which the alien or Other (cannibals, Tahitians, American Indians), at first thought to be primitive or degraded cultures, are then shown by the satirist or moralist to be more humane than the so-called civilized cultures judging them.

5. Pagetti, "Dick and Meta-SF," p. 26.

6. Stanislaw Lem, "Cosmology and Science Fiction," *Science-Fiction Studies* 12 (1977): 107-8

7. Ibid., p. 109

8. Lem himself admits this point and elaborates the varying uses of the time travel element in "The Time Travel Story and Related Matters of SF Structuring," *Science-Fiction Studies*, ed. R. D. Mullen and Darko Suvin (Boston: Gregg Press, 1976); pp. 16-27.

9. Darko Suvin, *Metamorphoses In Science Fiction* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979).

10. Gary K. Wolf, "The Known and the Unknown," in *Many Futures, Many Worlds: Theme and Form in Science Fiction*, ed. Thomas Clareson (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1977).

11. Stanislaw Lem, "Philip K. Dick: A Visionary Among the Charlatans," *Science-Fiction Studies* 5 (1975): 62.

12. Ibid. p. 62.

13. Peter Fitting, "The Deconstruction of Bourgeois SF." *Science-Fiction Studies* 5 (1975): 47-53.

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Critical Studies

Tom Joyce and Christopher P. Stephens: A Checklist of Kim Stanley Robinson

ALGIS BUDRYS

Algis Budrys is the only sf writer who has ever written a book about repairing bicycles.

He was the first American sf writer to graduate from a college writing course, and the first to deal realistically with working people, in stories like "Nobody Bothers Gus," "The Edge of the Sea," "The Man Who Always Knew," and in novels like *Hard Landing*. His people tend to be shrewd and savvy; they can talk, but they don't do it all the time, and they never tell all they know.

For a while Budrys was crisscrossing the country pretty frequently in the service of Writers of the Future, and he sometimes stopped off in Eugene, bringing strange gifts. Once I looked up and saw him getting out of his car with a pink plastic flamingo on a stick. He poked the stick into a flower bed and came on in. After a while I said, "AJ, is that your flamingo?"

He thought about it. "No," he said. "That's your flamingo."

We don't see each other that often anymore, but I cherish Budrys because he is the oldest friend I've got. He is a riveting lecturer, a keen story analyst, and an occasional barroom baritone who sings in three or four languages. He likes good company, Detroit cars, hot tubs, and double entendres. You'll like him.

– Damon Knight

I first met Algis Budrys in 1975, when he arrived at our home/office in Cornwall, CT with the manuscript of "The Silent Eyes of Time." I wasn't particularly looking forward to the visit. I'd never met the man, and he hadn't written any fiction in years. But even then, he was certainly one of the legends of the field, for such works as *Rogue Moon*.

I supposed I was expected to read the manuscript while the great one hovered and then make an immediate decision, and this is what had me apprehensive. But as soon as Budrys arrived, – big, friendly, laid back – I immediately relaxed, and the visit proved to be extremely pleasant, as have all the others since. The fact is that the man has a disarmingly small ego for an sf legend and is always more inclined to fool around with the dog or watch a ball game than he is to talk about himself or his achievements.

As for the story, it was a superior work, proving that he still had the touch for fiction, and we published it in our November 1975 issue.

But the most important thing about that visit is that it led to Algis taking over the *F&SF* Books column, which he began in the same November issue with the following words: "My purpose here is to recommend reading to you, to state my reasons, to shed light on larger relevant good things, to embattle error shrewdly, and to refrain from inventing my facts." He went on to say he wasn't really a Critic but was something more than a book reviewer.

I'd concur with that last. For more than 15 years he covered sf and fantasy books for *F&SF*. It is very likely the most intelligent, thoughtful and honest writing about the field that has ever been produced. For that, and for his friendship, I'm very grateful.

– Ed Ferman

Meeting Algis Budrys

Your first SF convention can be intimidating. Mine was. I didn't know a single person there, up at the two linked hotels in Springfield, Massachusetts in wintry, gray February 1988.

About fifteen minutes before 5:00 pm on Saturday I took the long, indirect walk from one hotel to another – through the traffic and the freezing wind, or maybe through the confusing mall that led to the enclosed elevated walkway – to see the Writers of the Future presentation. I had several things in mind. For one, I had started writing SF, and was attending all of Boskone 25's writing-themed panels. For another, I had been entering stories in the WoTF contest. Separately, and decisive in itself, the presentation was being given by the contest's administrator, Algis Budrys, his only appearance in the convention program. I'd been reading Budrys intently for years, since the mid-'70s; he was the guest I most wanted to see.

Sure enough, there sat Budrys, recognizable from photos in *Locus* and elsewhere, his notes and WotF forms arrayed on the tablecloth beside the microphone and the hotel's inevitable clear plastic pitcher of water. I scurried in and, feeling conspicuous, sat in the back row. I expected the function room to fill up, but when Budrys finally began, only four or five other attendees had come in – and sat closer up front, which didn't help. Budrys' voice was different from what I expected: slow, emphatic, deliberating, a heavy quadruped feeling its way along loose rock on a mountain slope. When I finally worked up the nerve to raise my hand to ask a question, he seemed to gauge me warily, as if anticipating an anti-L. Ron Hubbard ambush. But, if he had been tensed, he relaxed, and gave a good, thoughtful answer.

After a while it became obvious the tiny audience wasn't going to get any larger. Budrys decided it made more sense to hold the presentation up in his hotel room – and off we went!

There, twelve stories up the Sheraton Tara atrium, eating sandwiches and drinking soda and beer, we spent hours talking with Budrys about anything we could think of – including how to write, publishing, the state of the art, the state of the market, how he worked, and his stories. He didn't kick us out until he had to leave for a dinner.

At one point, when Budrys got up to order the room service cart, we examined our situation with dazed good humor. The other attendees had been to a lot of cons, but they'd never had anything like this happen; when I told them this was my first convention, they cracked up.

Writing something down can make you think about it differently. There was nothing puzzling at the time, or until now. Of course the other attendees there were as pleased as I was: this is what it's like to meet pros. I've been to a lot of conventions since then, though, and it's not. Now I puzzle. Why did the other attendees feel the way I did? What was special about Budrys, about us? Was my reading Budrys and thinking about him not a personal experience but a generational one?

That's my guess. I would guess the other attendees at that panel were a part of that generation. I'd guess that so are, for example, the editors of *Absolute Magnitude* and *Pirate Writings*, who regularly reprint Budrys, and sometimes only Budrys – I know I would, convinced that his stories are both excellent reading and excellent examples – and, reading between the lines, the critic in *Tangent* who reviewed the issue of *Absolute Magnitude* with the new Budrys story. Once I became conscious of it, I saw it everywhere.

How did this happen? I can tell you how it happened to me.

What makes you remember a byline? Once in a while it works the way we think it should: the byline is attached to a striking, memorable text. I recognized the name Robert F. Young because of "Starscape with a Frieze of Dreams" in *Orbit 8*, for instance, and Sidney Coleman because of his review column on Larry Niven and Roger Zelazny in the August 1974 *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*. Normally, though, a name crystallizes out of the familiar blur in untraceable stages.

No doubt the name Algis Budrys would have become instantly recognizable if I'd read "The War is Over" or "The Edge of the Sea" or some other later favorite – that happened with the name James Tiptree, Jr., who was writing very similar stories at the time – but I didn't. When I started reading SF, Budrys wasn't around. Instead, it happened backwards, beginning when I read *The Issue at Hand* and *More Issues at Hand*, two volumes of sf criticism by James Blish, in the early 70s. Budrys, briefly, presciently discussed in the first volume as a promising newcomer, was the subject of a whole chapter in the second, "Death and the Beloved," an appreciation of *Rogue Moon*. That's why I recognized the name when I came across "A Scraping at the Bones" in the May 1975 *Analog* or, about a year later, the first of the book review columns in *F&SF*.

I'm sure more of us discovered him through *F&SF* or WotF or the fiction, but don't underestimate how influential Blish is. To this day, everyone knows you shouldn't use forced synonyms of "said" for variety or emphasis, one of Blish's pet peeves, just as everyone knows that Rogue Moon is Budrys' masterpiece.

Maybe that's Blish's influence, or maybe *Rogue Moon* obviously is Budrys' masterpiece, or both. I don't know. I'm not that sure I understand it. "Death and the Beloved" is persuasive – enthusiastic but precise, seeming to tell you a lot about the book without actually doing so – but I'm not convinced by Blish's description. For example, I don't see the correspondence between the interior of the death machine and the events of the story that Blish did, or agree that all the characters are "gravely deteriorated psychotics." It's one of his most impressive works, and one of my favorites, but not quite the favorite. In the March 1983 *F&SF*, Budrys described what he called "open" and "closed" stories. The open story can be developed in all kinds of directions, at all lengths, all degrees of complexity – as he demonstrated with some themes and variations on a Leigh Brackettesque premise. The closed story is circularly exigent: the characters necessitate the narrative, the narrative necessitates the setting, the setting necessitates the characters, around and around the hub of some central perception or idea: the whole requires each part, each part requires the whole. Budrys made the distinction to question how we tend to think of "closed" stories as good and "open" stories as bad, but Budrys has always written "closed" stories, and none more perfectly closed than *Rogue Moon*, which is as hard, solid, and opaque as a sculpture of polished stone.

If *Rogue Moon* isn't my favorite, what is? My favorite novel is *The Amsirs and the Iron Thorn*. Perhaps inspired by the 60s, by Delany, LeGuin, Zelazny, and their cohorts, it skims forward as if a strong, fresh wind of invention and energy was filling its sails. I'm not sure I understand it either, since I don't recognize the subtle and complex story described in Budrys "Memoir" in the *Worlds of If* anthology, "a tale of the artist brought down by artifice." It's possible that I wouldn't have liked it so much if other people hadn't, if it hadn't been a pleasant surprise, if, for example, someone had named it as their favorite Budrys novel. So you can estimate how close or far off I am, I will say I think it has a happy ending. Or so it feels. Perhaps the ending is just formally pleasing: *The Amsirs and the Iron Thorn* progresses through three very different emotional keys – from a world as extreme in its scarcity and social discipline as the plague-devastated one of "Be Merry," through comedy reminiscent of Theodore R. Cogswell's "The Specter General", into a Don A. Stuart far-future – which are resolved like a chord into something mysteriously beautiful. "The Nuptial Flight of Warbirds," a strange, elaborate 1978 novelette that reminds me of Wolfe or even Pynchon, is so structurally similar to Amsirs that it seems like a condensed version, and I know I don't understand that one, as much as I like the zeppelin full of monkeys with hand-cranked holograms of aerial combat.

My favorite short piece is "Wall of Crystal, Eye of Night", also from the same period, and written for the same editor, Frederik Pohl. That one is clearly a tragedy, but it is similarly exhilarating.

Most of *Michaelmas* was written during this period, and I should warn you that I also enjoy the widely disliked ending of *Michaelmas*, enjoy the irony that the world is saved not by Domino the world-interpenetrating software intelligence but by Domino the small but heavy portable terminal.

But this is a few years before I – and a lot of other people near my age – began tracking down the battered paperbacks in used bookstores. It is 1976, and Algis Budrys has just started reviewing books in *F&SF*.

Since James Blish had left *F&SF*, its reviewer had changed every month: Joanna Russ, Avram Davidson, John Clute, Harlan Ellison, Barry Malzberg, and more. It was the most dazzling critical medium in the SF field at the time. Even so, Budrys immediately stood out.

This was long ago – to give you an idea of the timespan, one of his earliest columns reviewed *Orbit 18* and the first two stories by Kim Stanley Robinson – and though I don't remember the early columns clearly, I do remember being acutely disappointed whenever Budrys was pre-empted by another reviewer. Re-reading the old issues, I can guess why I would have liked the column so much.

I know it didn't have to do with agreeing with Budrys' opinions and conclusions. That's never been the appeal of a critic for me. He's pointed me towards a lot of good books I wouldn't have otherwise read, ranging from Dashiell Hammett's *The Dain Curse* – good preparation for the hermeneutic intricacies of *Hard Landing* – to *War in 2020* by Ralph Peters and *The Cipher* by Kathe Koja, but he's also pointed me towards some fairly bad ones, such as Tom Clancy's *The Sum of All Fears*, and he's ignored or slighted many of my favorite writers.

Partly it was that his reviewing took place in the deepest historical context around. The really fascinating thing about *The Issue at Hand* for me was its inadvertent recreation of an era I hadn't even known existed – the magazine-based, editor-driven SF of the 50s – all the more evocative for being so allusive and elliptical, its implied reader part of the world it describes by implication, like Cordwainer Smith, complete with the little rhymes. I'm fascinated by anything that offers such glimpses, from a Sam Moskowitz anthology to Barry Malzberg's *The Engines of the Night*, so I must have been fascinated by such Budrys columns as the long, three-part John W. Campbell retrospective in December 76 and January and March 77: "Shuttling between New Jersey and Cambridge over icy surfaces in a Model A – always late for class, pressing the accelerator to the floorboards, peering through the foggy windshield at the Boston Post Road, very proud of his ability to do that and not get killed, he told me once a long time later – and thinking, thinking, thinking. I hear him chuckling and humming with satisfaction. I see him beating one mittened paw on the hickory rim of the steering wheel, sticking out his lower jaw and going Hah! Heh heh heh! Ha!" Budrys answered old questions I had, some not even formed, such as why Fritz Leiber's "Coming Attraction" was in the Science Fiction Hall of Fame.

Budrys' authority derived from his own long experience, but he also invoked the unrecorded, tragically disappearing oral history of sf. In Budrys, this history looms over the present field, investing it with pathos until it resembles Don A. Stuart's "Twilight" – or Stuart's inspiration, according to Budrys, the Inca laborers in C.E. Scoggins' *The Red Gods Call*, who don't know or care that the ruins they're helping the archeologists to excavate were built by their ancestors – as in his comments in September 77 on Chad Oliver: "Practically all dealing-benevolently-with-the-natives sf is derived from derivations of Oliver, so thoroughly that most of its writers don't even know Grandpapa existed, back in the mists of 20 years ago." This sense of history extended to the present, allowing him to historicize a new book like Gregory Benford's *In the Ocean of Night* in July 78 as characteristic of a new generation – he also cited Joe Haldeman, John Varley, George R.R. Martin, and James Tiptree, Jr. – "taking the best of what it can assimilate from the past and creating a characteristic new sound by melding that with its own contemporary view of the world" and a new sf: "The central identifying characteristic of this new school is that it takes science fiction seriously. This represents a sharp reversal of a fifteen-year-old tendency toward satire and allegory which made mere science fiction a totally inadequate label and necessitated the use of sf as a covering term."

There is another, contrary tendency in Budrys' criticism: he likes to undermine such generalizations by complicating them to the breaking point, always aware of how artificial and reductive they are, always mindful of the individuality and complexity of actual texts and authors and editors and publishing media and audiences. I remember the first time he really made me rethink: it was his Edmond Hamilton obituary, in November 1977: "Hamilton could do what no hack can do: he could think about how he met the reader's requirements . . . when he wrote in the style of one of the masters of his day, attempting to wedge his way into their audience, he nevertheless thought about what an invisible spider-being would really look like, in the vasty grandeur of its invisible palace." I'd read Hamilton – even "The Monster-God of Mamurth," with the invisible spider-being – but I'd never thought about how different my first-hand experience and my second-hand opinion were.

These conflicting drives are dramatized clearly in Budrys' most ambitious work of criticism, "Paradise Charted," which appeared in *TriQuarterly* 49 in 1980. Budrys starts out writing the history of sf and ends up unwriting it; what begins as the familiar master narrative – Gernsback, Campbell, *Galaxy*, the New Wave – devolves by stages into a series of disconnected profiles of individual authors. More subtly, this distrust of schematism may be why *Writing to the Point* – the 1994 distillate of his *Tomorrow SF* essays on writing, in turn distilled from the "On Writing" column in Locus in the 70s – is as concerned with unteaching as with teaching.

Partly it was the historical context that I would have liked, and partly it was the writing itself. Good criticism is always just like any other good writing except that it's about other art. It's as demanding, and can achieve the same effects. It's a self-sufficient creation in which the topic is just the subject, the material. That doesn't mean it draws attention to itself at the expense of the topic – what good writing does? – but exactly the opposite: that unless it's realized as writing, the topic is also unrealized, has been failed.

First, there's the surface, Budrys' rich, complex, versatile language. It has a very distinct rhythm, deliberate and thorough. Heavy with modifiers and qualifying phrases, but graceful over its sharply-articulated skeleton of proper nouns and other precisely chosen words, it's a thoughtful style, ruminative, cautious, but with quick teeth and claws, like a bear tottering upright to sniff the wind. The perfect word for its attractive quality eludes me – is there an obverse of glib and facile?

It's also the perfect medium for a strong auctorial persona. Budrys is always a character in his column, and so are the authors and other people he discusses, with vivid personalities and understandable motives that are guessable if not knowable. In fact, the only comparable style I can think of is Norman Mailer's. Since Budrys is, like me, addicted to behind-the-scenes material about writers and writing – see the introduction to *Budrys' Inferno* – I wonder if he's read Mailer as much as I have, especially that Fort Knox of auctorial intermatter, *Advertisements for Myself*; even if not, Mailer's description of how he complicated and slowed down the genteel first draft of *The Deer Park* offers many serendipitous insights into Budrys' own writing.

Rereading these old columns, some for the first time in twenty years, I was surprised at how memorable they were. Individual sentences had stuck in my mind years after I forgot who wrote them, like his comment that Robert Silverberg's work in the early 70s was "done in the quasi-satirical protest vein but marked by an anti-romanticism so deliberate as to pass beyond cynicism and reflect its underlying romantic biases . . .," or that James P. Hogan wrote, to good effect, "like a falling safe knocking the balconies off a skyscraper." Some of his reviews had left behind virtual books, like Howard A. Rodman's *Destiny Express*, a novel I've never seen or even heard anything else about, whose very title and author I had forgotten since June 1990, but which I remember better than some novels I've read; I suspect that, in describing it, Budrys' own novelist's imagination had been engaged. I suspect it's often engaged; that's why his paraphrasing is so acute, as when he summed up the protagonist of William Gibson's *Neuromancer*: "Degage, existentialist, and wasted, Case blunders through life, taking heavy hits, plugging into all sorts of things but never himself." In the May 79 column, Budrys, defending Lester Del Rey's "Helen O'Loy" from a charge of sexism, inscribes his own very Budrysian narrative onto Del Rey's text, one about an "accidently mis-programmed robot": O'Loy is "programmed by incessant days of watching TV soap operas," and Dave marries her "because he recognizes his human responsibility for having done something rather terrible through his carelessness, and rejects the alternate course of opening her up and reprogramming her – that is, rejects the course of treating her as property." There's some textual evidence for this, though it's not what I experience when I read the story, but this alternative Dave, burdened by responsibility, trying to do the right thing, will be recognizable to anyone who's read even a little of Budrys fiction. Budrys' fiction and Budrys' criticism inform each other; eventually they become inextricable. The fiction backs the criticism, like precious metal backing currency, so that, for instance, Budrys' opinion of a given Stephen King work is validated by "The Master of the Hounds"; likewise, the criticism is always feeding into the fiction: when *Writing to the Point* describes how a story and a manuscript are different things, it makes us think of *Who?*, and how the end of the plot – "No." – and the end of the manuscript – But I haven't lost anything – widely separated, don't mean anything separately, so that the story only ends when they're combined in the reader's mind. The important effect is that Budrys is always reviewing sf as it is written and read, and he is always writing it to exacting and highly evolved standards.

Finally, none of this would have been compelling, only entertaining, without critical intelligence. Whatever its other achievements, a work of criticism only attains substance as perception, as thought. Critical intelligence is the most important aspect of reviewing, and also the hardest to describe, the most elusive, the most subjective. It's not the same thing as being right, any more than extrapolation and world-building in SF are only good if they turn out to be accurate predictions – though, like SF, the more plausible criticism is, the better. In Budrys' work, the intellectual content is so solid it can structure a review or even an entire column, replacing the usual formula of introduction, synopsis, and verdict. Its unfolding becomes a narrative line, generating suspense and resolution. This is possible to overlook, because the thought is usually evoked, not stated directly, more like fiction than nonfiction. My favorite example is in *Writing to the Point*. He's just demonstrated how a story is constructed with the somewhat contrived example of Sarah Jane's audition. When he's done, the various small, silly parts are lying inert, disarrayed on the workbench. He now lifts an invisible string that, it turns out, has been holding the parts together like the pieces of a necklace, and the story becomes meaningful, even moving. That was craft, which I can explain to you; this is art.

I was just reading his column in the June 85 *F&SF*, because that's where he discusses his collection of criticism, *Benchmarks*, and in one of the other reviews, for Frank Kelly Freas' *A Separate Star*, found some unusually explicit comments on art – Freas' art, but also, in my view, the art of Budrys' criticism. "It's very difficult to conceive of an uncommunicated art. I find, in fact, that I can't do it; when I try, I conceive not of an art but a surly, baffled individual who claims to practice it and is secretly terrified . . . I find that in my universe there is no way to discuss art without entailing communication, any more than there is a way to discuss time without implying space . . . or vice-versa; there is no communication that is not in some sense a work of art." And, keeping "there is no communication that is not in some sense a work of art" in mind, ". . . art expresses itself willy-nilly; . . . craftsmanship, only, is susceptible to rationality. But the procedures of craftsmanship consist of making moves which are themselves bits of art, so that what seems solid and comprehensible, while you discourse on technique, actually has moondust for its fundamental particle and is as mysterious as ever."

This review, of Freas' *A Separate Star*, is a fair example, above average but not unusual. There's the intellectual substance: Budrys works out a whole theory of art in order to place Freas within in. There's the history, both personal – Budrys has known Freas for decades – and long-range: "Then, there is the matter of melding graphic art with written text – that is, the doing of illustrations. This is a form of partnership that sprang to importance with the development of mass literature. Although its roots go back to dimmest antiquity, its flowering is no more than one or two centuries in progress, and every generation sees a fresh evolution of it. Among all the graphic artists, the illustrators have the liveliest time and possess the quickest moves." There's the striking prose: "And here, of course, in the rich color and the crisp black-and-white, is the entrance to the gossamer labyrinth; the eye is drawn in, and the brain follows." All this for one of four books reviewed, in a column that appeared twelve times a year.

As for *Benchmarks*, the 1985 collection of his *Galaxy* reviews from the 60s, as good as it is – it's one of the few essential books about SF, the equal of *The Issue at Hand* and Damon Knight's *In Search of Wonder* – it was anticlimactic after a decade of the

F&SF criticism, relatively undeveloped and unambitious. When someone collects some or all of the *F&SF* columns – and, I hope, other work from the same period: my favorite work of Budrys criticism, and the best single introduction to it, his review of *Return of the Jedi,* appeared in the March 1984 *Amazing* – it will probably be the best book of sf criticism ever.

So how did Budrys affect so many people? The position Budrys occupies in sf is a new one, I think. It doesn't inhere in the various public roles he's taken over the years – the *Locus* column, the Writers of the Future contest, editor and publisher of *Tomorrow SF* and its electronic successor, *tomorrowsf* – though there's a lot of mutual resonance. The regular criticism is central to it, but we've had influential critics before. The fiction is important, though almost all of those critics have been important writers too. Nor is he simply a workshop guru, even if he is the definitive aspiring writer's writer, and in a period when learning to write has taken new prominence as a mode of responding to sf.

In puzzling it out, my mistake was thinking of Budrys' role as something objective, something intentional – and this about the author of "Little Joe" and *Falling Torch,* studies in how leadership only exists in the minds of the led. Why did Budrys invite the bunch of us up to his hotel room? I'll never know. Maybe his belief in WotF had been lost in the backlash at the Brighton worldcon a few months earlier, and then restored when he saw what it meant to some anonymous would-be writers out in the hinterlands. Maybe he needed a cigarette. Why is Captain Howe kind to the young marine in "Little Joe"?

So, why is Budrys valued? What does he mean to us? My guess is that for those of us who came to sf within a certain time – a window of twenty years or so, not necessarily closed by the end of his ongoing regular criticism – Budrys is the authoritative perceiver of what had been and what was going on. Reprinting had stopped, even as sf history grew longer. Even present sf was too fragmentary and prolific to see whole. Its canon-forming institutions were overwhelmed: the Hugo and Nebula usually reflected the best seller lists, the year's best anthology was swollen and chaotic. The old master narratives were over. Budrys explains the past – there are probably lots of people today who only know there was a John W. Campbell, Jr. and that he was important because of Budrys. He has an overview of at least most of the important authors and trends of the present, transcoding all that paper into a habitable literature. His fiction and teaching are a standard – not the only possible one, but a good one – at a time when the field is too decentered to have an intrinsic up and down. I was struck by a line in Ellen Brody's description of Budrys in this year's Readercon Progress Report: "I first met Algis Budrys at his kaffeeklatsch at Readercon 6 in 1993, but I can't remember when I first encountered his work because it seems like he had always been here." That's exactly it. We arrived alone at sf, like I arrived alone at Boskone 25, and we soon bumped into Algis Budrys. He invited us over, handed us a drink, filled us in on what was going on. He made us feel at home.

– Barnaby Rapoport

LIVING ALONE IN THE JUNGLE
BY ALGIS BUDRYS

A man was brought up from Kansas City, whom I would not know to look at. But a certain person pointed him out to me by chance. The Kansas City man was coming out of the pool hall on Paulina that is right on the north edge of Chicago. This other person of my acquaintance gave me the nod, saying: "There is a man I used to work with in Kansas City. What do you suppose he is doing up here around Juneway Terrace, Tierney?"

We were in the submarine sandwich place, eating with our food in front of our faces and looking out through the window. I saw that the Kansas City man was in the habit of touching the back of his neck. He was wearing a blue suit and gray hat. "I don't know," I said, and left the submarine sandwich place by myself.

I saw that the man was walking north, toward the red and yellow brick building that they call the Juneway Jungle. He half-turned once, and I stepped into the entrance of the shot-and-beer place across from the school playground, but I had no other trouble following him, and he didn't see me.

I followed him to my street and saw he was going in my building. I went around back in the alley and came up the back steps. Mrs. Macaluso was putting out her garbage into the can on her back landing, and her eyes got big. "Why, hello, Tierney!" she said, "I thought I was hearing you home upstairs," so I put my finger to her lip and went "Shh!" real gentle. She gave me a nod and went inside behind her closed door, and I went up to the back landing of my place.

When I went in my back door, I could hear there was something going on in the front room. When I looked in around the corner from the dining room, I could see the Kansas City man was holding my brother with one arm circled around his neck and the hand over my brother's mouth, and was also jamming his legs in between my brother's to keep him from getting his weight set. The Kansas City man's other hand had a thing in it with a long thin blade made by grinding on the end of a long electrician's screwdriver. He was putting it in my brother's body low down all along the back, and twisting around in there until he finally found an artery. Then he held my brother for a while until he was beginning to tire and stumble from the weight of him, and he laid him down. On the TV was the first inning of the Chicago Cubs ball game. My brother would get interested in things and not be distracted away from them, especially lately. It was like there were fewer and fewer switches working along the tracks in his mind, and you could start him on a ball game and he would not so much as swat a mosquito until the last man was out.

The Kansas City man wiped a hand across the back of his mouth and straightened his clothes. He left the knife in my brother's body and got out a Cricket lighter, which he turned up high and used to set fire to the fingerprints on the yellow plastic handle, which made a stink and a lot of soot. Then he went back out through the front door which he had opened I guess with a piece of plastic, which you can do.

This would be a different world if there were no plastic.

I used a corner of the throw rug to smother the knife handle and pull the thing from my brother, and then I went out through my front door, which the Kansas City man had closed and wiped the knobs of. I waited back on the landing, and when I heard him go out the street door, I went down well behind him. I noticed in the entry that he had taken the card off my mailbox where I had printed my name, Tierney Debrecenskoy, and I thought that was a bad joke of him.

The Kansas City man got very confident as soon as he thought he was off my turf. He was no longer touching the back of his neck or taking off his gray hat to wipe his forehead. I followed him toward Roland Armagia's place down below Howard Street, in Rogers Park. His house, not the store off Clark Street that looks like a household electrical fixtures place.

There is a turn you take there, walking, when there is almost no chance you are not going to Roland Armagia's brick bungalow with the Cyclone fencing. So once he took that turn I stepped out from behind some hedging and pulled him in there with me. I did not ask him anything, because going to where he was going was all the answers a reasonable person could expect, so I did him in right away.

I got my mailbox card back from his pocket, and wrote HA HA on his forehead with a ballpoint pen. I put him around to Roland Armagia's alley garage with the $39.95 repaint blue Ford in it that has heavy duty rear spring and a lot of false panels over odd-shaped little cubbyholes. A man saw me, but I had on the Kansas City man's grey hat shading my face, and all the Rogers Park cops know I never wear a hat. So just shook my finger at the man, and he ducked back fast inside his garage. Still and all, I walked back out of the alley in the opposite direction, and then went for a while to the saloon on Western Avenue where Tommy Darling will say you were there all afternoon. They will believe him because all the Foster Avenue station cops eat and do other things there, and he also knows what to do with a gray hat when you hand it to him and say you found it outside his door.

I had three Hamms Beer and watched the middle of the ball game, then got my brother up. "How did I do?" he said, mopping his face from the heat you get when you have the results of the process.

"How did you do? You did fine, you big cabbage, and the Cubs are ahead only because the Cincinnati third baseman was watching some girl in the stands, and let a ground ball go through his legs while you were asleep. Stop rolling down your sleeves, Asshole," I said, putting the hypodermic and the empty medicine jar away in the wall. "Your shirt is burned and has holes in it; you have to get out a new one."

He took it off and stood there fingering the holes. "How come I don't bleed, Tierney?" he said.

What can you explain to people without switches? "You bleed," I said. "You bled like a spring pig that time in East St. Louis when they threw the pipe thing full of roofing nails that took the whole front of my store besides tearing up the walls. I had to go out in the alley and put my lunch in the weeds." I got stores now built like currency exchanges; you would have to get bazookas."What they did to you this time, you bleed inside and it collects. You have to go to the john?"

"Huh? Yeah . . . yeah, come to think of it. But I already went that way this morning, you know?"

"The other thing you're gonna do, you're gonna get hungry as hell. go in the john and then put on another shirt, and I'll call the pizza meanwhile."

"All right." My brother stopped and looked at me. "How come you always know what to do and I can't even remember what I did? Ain't we the same person?"

I went over and kissed him on the cheek before I had to look in his eyes any longer. "It's okay, Tierney," I said. "It's how it has to be. You're happy, ain't you?"

"Yeah. Yeah, I guess so. Yeah. Listen, can we have sausage and anchovies?"

"Sure," I said. "And I'll get it from Laurie's. They'll bring it in one of those little Jeeps with the heater in the back," and he grinned and went off to do what I told him.

I don't know. When Sanford first gives him to me and I give Sanford back his markers, I was told that the process undoes whatever happens to your brain and as well as your body while your metabolism is not working. But I have read in many places that brain cells do funny things if they don't get a lot of attention from the body, and I think Tierney gets a little dumber each time, and I don't mean me.

I called Laurie's, then I called the University medical center and asked for Doctor Sanford in Research, who on it right away when he heard who it was calling.

"I need another three cc's of Processor, Doc," I said. "You want the two thousand made out to the Equipment Fund again?"

That would be fine with him; they had seen this new centrifuge or something in a catalog, and it had a counter-rotatable eccentric cam capability in stainless steel with teflon inserts and a Vinyl landau top or something; they always have something they need it for right away.

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CYRIL M. KORNBLUTH

The following remarks are made possible by the NESFA Press, which this year generously published *His Share of Glory: The Complete Short Fiction of C. M. Kornbluth,* edited by Timothy P. Szczesuil and with a preface by Frederik Pohl.

I bought a copy of the book eagerly, as soon as I learned about it, because I had been looking for a particular Kornbluth story – looking in vain, because so much science fiction, as we know, is out of print and extant only in, to quote Szczesuil, "old, yellowed, brittle-paged paperbacks." I had none of the old, yellowed, brittle-paged science fiction anthologies and no access to the great pulp magazines of the 1950s – *Fantasy and Science Fiction, Galaxy, Astounding* – which forty years ago I read (pored over) but never thought of saving beyond a few months.

Some collectors, I know, keep these treasures under xenon-filled plastic. Unfortunately I'm not personally acquainted with any such collector, and Charles Brown's library is on the wrong coast.

Flashback. I spent one whole summer (1956?) submitting stories to those venerable periodicals. I was determined to break into print. I kept a careful record of my submissions and lovingly saved the rejection slips that arrived in the mail. The high point of my literary assault on the fortified castle of authorhood was a personally written rejection, from John W. Campbell, Jr., himself. His closing sentence, bless him, is stamped as indelibly in my head as the lyrics of a favorite song: "I rather like your style of writing and suggest that you try us again." Back to the present.

At first, I didn't even know it was a Kornbluth story I was looking for. I had only a vague memory to go on. I asked some science fiction experts and was finally steered (by expert Franz Rottensteiner) to the name Kornbluth and the title of the story, "The Cosmic Charge Account."

The name Kornbluth actually didn't mean much to me – that is, not in any specific way. When I consumed science fiction stories in the good old days, it was the stories I was focused on, not the authors behind them. Kornbluth, Kuttner, Padgett, Brown, Sturgeon: the names were fondly pronounced, revered, but they were pretty much interchangeable.

Opening the pages of *His Share of Glory,* I expected to find – what? Something dated? Cobwebby, quaint, corny? Primitive? Amateurish? It indeed happened to me, such disenchantment, and more than once, when I went digging nostalgically in the reading matter of my childhood and adolescence. An awful lot, you know, doesn't hold up.

Kornbluth holds up.

First, I encountered that snappy, witty 1950s pulp style I always liked so much. It's a style that went out of style in the 1960s and has stayed out since. With Kornbluth, it can be lyrical ("The Words of Guru"), bureaucratic-legalistic ("That Share of Glory"), cheap-hood ("I Never Ast No Favors"), silly biblical ("The Advent on Channel Twelve"), or it can assume any number of other voices, but whatever it does, it is unfailingly economical, making its various points with short, effective punches – having that great virtue of newspaper writing, which says: All right, let's not waste time. Practically every Kornbluth line contains a payoff: a joke, a frisson, an idea, an image. Often there are several payoffs packed in one line.

This pulp style is also a very democratic style. It may wax poetical-literary, but it never pretends to Parnassus. It never takes itself that seriously. Its vein is iconoclastic and its purpose is to provide entertainment, not undying art that only the privileged few will understand and appreciate.

The construction of a 1950s Kornbluth pulp story is just as economical as its sentences. You're put into the picture without preamble and have to figure out for yourself what the hell is going on as the action proceeds. Explanations, if given, are minimal. Here is one neat example, among a host: "He took out of his pocket a late Morrison fingering-piece and turned it over in his hand, a smile of relaxation and bliss spreading over his face" (25). Now, there has been no discussion of fingering-pieces in the story, and fingering-pieces are not explained later. They do not figure at all in the plot. There's just this one sentence (and half a reference elsewhere). The character holding the fingering-piece is the President, who has absolute power and collects art – so the object must be a kind of tactile art form (since we're in the future), and Morrison must be a great artist in that form, and if this is a late Morrison we have, it's probably a masterpiece, and so on.

The Don't Explain strategy often becomes a game of concealment or indirection the writer plays with the reader. Like, What's Wrong with This Picture? You'll have to look more than once and maybe more than twice. It's so easy to miss stuff. The first sentence of "The Marching Morons," in its apparent simplicity, is a classic: "Some things had not changed." How much more indirectly, and how much more economically, can one impart the information that the world has changed drastically?

A Kornbluth story's problem or conflict is quickly presented and the players introduced. You're then led to expect the action to lead in a certain direction, which it does, satisfyingly, until the surprising twist at the end, which is also satisfying, because you both expected it and were surprised. The horror comics of the 1950s, like *Tales from the Crypt*, possessed this same, simple structure.

Kornbluth's playfulness is one of the things that set him apart and above many of his contemporary purveyors of pulp. His wit can show in one word or phrase: Whambozambo Comix (372) I'm particularly fond of. A dignified conman finishes his confession (two pages only) as vigilantes come to hang him (deservedly): "Here they come, with an insulting thick rope" (60). Consider all the wonderful work that the single word insulting does. Or take this parody of science talk: "And then the protoplasmo high carbon proteidic discellular converter would be turned on. The population of Manhattan would turn into pocket fuzz" (136). A generation later, and you could be reading this sentence in Douglas Adams or Terry Pratchett.

What ideas move Kornbluth? One idea has to do with democracy. Kornbluth's villains are dictators, tyrants, wardens, generals, cops – your usual authority figures. His hero may not be exactly the little guy, but he definitely sticks up for the little guy. There's a strong sense of the common, human touch.

(Re guy: yes, Virginia, these stories are sexist, though some of the most impressive kickers of ass in them are female. A delightful example: "I Never Ast No Favors.")

The hero is not exactly the little guy or the man in the street, because he is no meathead. Kornbluth doesn't abide meatheads, and that's another important theme: brains winning out over brawn. Julio Gomez, a teenage dishwasher in Spanish Harlem who is another Ramanujan (which see), uses his genius to get the better of Pentagon generals who want to use his science to make superweapons. In another story, we hear that "brainpower" has to be pitted against "firepower" (331), and of course we know which power will win. (That's one of the joys of fiction, versus real life.)

Kornbluth's praise of democracy and intelligence, and throw in a helping of sardonic wit ("That Share of Glory"), makes me think of the ethnosociopolitical category of the 1950s New York Jew – and also of Bugs Bunny, who is (I have the impression, but I'm no historian) himself a New York Jew. See also under anti-McCarthyism.

To get a little less facile. Kornbluth portrays decent people in a lousy world, and one of the strongest and most poignant expressions of this is "Theory of Rocketry," written in 1958 and having, in the first sentence, Richard M. Nixon High School. It's a future world in which the Right (as opposed to the Left) is holding the lid tight, and cruelly, on everything.

What impresses me most about Kornbluth does not have to do with style or theme, because those things are, after all, social, communal. They are counters we all use, with varying degrees of success. It's his imagination, his ability to come up with those very logical yet very crazy details for his invented worlds, that gives him his stature and keeps these stories new after all these years.

"The Cosmic Charge Account," short as it is, is chockfull of originality, and vivid enough to be filmed: the pompous Swiss professor and the publisher's Bright Boy assuming the Pavlovian-induced posture that allows them to "burn off" the mind power from the misguided ruler of the universe in a small town in Pennsylvania that turns everyone else in a radius of several miles into a do-good zombie: "In one violent fling I was standing on my left foot in the aisle, thumbing my nose, my tongue stuck out. Gooseflesh rippled down my neck and shoulders" (424). Or the scene of desperate people stopping the train and forcing it to flee the plague zone. Or the Ford demolished by the bazooka at the order of the New Wave-bookstore duchess. The rabbit biting the farmer's hand. The professor indignantly recovering from a mortal wound and levitating as he threatens a lawsuit.

Here are my Kornbluth Top Ten, not in any order: "That Share of Glory," "The Mindworm," "The Slave," "The Silly Season," "The Marching Morons," "The Altar at Midnight," "Theory of Rocketry," "The Cosmic Charge Account," "Friend to Man," and "I Never Ast No Favors."

Thanks, NESFA.

– Michael Kandel

In the early 1950s, very few would have contradicted you if you said that Cyril Kornbluth was the best of us. Not only best, but different in some indefinable way that made his failures more interesting than most people's successes. And his successes. . . .

He was seventeen or so, before the War, when as a member of the Futurians he sold his first stories. One of them was "The Rocket of 1955," which is still one of the great minor short stories in this field; others were by a score of pen names, often in stories shared with other writers within that group of street geniuses that also included Frederik Pohl, Harry Dockweiler ("Dirk Wylie"), Robert A. W. Lowndes, Walter Kubilius, Don Wollheim, Damon Knight, James Blish and Richard Wilson, among others. Living in the shadow of John W. Campbell, they edited and wrote magazines that few ever heard of in the same breath as Campbell's *Astounding*, but it is noteworthy how many good, solid stories they wrote.

Cyril, like most others, went away to war. He had a stratospheric IQ, which in the case of somebody who looked Jewish and did not have a university education meant he went into the infantry, and eventually carried a 30 calibre machinegun. (There is no record as to whether this was a form of hazing.) In the Battle of the Bulge, he earned a Bronze Star. I don't know if anybody learned exactly what he did to earn his medal, but he manned that machinegun, and presumably used it.

He came out of the war and set about the remainder of his life. He resumed reading; he may not have had much formal education, but I wouldn't want to argue most intellectual points with him. He knew some remarkable people – the glass sculptor in "The Mindworm" lived up the road from him in Waverly, NY, for instance. He married Mary, and eventually had two sons by her. They were both handicapped. He worked for Transradio Press in Chicago for a while, which was a horse wire underneath it all. He suffered in the Hawk, which is what they call the Chicago winter wind. And he returned to science fiction.

Most people now who recall him remember him as the partner of Frederik Pohl on *The Space Merchants*. I'm sure Fred will not be too hurt if I say that at the time, people supposed that he was Cyril's junior partner. This was due in part to Fred's doing everything he could to boost Cyril's reputation. It was also due to the fact that Cyril was turning out many stories, like "The Little Black Bag," "That Share of Glory," (for *Astounding*), "The Marching Morons" for *Galaxy*, "Theory of Rocketry" for *F&SF*, and "Two Dooms" for *Venture*. Which meant he was consistently hitting the top magazine markets. He also wrote *Takeoff*, *The Syndic*, and *Not This August*, which are books worth anyone's time to this day, among others, and as Cyril Judd he wrote two books in collaboration with Judith Merril. And he did several additional sf novels with Frederik Pohl.

It was as a writer for Lion Library that he turned out a slew of mundane books written to the headlines – *The Naked Storm Valerie*, *The Man of Cold Rages*, etc., etc. which are notable for the speed with which he did them, the number of pen names they sported, and a wealth of gritty detail which is otherwise the province of writers like James M. Cain and which is not too much seen in sf even today. And with Frederik Pohl again, he wrote a rather ambitious novel, *Presidential Year*, which Ballantine Books published and is, as usual, worth re-reading now.

It did not come to anything much financially. Nobody made much money out of sf – though that was beginning to change, partly due to Kornbluth and Pohl, not that it did Kornbluth any good. And he remained a rather plump, rather sardonic person whom, to look at, you would not put down as the world's greatest sf writer.

He had simply lived rather more than most people his age. He had lived it while starving as a Futurian, while walking incessant miles with that gun, while viewing the world through brown-colored glasses. His blood pressure, after the War, was so high that he was deafened by the ringing in his ears.

He fought the world, and the world fought back. His mother died of radiation poisoning, he said, in an attempt to cure her cancer. His brother – who survives to this day, I believe – does not seem to have much idea of his status. He had married Mary, and taken the M as his middle initial, he having been born without one, but it was not a truly satisfactory marriage. He lived for a while in Waverly, which is a marginal community in the lower tier of New York State, in a house without drinkable water, coming out periodically to stay with Fred in Red Bank, NJ, and write another novel. And, finally, he got a job as Assistant Editor to Robert P. Mills, the editor of *Venture* and *F&SF*. By then he was living in Levittown, Long Island, in a tract house with Mary and the kids. It had snowed. He shoveled his walk, went to the train station to begin his first day on the job, had a heart attack in the station, and died. It was the early spring of '58, and he was in his thirties. The war had caught up to him. Some war had caught up to him.

He leaves behind a major legacy. A score of writers, to this day, write the way they do because of the influence of Kornbluth. For that matter, the field has only partly caught up to him; now it is usual to write sardonic, grittily detailed stories; then, it was not. Every so often, too, somebody still reprints one of the old stories, and people reading them are startled by them. He was a giant. I wish he were alive.

– Algis Budrys

1. I intend this as a set of notes, a set of suggestions, made in hopes of arriving at a cohesive essay later, when time allows. Yet since I want to talk about a series of suggestions found in a set of stories, a responding set of suggestions may constitute suitable form for an essay. Suggestions in answer to suggestions: a kind of antiphony.

2. It may be an entirely personal thing, that I believe as I do that rationality has an important part to play in the creation of fiction. It must play an especcially important role in the creation of science fiction. Oddly, the most logical – not the most historically accurate – etymology of scientifiction would lead one to believe it was "knowledge" fiction, not "science" fiction.

3. Knowledge itself may take a neutral position in the human mind. It acquires value through the action of the mind, which may "manipulate" knowledge (if I may co-opt that verb) by means of reason, or through some variety of unreason. To the reasoning mind, unreason must have unpleasant association. To the mind highly concerned with reasoning, the unpleasantness must grow to some corresponding degree. This may account for the nightmare preoccupation with madness among some of our most analytical authors. Some might suggest Poe and Hemingway as examples. I suggest Cyril Kornbluth as an additional one. Kornbluth's works, from either his pre-war youth or post-war maturity, have no more accidental literary effects than do the works of Poe or Hemingway. Poe's spoken terrors and Hemingay's unspoken ones find some echo in the nightmare worlds concocted by Kornbluth, which inspire in his protagonists not only fear and bravery, but also anger and bitter fortitude.

4. In his short story "MS. Found in a Chinese Fortune Cookie," Kornbluth's alter-ego, Cecil Corwin, discovers what he believes to be the philosopher's stone. He has found a way of approaching problems that solves them. All of them. Universally. He may turn the solution with equal efficacy to a domestic squabble, a military question, or a matter of international dispute: the Answer dissolves each knot. It works every time. Corwin soon learns he is not the first to discover the Answer, however. Other writers have. All the writers, in fact, who made up the best-selling cadre of the times. They discovered it, then agreed to a pact of silence. Those who did not agree were dealt with summarily – as Corwin discovers quickly, being adminstered LSD to render him, in his own words, insane.

5. Look at it this way: Corwin arrives at complete sanity: he has devised an intellectual model that resolves every difficulty along rational lines. For this sanity, he is rendered insane, and placed in an asylum.

6. The writer C.M. Kornbluth himself exists in the story alongside his alter-ego. Corwin communicates from his insane asylum by means of placing messages on Chinese fortune-cookie papers, which include a notice of award if placed in Kornbluth's hands. Nowhere does Corwin hint that he had any intention of letting Kornbluth in on the Answer before the insanity difficulty arose. Kornbluth has a stake in the matter, after all, even if he does not know it.

7. Poe, in "MS. Found in a Bottle": "It is evident that we are hurrying onwards to some exciting knowledge – some never-to-be-imparted secret, whose attainment is destruction."

8. Two angels, if I may call them that, come to test Corwin after he discovers the Answer. One appears to be a best-selling author of the time who once held a pastorate; the other appears to be Mickey Spillane. The sacred, and the profane. They find Corwin reluctant, and place him in the limbo of LSD-induced insanity. They have firm reasoning on their side. If the world as a whole knew the Answer, after all, it would ruin Art. Writing would become a hobby, nothing more. No one but a writer would need it any more.

9. In plain terms, Corwin, the sane individual, is speaking, lacking any means for action himself, to Kornbluth, who is a part of the ruling insanity of the world as it then existed.

10. Kornbluth himself, in the story, distances himself from certain claims Corwin makes. He gives suggestions leading the reader to believe that Kornbluth is more reasoning and reasonable than Corwin, which suggests in turn that Corwin may have partly deserved what he got. In essence, he acts conventionally – which is not to say sanely.

11. Billy Justin, in Kornbluth's novel, *Not This August*, finds he must assume madness, a kind of philosophic and religious madness, in order to find a sane reaction to being submerged in a society that has become a madhouse, under Sino-Soviet rule. He does it to become sane, as a being, since submission hardly appears sane. Through madness he regains his sense of being human.

12. In "MS. Found in a Fortune Cookie," the situation holds: Kornbluth's sanity may be brought about, but only through the insanity of his alter ego, his inner voice.

13. Joe, in Kornbluth's "Everybody knows Joe," might be considered mad, for he hears and talks with an inner voice. Yet that inner voice is his sanity. At least it possesses sanity to a greater degree than Joe himself does. The inner voice, who is the narrator of the story, is the voice of reason buried within a larger, largely unreasoning world. Joe and the story's narrator are close to being the "inseparable companions," one of whom was unable to speak above "a very low whisper," of Poe's "William Wilson."

14. A similar structure recurs in what might be called Kornbluth's Los Alamos tales: "Gomez," "The Marching Morons," "The Altar at Midnight," and "Two Dooms." In all four, the shadow of atomic weaponry distorts the nature of society and the role intelligence plays within that society. Similar elements occur again in "The Adventurer" and "The Silly Season," and likely others.

15. A few simplifications: Gomez regains his humanity through a slight dementia: amnesia, in which he loses the Answer at the same time he loses his virginity. The knowledgeable class of "The Marching Morons" solves its problems through insane means devised in the 20th century, courtesy Honest John Barlow. Atomic scientist Dr. Edward Royland in "Two Dooms" arrives at his specific Answer through a psychedelic drug, which puts him in a fugue state that transfers him from one reality to another. The midnight hour chimes truth to him, as it does for Dr. Francis Bowman in "The Altar at Midnight." Bowman changed the world, through intellectual achievement; and now society looks upon him as neurotic and a dipsomaniac. He hangs out on Screwball Square, where one of the screwballs, it so happens, does know the truth that Bowman does.

16. Kornbluth may be offering that one consolation through his fiction: one other person knows the truth, even if that one person only has a voice on Screwball Square.

– Mark Rich

THE ALTAR AT MIDNIGHT
BY CYRIL M. KORNBLUTH

He had quite a rum-blossom on him for a kid, I thought at first. But when he moved closer to the light by the cash register to ask the bartender for a match or something, I saw it wasn't that. Not just the nose. Broken veins on his cheeks, too, and the funny eyes. He must have seen me look, because he slid back away from the light.

The bartender shook my bottle of ale in front of me like a Swiss bell ringer so it foamed inside the green glass.

"You ready for another, sir?" he asked.

I shook my head. Down the bar, he tried it on the kid – he was drinking scotch and water or something like that – and found out he could push him around. He sold him three scotch and waters in ten minutes.

When he tried for number four, the kid had his courage up and said, "I'll tell *you* when I'm ready for another, Jack." But there wasn't any trouble.

It was almost nine and the place began to fill up. The manager, a real hood type, stationed himself by the door to screen out the high-school kids and give the big hello to conventioneers. The girls came hurrying in too, with their little makeup cases and their fancy hair piled up and their frozen faces with the perfect mouths drawn on them. One of them stopped to say something to the manager, some excuse about something, and he said: "That's aw ri'; getcha assina dressing room."

A three piece band behind the drapes at the back of the stage began to make warmup noises and there were two bartenders keeping busy. Mostly it was beer – a midweek crowd. I finished my ale and had to wait a couple of minutes before I could get another bottle. The bar filled up from the end near the stage because all the customers wanted a good, close look at the strippers for their fifty-cent bottles of beer. But I noticed that nobody sat down next to the kid, or, if anybody did, he didn't stay long – you go out for some fun and the bartender pushes you around and nobody wants to sit next to you. I picked up my bottle and glass and went down on the stool to his left.

He turned to me right away and said: "What kind of a place is this, anyway?" The broken veins were all over his face, little ones, but so many, so close, that they made his face look something like marbled rubber. The funny look in his eyes was it – the trick contact lenses. But I tried not to stare and not to look away.

"It's okay," I said. "It's a good show if you don't mind a lot of noise from –"

He stuck a cigarette into his mouth and poked the pack at me. "I'm a spacer," he said, interrupting.

I took one of his cigarettes and said: "Oh."

He snapped a lighter for the cigarettes and said: "Venus."

I was noticing that his pack of cigarettes on the bar had some kind of yellow sticker instead of the blue tax stamp.

"Ain't that a crock?" he asked. "You can't smoke and they give you lighters for a souvenir. But it's a good lighter. On Mars last week, they gave us all some cheap pen-and-pencil sets."

"You get something every trip, hah?" I took a good long drink of ale and he finished his scotch and water.

"Shoot. You call a trip a 'shoot.'"

One of the girls was working her way down the bar. She was going to slide onto the empty stool at his right and give him the business, but she looked at him first and decided not to. She curled around me and asked if I'd buy her a li'l ole drink. I said no and she moved on to the next. I could kind of feel the young fellow quivering. When I looked at him, he stood up. I followed him out of the dump. The manager grinned without thinking and said, "G'night, boys," to us.

The kid stopped in the street and said to me: "You don't have to follow me around, Pappy." He sounded like one wrong word and I would get socked in the teeth.

"Take it easy. I know a place where they won't spit in your eye."

He pulled himself together and made a joke of it "This I have to see," he said. "Near here?"

"A few blocks."

We started walking. It was a nice night.

"I don't know this city at all," he said. "I'm from Covington, Kentucky. You do your drinking at home there. We don't have places like this." He meant the whole Skid Row area.

"It's not so bad," I said. "I spend a lot of time here."

"Is that a fact? I mean, down home a man your age would likely have a wife and children."

"I do. The hell with them."

He laughed like a real youngster and I figured he couldn't even be twenty-five. He didn't have any trouble with the broken curbstones in spite of his scotch and water I asked him about it.

"Sense of balance," he said. "You have to be tops for balance to be a spacer – you spend so much time outside in a suit. People don't know how much. Punctures. And you aren't worth a damn if you lose your point."

"What's that mean?"

"Oh. Well, it's hard to describe. When you're outside and you lose your point, it means you're all mixed up, you don't know which way the can – that's the ship – which way the can is. It's having all that room around you. But if you have a good balance, you feel a little tugging to the ship, or maybe you just *know* which way the ship is without feeling it. Then you have your point and you can get the work done."

"There must be a lot that's hard to describe."

He thought that might be a crack and he clammed up on me.

"You call this Gandytown," I said after a while. "It's where the stove-up old railroad men hang out. This is the place."

It was the second week of the month, before everybody's pension check was all gone. Oswiak's was jumping. The Grandsons of the Pioneers were on the juke singing the *Man from Mars Yodel* and old Paddy Shea was jigging in the middle of the floor. He had a full seidel of beer in his right hand and his empty left sleeve was flapping.

The kid balked at the screen door. "Too damn bright," he said.

I shrugged and went on in and he followed. We sat down at a table. At Oswiak's you can drink at the bar if you want to, but none of the regulars do.

Paddy jigged over and said: "Welcome home, Doc." He's a Liverpool Irishman; they talk like Scots, some say, but they sound like Brooklyn to me.

"Hello, Paddy. I brought somebody uglier than you. Now what do you say?"

Paddy jigged around the kid in a half-circle with his sleeve flapping and then flopped into a chair when the record stopped. He took a big drink from the seidel and said: "Can he do this?" Paddy stretched his face into an awful grin that showed his teeth. He has three of them. The kid laughed and asked me: "What the hell did you drag me into here for?"

"Paddy says he'll buy drinks for the house the day anybody uglier than he is comes in."

Oswiak's wife waddled over for the order and the kid asked us what we'd have. I figured I could start drinking, so it was three double scotches.

After the second round, Paddy started blowing about how they took his arm off without any anesthetics except a bottle of gin because the red-ball freight he was tangled up in couldn't wait.

That brought some of the other old gimps over to the table with their stories.

Blackie Bauer had been sitting in a boxcar with his legs sticking through the door when the train started with a jerk. Wham, the door closed. Everybody laughed at Blackie for being that dumb in the first place, and he got mad.

Sam Fireman has palsy. This week he was claiming he used to be a watchmaker before he began to shake. The week before, he'd said he was a brain surgeon. A woman I didn't know, a real old Boxcar Bertha, dragged herself over and began some kind of story about how her sister married a Greek, but she passed out before we found out what happened.

Somebody wanted to know what was wrong with the kid's face – Bauer, I think it was, after he came back to the table.

"Compression and decompression," the kid said. "You're all the time climbing into your suit and out of your suit. Inboard air's thin to start with. You get a few redlines – that's these ruptured blood vessels – and you say the hell with the money; all you'll make is just one more trip. But, God, it's a lot of money for anybody my age! You keep saying that until you can't be anything but a spacer. The eyes are hard-radiation scars."

"You like dot all ofer?" asked Oswiak's wife politely.

"All over, ma'am," the kid told her in a miserable voice. "But I'm going to quit before I get a Bowman Head."

I took a savage gulp at the raw scotch.

"I don't care," said Maggie Rorty. "I think he's cute."

"Compared with –" Paddy began, but I kicked him under the table.

We sang for a while, and then we told gags and recited limericks for a while, and I noticed that the kid and Maggie had wandered into the back room – the one with the latch on the door.

Oswiak's wife asked me, very puzzled: "Doc, w'y dey do dot flyink by planyets?"

"It's the damn govermint," Sam Fireman said.

"Why not?" I said. "They got the Bowman Drive, why the hell shouldn't they use it? Serves 'em right." I had a double scotch and added: "Twenty years of it and they found out a few things they didn't know. Redlines are only one of them. Twenty years more, maybe they'll find out a few more things they didn't know. Maybe by the time there's a bathtub in every American home and an alcoholism clinic in every American town, they'll find out a whole *lot* of things they didn't know. And every American boy will be a pop-eyed, bloodraddled wreck, like our friend here, from riding the Bowman Drive."

"It's the damn govermint," Sam Fireman repeated.

"And what the hell did you mean by that remark about alcoholism?" Paddy said, real sore. "Personally, I can take it or leave it alone."

So we got to talking about that and everybody there turned out to be people who could take it or leave it alone.

It was maybe midnight when the kid showed at the table again, looking kind of dazed. I was drunker than I ought to be by midnight, so I said I was going for a walk. He tagged along and we wound up on a bench at Screwball Square. The soap-boxers were still going strong. As I said, it was a nice night. After a while, a pot-bellied old auntie who didn't give a damn about the face sat down and tried to talk the kid into going to see some etchings. The kid didn't get it and I led him over to hear the soap-boxers before there was trouble.

One of the orators was a mush-mouthed evangelist. "And oh, my friends," he said, "when I looked through the porthole of the spaceship and beheld the wonder of the Firmament –"

"You're a stinkin' Yankee liar!" the kid yelled at him. "You say one damn more word about canshootin' and I'll ram your spaceship down your lyin' throat! Wheah's your redlines if you're such a hot spacer?"

The crowd didn't know what he was talking about, but "wheah's your redlines" sounded good to them, so they heckled mushmouth off his box with it.

I got the kid to a bench. The liquor was working in him all of a sudden. He simmered down after a while and asked: "Doc, should I've given Miz Rorty some money? I asked her afterward and she said she'd admire to have something to remember me by, so I gave her my lighter. She seem' to be real pleased with it. But I was wondering if maybe I embarrassed her by asking her right out. Like I tol' you, back in Covington, Kentucky, we don't have places like that. Or maybe we did and I just didn't know about them. But what do you think I should've done about Miz Rorty?"

"Just what you did," I told him. "If they want money, they ask you for it first. Where you staying?"

"Y.M.C.A.," he said, almost asleep. "Back in Covington, Kentucky, I was a member of the Y and I kept up my membership. They have to let me in because I'm a member. Spacers have all kinds of trouble, Doc. Woman trouble. Hotel trouble. Fam'ly trouble. Religious trouble. I was raised a Southern Baptist, but wheah's Heaven, anyway? I ask' Doctor Chitwood las' time home before the redlines got so thick – Doc, you aren't a minister of the Gospel, are you? I hope I di'n' say anything to offend you."

"No offense, son," I said. "No offense."

I walked him to the avenue and waited for a fleet cab. It was almost five minutes. The independent cabs roll drunks and dent the fenders of fleet cabs if they show up in Skid Row and then the fleet drivers have to make reports on their own time to the company. It keeps them away. But I got one and dumped the kid in.

"The Y Hotel," I told the driver. "Here's five. Help him in when you get there."

When I walked through Screwball Square again, some college kids were yelling "wheah's your redlines" at old Charlie, the last of the Wobblies.

Old Charlie kept roaring: "The hell with your breadlines! I'm tanking about atomic bombs. Right – up – there!" And he pointed at the Moon.

It was a nice night, but the liquor was dying in me.

There was a joint around the corner, so I went in and had a drink to carry me to the club; I had a bottle there. I got into the first cab that came.

"Athletic Club," I said.

"Inna dawghouse, harh?" the driver said, and he gave me a big personality smile.

I didn't say anything and he started the car.

He was right, of course. I was in everybody's doghouse. Some day I'd scare hell out of Tom and Lise by going home and showing them what their daddy looked like.

Down at the Institute, I was in the doghouse.

"Oh, dear," everybody at the Institute said to everybody, "I'm sure I don't know what ails the man. A lovely wife and two lovely grown children and she had to tell him 'either you go or I go.' And drinking! And this is rather subtle, but it's a well-known fact that neurotics seek out low company to compensate for their guilt feelings. The places he frequents: Doctor Francis Bowman, the man who made space flight a reality. The man who put the Bomb Base on the Moon! Really, I'm sure I don't know what ails him."

The hell with them all.

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"The Castle on Outerplanet" (with Frederick Pohl and Robert A. W. Lowndes, writing together as S. D. Gottesman)
Stirring Science Stories April, 1941
"Best Friend" (with Frederick Pohl, writing together as S. D. Gottesman)
Super Science Stories May, 1941
TWE, BtU
"Dimension of Darkness" (as S. D. Gottesman)
Cosmic Stories May, 1941
HSoG
"No Place to Go" (as Edward J. Bellin)
Cosmic Stories May, 1941
HSoG
"What Sorghum Says" (as Cecil Corwin)
Cosmic Stories May, 1941
13O, HSoG
"Forgotten Tongue" (as Walter C. Davies)
Stirring Science Stories June, 1941
HSoG
"Mr. Packer Goes to Hell" (as Cecil Corwin)
Stirring Science Stories June, 1941
13O, HSoG
"The Words of Guru" (as Kenneth Falconer)
Stirring Science Stories June, 1941
MbtM, BoCMK, HSoG
"Kazam Collects" (as S. D. Gottesman)
Stirring Science Stories June, 1941
MbtM, HSoG
"Fire Power" (as S. D. Gottesman)
Cosmic Stories July, 1941
HSoG (as Fire-Power)
"Interference" (as Walter C. Davies)
Cosmic Stories July, 1941
HSoG
"The City in the Sofa" (as Cecil Corwin)
Cosmic Stories July, 1941
13O, HSoG
"Mars-Tube" (with Frederick Pohl, writing together as S. D. Gottesman)
Astonishing September, 1941
TWE, BtU, OB
"Sir Mallory's Magnitude" (as S. D. Gottesman)
SF Quarterly Winter 1941/1942
HSoG
"Error in Guinea Pigs" (as Walter C. Davies)
10-Story Magazine February, 1942
"The Embassy" (with Donald A. Wollheim, writing together as Martin Pearson)
Astounding March, 1942
"The Perfect Invasion" (as S. D. Gottesman)
Stirring Science Stories March, 1942
HSoG
"The Golden Road" (as Cecil Corwin)
Stirring Science Stories March, 1942
13O, HSoG
"Masquerade" (as Kenneth Falconer)
Stirring Science Stories March, 1942
HSoG
"Einstein's Planetoid" (with Frederick Pohl and Robert A. W. Lowndes, writing together as Paul Lavond)
SF Quarterly Spring, 1942
"Crisis!" (as Cecil Corwin)
SF Quarterly Spring, 1942
13O, HSoG
"The Core" (as S. D. Gottesman)
Future April, 1942
HSoG
"An Old Neptunian Custom" (with Frederick Pohl, writing together as Scott Mariner)
Super Science Stories August, 1942
"The Extrapolated Dimwit" (with Frederick Pohl and Robert A. W. Lowndes, writing together as S. D. Gottesman)
Future October, 1942
BtU
"Cure for Killers" (with Frederick Pohl, writing together as Scott Mariner)
10-Story Magazine February, 1943
"A Ghoul and His Money"
Dime Detective September, 1946
"Beer-Bottle Polka"
Black Mask September, 1946
"The Brooklyn Eye"
Black Mask November, 1946
".45 Motives for Murder"
Ten Detective Aces December, 1946
"The Mirrors of Hell" (as Kenneth Falconer)
Ten Detective Aces December, 1946
"X Marks the A-Bomb"
10 Story Detective January, 1947
"The M-Job"
The Phantom Detective March, 1947
"Tomb to Let"
10-Story Detective May, 1947
"The Kill Department"
Ten Detective Aces June, 1947
"Crime on His Hands"
Ten Detective Aces September, 1947
"Goldbrick Solitaire"
Ten Detective Aces January, 1948

"Blood on the Campus"
Street & Smith's Detective Story Magazine June, 1948

"The Yogi Says Yes"
Private Detective Stories November, 1948

"Homicidal Hypo-Man"
All-Story Detective June, 1949

"The Only Thing We Learn"
Startling Stories July, 1949
TMM, BSFoCMK, BoCMK, HSoG

"The Little Black Bag"
Astounding July, 1950
TMOS, MbtM, BSFoCMK, BoCMK, HSoG

"Iteration"
Future September/October, 1950
HSoG

"The Silly Season"
F&SF Fall, 1950
TMOS, TMM, BSFoCMK, BoCMK, HSoG

"The Mindworm"
Worlds Beyond December, 1950
TE, TMOS, BSFoCMK, BoCMK, HSoG

"The Finger Job"
Famous Detective Stories February, 1951

"Friend to Man"
Ten Story Fantasy Spring, 1951
TE, TMOS, BSFoCMK, BoCMK, HSoG

"The Marching Morons"
Galaxy April, 1951
TMOS, TMM, BSFoCMK, BoCMK, HSoG

"With These Hands"
Galaxy December, 1951
TE, TMOS, BSFoCMK, BoCMK, HSoG

"That Share of Glory"
Astounding January, 1952
TE, TMOS, BSFoCMK, HSoG

"The Luckiest Man in Denv" (as Simon Eisner)
Galaxy June, 1952
TMOS, TMM, BoCMK, HSoG

"Gravy Planet" (with Frederick Pohl)
Galaxy June, July, August, 1952
novelized as *The Space Merchants* (which omits ending) missing ending appears in OB

"Make Mine Mars"
SF Adventurers November, 1952
MbtM, HSoG

"The Altar at Midnight"
Galaxy November, 1952
TE, TMOS, BSFoCMK, BoCMK, HSoG

"The Goodly Creatures"
F&SF December, 1952
TE, TMOS, HSoG

"The Mask of Demeter" (as Cecil Corwin, with Donald A. Wollheim as Martin Pearson)
F&SF January, 1953

"Time Bum"
Fantastic January/February, 1953
TMOS, HSoG

"Dominoes"
Star Science Fiction Stories, ed. Frederick Pohl, Ballantine, 1953
TMM, BoCMK, HSoG

"Sea Change" (with Judith Merril, writing together as Cyril Judd)
Dynamic SF March, 1953

"The Adventurer"
Space SF May, 1953
MbtM, BoCMK, HSoG

"The Dip Detail"
Private Eye July, 1953

"The Meddlers"
SF Adventures September, 1953
MbtM (hardcover only), HSoG

"Everybody Knows Joe"
Fantastic Universe October/November, 1953
MbtM, HSoG

"The Remorseful"
Star Science Fiction Stories No. 2, ed. Frederick Pohl,
Ballantine, 1954
TMM, BoCMK, HSoG

"I Never Ast No Favors"
F&SF April, 1954
TMM, BSFoCMK, HSoG

"Gomez"
The Explorers, Ballantine, 1954
TMOS, BSFoCMK, BoCMK, HSoG

"The Adventurers"
SF Quarterly February, 1955
HSoG

"The Cosmic Charge Account" (anthologized as "The Cosmic Expense Account")
F&SF January, 1956
TMM, HSoG

"The Engineer" (with Frederick Pohl)
Infinity February, 1956
TWE, CM, OB

"Ms. Found in a Chinese Fortune Cookie"
F&SF July, 1957
TMM, 13O, HSoG

"The Education of Tigress McCardle"
Venture July, 1957
HSoG

"The Slave"
SF Adventures September, 1957
MbtM (hardcover only), HSoG

"The Last Man Left in the Bar"
Infinity October, 1975

MbtM, BoCMK, HSoG
"The Events Leading Down to the Tragedy"
F&SF January, 1958
MbtM, HSoG
"Virginia"
Venture March, 1958
MbtM, HSoG
"Shark Ship"
Vanguard June, 1958 (as Reap the Dark Tide)
MbtM, BoCMK, HSoG
"Theory of Rocketry"
F&SF July, 1958
BSFoCMK, HSoG
"Two Dooms"
Venture July, 1958
MbtM, BoCMK, HSoG
"The Advent on Channel Twelve"
Star Science Fiction Stories No. 4, ed. Frederick Pohl, Ballantine, 1958
BoCMK, HSoG
"Nightmare with Zeppelins" (with Frederick Pohl)
Galaxy December, 1958
TWE, CM, OB
"Passion Pills"
A Mile Beyond the Moon, Doubleday, 1958 (hardcover only)
HSoG
"A Gentle Dying" (with Frederick Pohl)
Galaxy June, 1961
TWE, CM, OB
"The Quaker Cannon" (with Frederick Pohl)
Astounding August, 1961
TWE, CM, OB
"The World of Myrion Flowers" (with Frederick Pohl)
F&SF October, 1961
TWE, CM, OB
"A Hint of Henbane" (with Frederick Pohl)
Alfred Hitchcock's Mystery Magazine November, 1961
CM
"Critical Mass" (with Frederick Pohl)
Galaxy February, 1962
TWE, CM, OB
"The Objective Approach"
Operation: Phantasy, ed. Donald A. Wollheim, Phantagraph Press, 1967
"The Meeting" (with Frederick Pohl)
F&SF November, 1972
CM, OB
"The Gift of Garigolli" (with Frederick Pohl)
Galaxy August, 1974
CM, OB
"Mute Inglorious Tam" (with Frederick Pohl)
F&SF October, 1974
CM, OB
"Interplane Express" (with Donald A. Wollheim)
Up There and Other Strange Directions, NESFA, 1988

Poems

"Chant of the Black Magicians"
Operation: Phantasy, ed. Donald A. Wollheim, Phantagraph Press, 1967
"Segment"
Operation: Phantasy, ed. Donald A. Wollheim, Phantagraph Press, 1967
"The Unfortunate Typologist"
F&SF July, 1957
BSFoCMK

Articles and Essays

"New Directions" (as Walter C. Davies)
Cosmic Stories March, 1941
"So You Want to be a Space Flier?" (as Martin Pearson)
Cosmic Stories May, 1941
"Time Travel and the Law"
Coming Attractions, ed. Greenberg, Gnome, 1957
"The Failure of the Science Fiction Novel as Social Criticism"
lecture delivered at the University of Chicago, November 1, 1957
The Science Fiction Novel Advent, 1959
"Requiem for a Scientist"
Fantastic Universe December, 1957

Critical Studies

J. P. Brennan: Mechanical Chicken: Psyche and Society in The Space Merchants
Extrapolation Vol. 25, No. 2, Summer, 1984
Suzanne Edwards: The Syndic
Survey of Science Fiction Literature Volume 2, ed. Magill, Salem Press, 1979
Richard D. Ehrlich: Odysseus in Grey Flannel: The Heroic Journey in Two Dystopias by Pohl and Kornbluth
Far Rapport #1, Summer, 1978
Richard D. Ehrlich: A Womb with a View: Domesticating the Fantastic in Pohl and Kornbluth's *Gladiator-at-Law*
Foundation #23, October, 1981
D. L. Lawler: The Best of C. M. Kornbluth
Survey of Science Fiction Literature Volume 1, ed. Magill, Salem Press, 1979
Tom Moylan: *Gladiator-at-Law*

Survey of Science Fiction Literature Volume 2, ed. Magill, Salem Press, 1979

Charles Platt: C. M. Kornbluth: A Study of His Work and Interview With His Widow
Foundation #17, September, 1979

Frederick Pohl: Reminiscence: Cyril M. Kornbluth
Extrapolation Vol. 17, No. 2, May 1976
BoCMK (as An Appreciation)

David Pringle: *The Space Merchants*
Science Fiction: The 100 Best Novels, Xanadu, 1985

Robert Silverberg: The Little Black Bag: Press Button for Triple Bypass
Robert Silverberg's Worlds of Wonder, Warner, 1987

Phil Stephensen-Payne and Gordon Benson, Jr. Cyril Kornbluth The Cynical Scrutineer: A Working Bibliography
Chris Drumm Books, 1988
second edition, 1990

D. West: The Right Sort of People
Foundation #11, February, 1981

Michael Wood: Sinister Pastoral
New Society May 2, 1968

THE COMMITTEE

Adina Adler was told, as a child, that she needed to develop her leadership potential. She doubts that running Readercon is really what her instructors had in mind.

Ellen Brody has done a lot of theatre and other insane projects like Readercon. She hasn't had enough sleep since the *last* time Hale-Bopp swung by. Having been Program and Co-Chair, she is now planning to climb Mt. Everest with a fully-laden refrigerator strapped to her back.

Julianne Chatelain is an information designer (both online and in print) and book collector. Key words: APA-50, SIGCHI, feminism, St. Mary's, jchat@world.std.com.

Bob Colby is this guy who seems to have a weakness for bringing people together to explore common (or uncommon) interests. This at least partially explains his '70s rock fanzine FRENZY, the founding of Readercon in the '80s, and the recent attempt to found a "Readercon-like" conference for font fanatics (to be called Typecon). Knowing him, he'll probably start a few more things before he's through.

Humor him.

Richard Duffy would *still* like to show that the Nielsen-Schreier theorem implies the axiom of choice, but in the meantime has kept plenty busy with Readercon preparations and assorted other geeky pursuits. With a bit of reading thrown in here and there.

George Flynn copyedits and proofreads for NESFA Press and Necronomicon Press (besides the people who actually pay him to do it). He has more times than anyone else been Secretary of the World Science Fiction Society, which is amazingly trivial but looks great on resumes. And he still aspires to be an omnifan.

Oz Fontecchio (At-Con,Hotel Liaison)- Oz says that his intro to fandom came about as a result of not having much to do during Freshman Week at the University of Pa.While walking down Locust Walk on a day that all the groups displayed themselves and their wares,he ran into a table for the Penn SF Club.

After stopping for a moment to shake off the surprise that there were other people who liked the stuff, he signed up. After a year of basking in the conversation of other fans,he succumbed to what so far has proven to be a life long inability to resist helping to run organizations that give him a place to indulge his passion for SF, serving as Vice President and then a couple of years as President of his college SF club.

At a meeting of the Penn SF Club, he heard about Philcon, a convention held locally where it was expected that actual writers of SF and several hundred fans would be in attendance. Such a momentous gathering of those interested in science fiction was not to be missed. After finding Philcon to be a neverending series of wonders, he went the next month to a meeting of the sponsoring organization, the Philadelphia Science Fiction Society and has never lost the habit of attending since.

Over the years, he feels fortunate to have served as President of PSFS five times,Vice President 7 times and also put in time in a single term as Treasurer and 2 year director as well. He has chaired 6 Philcons (as well as serving as Vice Chair 6 times) and fills up a good chunk of the rest of his spare time with PSFS and Philcon programming and helping with Phrolicon (Chair, 7 times), a small relaxacon he helped found. At Readercon, he has served as the Hotel Liaison since Readercon 2. For relaxation, he lists reading SF (natch), gaming,Japanese animation and alternative rock among his hobbies.

When contacted, Oz said he loves coming to Readercon because of the people on the Committee, the guests and as a convenient way of stealing program ideas for Philcon. Saying something about completeness in his bio, Oz added that he has never been known to turn down the offer of a spiced rum and coke.

Merryl Gross is proud to be one-third of the con sofa for Readercon 9. In future life, she aspires to become a complete piece of furniture, perhaps a settee or chaise lounge. When she is not pining after pine, she spends time designing user interfaces for software or figuring out what to do with too many books. At Readercon 9, she plans to be completely stressed out. Say hi to her in the halls.

Bob Ingria is the defrocked classicist of the committee. The recent showing of *NBC's Francis Ford Coppola's Homer's Odyssey* ("All the monsters and sex, none of the poetry!") has turned his attention back to the works of the oldest dead white European males. While not contemplating the relevance of Epicurus to contemporary society, he programs in LISP and Smalltalk, and occasionally dabbles in Java. Much like Socrates, he finds the uninterpreted life not worth living. *Hodos ano kato mia kai oute,* baby!

Sheila Lightsey has been involved with Readercon for five years now, and seems not to have learned her lesson yet.

Active in Science Fiction Fandom since 1967, Kathei Logue merged the two things she loved most in the world, Science Fiction and Rock'n'Roll, into a full time career.

She spent years on the road doing publicity for rock bands and is currently working on a book. Her credits range from hosting a daily radio gossip column (Warm Leatherette) during Punk Rock's hey day, to recording on record with the Chambers Brothers in the 1960's. She also performs live with the Church of the Sub Genius in their famed Zombie Choir.

She was the advertising director at Newbury Comics for years and has recently left the music business to continue her work with homeless families in the Boston area. Kathei was awarded the Commonwork Award by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts for her work in the community.

Married to science fiction artist N. Taylor Blanchard, they have two cats and a daughter, who lives on the left coast working for the band Folk Implosion.

As a long time reader, as co-founder of Readercon, and as a committee or staff member of most Worldcons, she has managed to maintain her fanish roots.

Craig R. McDonough
Lets see.
Probably Human.
Recovering AMWAY™ distributer, keeps the indentature contracts on several Teddy bears, and has contracts held on him by one wife (Leslie) and four cats (Leda, Edmund, Pywacket and Falstaff, in order of appearance in the household).
Drives a little car that does go "Beep, beep."
Works on local SF conventions whenever possible (or prudent).

Eric M. Van has had two normal night's sleep (defined as going to bed between midnight and 4:00 AM, sleeping from 6 to 10 hours, and not napping the next day) in the last three months. This represents a dramatic 433% improvement from the three normal nights he got in the preceding two years. He hopes to see this trend continue.

David Walrath fits coordinating the Readercon bookshop between developing late 20th century decision support database technology and living many evenings and weekends in the late 18th century trying to get far away from that technology.

Amy West is an editor at a dictionary publisher in Western Massachusetts who is doing far too much computer support work and not enough editing. Last summer she accomplished many things: finished a dictionary of law, had a baby, and helped with the Readercon Publicity effort. This summer she's lucky to get dressed sometime during the day and has accepted the fact that she's second bannana to P & T.

Karl R. Wurst is *still* a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Connecticut *still* attempting to merge the fields of Artificial Intelligence, Robotics and Puppetry. He's had a fun year being a new daddy, but hasn't gotten much research done (or reading.) On the other hand he did get up on stage with Penn & Teller and got his picture taken with them. (Ask to see it, he's carrying it around. . . .)

Nicholas K. Wurst bears most of the responsibility for his parents not getting much done in the last year (or is, at least, a convenient scapegoat). When not crawling, climbing, banging on things, taking things out, putting things in or making a mess, he likes to sit and turn pages in books. This is his 2nd Readercon, his 8th con, and the start of his second year as an actifan. He is the Official Mascot of the Readercon Committee.

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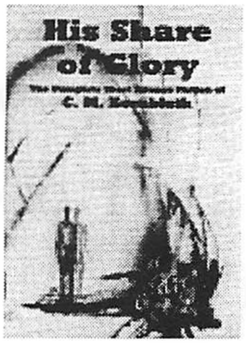

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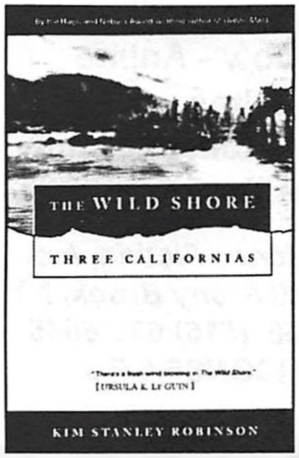
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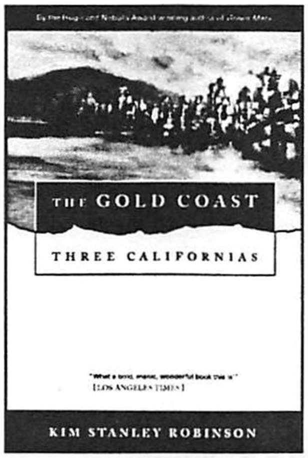
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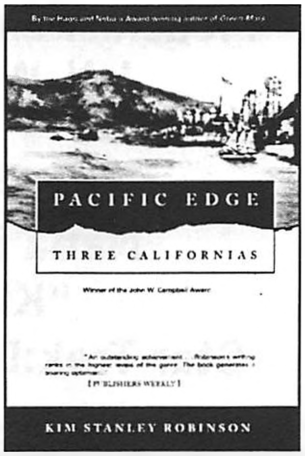
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Praise for Chapman's previous work, from Rhys Hughes in Zene *(UK)*

troika (troi´kə), *n.* [Russ.], 1. a vehicle drawn by a team of three horses abreast. 2. triads on a string. 3. the order of things in the universe. 4. a jeep, a brontosaurus, and an old Mexican woman. 5. the minimum coordinate set required to define a single point in three-dimensional space. 6. three travelers drawn by unseen forces across an endless desert lit by three purple suns.

troika
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In Stepan Chapman's startlingly original *The Troika*, sandstorms blow minds from body to body, bodies refuse to die, angels go mad, psychotherapeutic cures last for ten centuries, and music boxes control whole worlds. Part existentialism, part Samuel Becketts How It Is and The Lost Ones, part theology, part atheology, Chapmans speculative science fiction traces all the twists and curves of minds gone wrong.

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