



bumper stickers like "Weight lifters keep it up longer." Jeez! I hope not, but how different is that from the "I found it" and "Jesus saves real good" bumper stickers? Doesn't every shopping center have a karate and Tae Kwan Do temple in which there is a hierarchy of priesthood measured in belt colors and with priestly

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robes with marked respect for the higher priests? There is even a sort of catechism. And parents bring their children to be initiated. And if you are not being solicited by the Krishnas, it's the local high school football or baseball team. What used to be the choir is now the cheerleaders. And of course their devotions become an art form in itself. That's why the whole world knows the Mormon Tabernacle Choir and the Dallas Cowboys Cheerleaders. Of course this is getting away from exercise into sports, which are sort of non-participatory. Then again, how many Catholics actually participate in what gets decided at the Vatican? I guess some parts of religion are non-participatory also.

Well, enough of this. I'm getting depressed. I need inspiration. Maybe a film like F\_r\_a\_n\_c\_i\_s\_o\_f\_A\_s\_s\_i\_s\_i or the K\_n\_u\_t\_e\_R\_o\_c\_k\_n\_e\_S\_t\_o\_r\_y.

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Want of principle is power.  
-- William Hazlitt (1778-1830)

ORPHAN OF CREATION by Roger MacBride Allen  
Baen, 1988, ISBN 0-671-65356-3, \$3.50.  
A book review by Jerry Ryan  
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A quick plot summary of Roger MacBride Allen's O\_r\_p\_h\_a\_n\_o\_f\_C\_r\_e\_a\_t\_i\_o\_n is contained in its epigraph, where Stephen Jay Gould asks "Suppose... that one or several species of our ancestral genus Australopithecus had survived... what would we have done with them?" That summary doesn't do much justice to the book, though; Allen has created a terrific story that is not to be missed.

Dr. Barbara Marchando is a paleoanthropologist with the Smithsonian. While visiting the family home for Thanksgiving, she comes across the diary of her great-great-grandfather, who had been a slave on the plantation that he later came to own, the very mansion she is visiting. "The Diary of Zebulon Jones" is filled with stories of her predecessor's exploits as a slave, his escape, and the later adventures as a landowner and a Congressman that made him the family legend that Barbara so admires. In the middle of the record of his slave days is an

odd account of strange creatures sold to the plantation owner as new slaves. The interlude is brief, for the creatures are sickly and die before much time has passed. The most memorable part of their time on the plantation is the dispute over their burial. This is recounted in enough detail in the Jones diary that Barbara is moved to try and unearth the graves of these creatures.

Barbara and family are outraged at the thought that gorillas (for so she believes the creatures to be) were brought in to work side by side with the slaves. As if the slavery wasn't dehumanizing enough! In fact, the thought of unearthing this missing bit of nastiness from the past almost keeps Barbara from going ahead with an excavation. She bounces the idea off Rupert Maxwell, her co-worker at the Smithsonian, then proceeds to hire her cousin, Livingston Jones, as an assistant. Together they find and unearth the graves of the gorillas... only to find that they are not gorillas, but Australopithecines, supposedly long extinct, but obviously alive as recently as 150 years before.

Barbara faces disbelief from her superiors, and accusations of fraud from the world at large. When a local reporter gets wind of the find and breaks it to all the major papers, their discovery becomes a three day laughter that stands to disappear from the news as quickly as it appeared. In the meantime Barbara's investigation turns from finding and unearthing the graves to trying to track down where in Africa this supposedly long-dead species came from. Clues from local newspapers from the time of the importation of the creatures lead Barbara, her cousin, and Rupert Maxwell on an expedition into the African republic of Gabon to search for the tribe mentioned in the papers.

As the press rakes the team over the coals in America, accusing them of fabricating the bones from the plantation dig, Barbara and her team find that the Australopithecines still live. They are slaves of the Utanni, a little-known and less liked tribe living in the Gabonese jungle.

Allen's writing is so powerful that I felt like I was helping Barbara with the dig. I could feel the excitement as she realizes what it is that she has discovered. The characterizations are excellent, as well; the reader feels as if Barbara is as alive as you or I. The

quality of the writing, the mystery of the dig, and the suspense of the search in Gabon kept me up reading long after I should have been (getting to bed late because of being lost in a good read is an excuse no child understands the next morning when you want to stay in bed!). The repugnance of the treatment of the Australopithecines, and the way that the Utanni are themselves dehumanized by their keeping of the slaves, is felt in Barbara's anguish as she must trade for one of the Australopithecines in order to examine it. She realizes that the creature is not an "it" at all. She decides to bring "Thursday," as they name her, back to America to free her from the slavekeepers.

While most of the book is taken up with the excavation and the search for a living Australopithecine, it is the reaction of the world to Thursday's existence that makes for the most interesting, if not frightening, reading. Reactions range from the scientist who wants to import Thursday's people for use as experimental animals for product testing, to all manner of "creation scientists," "textbook cleansers" and their ilk, who use Thursday's existence as proof that "evil-loution" is definitely false. Through it all, Barbara and Thursday's relationship grows. Thursday is taught American Sign language so that she may talk with Barbara by way of sign. Barbara grows to view Thursday as a friend; perhaps a bit slow, but as human and as deserving of human dignity as she is.

Allen might have titled his book J\_u\_s\_t\_W\_h\_a\_t\_I\_s\_A\_H\_u\_m\_a\_n,\_A\_n\_y\_w\_a\_y: the question of what constitutes a human being, and what rights belong to one that doesn't quite meet the norm, is threaded throughout the story line. Thursday's eyebrow ridge and sloping forehead are only more obvious deviations from the norm. The situation becomes all the more complex when we discover just how close to human Thursday really is. How Barbara deals with Thursday's human-ness, and the course she takes to make people see things her way, bring the book to a conclusion that I won't spoil for you, but there is power in her definition of what a person really is.

Allen has created rich characters, a suspenseful plot, and a message or two along the way about racism and about humanity. Don't miss O\_r\_p\_h\_a\_n\_o\_f\_C\_r\_e\_a\_t\_i\_o\_n.

VIKRAM & THE VAMPIRE, or Tales of Hindu Devilry  
translated by Sir Richard F. Burton  
Dover, 1969, ISBN 0-486-2205705, \$2.50.  
(originally published by Tylston and Edwards in 1893)  
A book review by Evelyn C. Leeper  
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Every once in a while, I decide to dig out some older fantasy work and read it. Two years ago it was V\_a\_r\_n\_e\_y\_t\_h\_e\_V\_a\_m\_p\_i\_r\_e, last year it was W\_a\_g\_n\_e\_r,\_t\_h\_e\_W\_e\_h\_r-W\_o\_l\_f, and this year it's V\_i\_k\_r\_a\_m\_a\_n\_d\_t\_h\_e\_V\_a\_m\_p\_i\_r\_e.

Richard Burton (the adventurer, not the actor) was best known for his translations of Persian tales (variously called T\_h\_e\_T\_h\_o\_u\_s\_a\_n\_d\_a\_n\_d\_O\_n\_e\_N\_i\_g\_h\_t\_s, T\_h\_e\_A\_r\_a\_b\_i\_a\_n\_N\_i\_g\_h\_t\_s, and A\_T\_h\_o\_u\_s\_a\_n\_d\_N\_i\_g\_h\_t\_s\_a\_n\_d\_a\_N\_i\_g\_h\_t, among other titles), but he also translated (some say "adapted") eleven stories from the 1799 Hindu version of the B\_a\_i\_t\_a\_l-P\_a\_c\_h\_i\_s\_i ("Twenty-five Tales of a Vampire"). This is also known as V\_e\_t\_a\_l\_a-p\_a\_n\_c\_h\_a-V\_i\_n\_s\_h\_a\_t\_i\_o\_r "Twenty-five Tales of a Demon," and is part of a longer 11th Century Sanskrit work by Bhavabhuti called K\_a\_t\_h\_a\_S\_a\_r\_i\_t\_S\_a\_g\_a\_r\_a. Dover Books has now reprinted it under another one of its titles, V\_i\_k\_r\_a\_m\_a\_n\_d\_t\_h\_e\_V\_a\_m\_p\_i\_r\_e, a misleading title, since the "vampire" is more like a demon and has little if any similarity to the standard Western conception of a vampire as popularized by Bram Stoker. However, the Tylston and Edwards edition came out in 1893, four years before Stoker's D\_r\_a\_c\_u\_l\_a narrowed the definition of "vampire" to what it is today.

Though King Vikram is described as the "King Arthur of India," the hero seems to be the Baital (vampire). The framing story is that King Vikram must capture the Baital and bring him to a magician. The Baital makes a deal where he will tell stories and if the king speaks, the Baital gets to fly back to his starting point. (Note the similarity to the A\_r\_a\_b\_i\_a\_n\_N\_i\_g\_h\_t\_s stories in the cycle that develops.) The Baital succeeds in outwitting the king twenty-four times before the king finally succeeds in his task.

Most of the tales are of a fantastical nature. For example, in one tale a woman has two suitors who are somehow beheaded. She has a magic potion and manages to re-attach the heads and revive the suitors, but accidentally switches the heads on the bodies. Other tales are more down-to-earth. A woman is in love with one man, but marries another for his money on the condition that the latter allow her one night with the former. He agrees, but then the other man rejects her because she is another man's wife, and her husband leaves her because she has not been virtuous. At the end of each tale, the Baital asks Vikram for his opinion on some point in the story, and Vikram gives it, putting them back at their starting point.

The most interesting (and problematic) of the tales is the last, here called the eleventh, in the original presumably the twenty-fifth,

though I have my doubts about its presence there at all. It is a tale of prediction, where the Baital tells Vikram of what is to come: of pale foreigners who come to India, who bow to a woman, who conquer India, who give women equality (well, by 19th Century standards, anyway), and so on. It's a very accurate description of the British and their conquest of India. I just find it hard to believe that it was written in the 11th Century. My suspicion is that there was some sort of predictive tale in the original, but that Burton re-wrote it entirely, keeping the concept while changing all the facts. Fawn Brodie's biography of Burton, *The Devil Drives*, doesn't comment on this, but Jorge Luis Borges (in "The Translators of *The 1001 Nights* [1935]) says that Burton's translation of that work introduces "a falseness. Not a bad falseness.... He gravely translates *Sulayman* 'Son of David' (on the twain be peace!); later, when that majesty is familiar to us, he reduces it to *Solomon Davidson*. ... Burton completely rewrites, with addition of circumstantial details and physiological features, the beginning of the history and the end." (Italics in Borges's original.) This would seem to substantiate my suspicion.

Unfortunately, the Dover edition appears to be out of print and indeed, the only edition in print costs \$23. That is a bit steep for the average casual reader. However, I wouldn't be surprised to find that many libraries have the Dover edition on their shelves, so I feel no guilt at recommending this book if you enjoy fantastic tales of the Arabian Nights variety.

1930s Science Fiction Double Feature  
Film comment by Mark R. Leeper  
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I came out of a double feature at the Film Forum in New York City listening to the conversation of the couple behind me. "Boy, I guess you really don't know how bad films were back then," the man said. I guess the comment really took me by surprise. This was an evening I had been looking forward to for months and which had surpassed all expectations. The evening started with a chapter from the serial \_ B\_ a\_ t\_ m\_ a\_ n, continued with \_ D\_ e\_ l\_ u\_ g\_ e, and concluded with \_ F\_ \_ P\_ \_ 1. Each was a film I'd wanted to see for years. The fact that they did not stand up well compared to \_ T\_ h\_ e\_ A\_ b\_ y\_ s\_ s is hardly relevant. Each of these films is a missing piece of the puzzle of how science fiction films evolved. When they find a new fossil at Olduvai they don't get excited because it came from a really terrific ape. Of the great classic science fiction films that I have never seen, I expect them all to be at best mediocre by today's standards. Better than that is too much to hope for. I frankly never expect to see a great 1930s science fiction film that I have not already seen.

The \_ B\_ a\_ t\_ m\_ a\_ n serial was not actually from the 1930s, but from 1943, and directed by Lambert Hillyer, who had previously directed atmospheric chillers such as \_ T\_ h\_ e\_ I\_ n\_ v\_ i\_ s\_ i\_ b\_ l\_ e\_ R\_ a\_ y and



D\_r\_a\_c\_u\_l\_a'\_s\_D\_a\_u\_g\_h\_t\_e\_r. Lewis Wilson was the screen's first Batman (succeeded by Robert Lowry and, of course, Adam West and Michael Keaton). I have seen Michael Keaton sticking his chin out of his stiff--probably plastic--costume, and he really looks like the comic character. In 1943 Columbia did not have the same materials. Wilson's Batman suit really does look like the long underwear it was probably made from. There are wrinkles on the legs and the arms. There is a pressed crease up the side of the legs. The cowl has the bat-ears but they are bent at the ends. The effect is like a jester's cap and brought howls of laughter from the audience. Robin had a full head of curly hair and a Halloween mask.

The only recognizable actor in the episode was J. Carrol Naish as the evil Japanese mad scientist Dr. Daka with a machine that turns men into zombies. When Daka turns on his weird electrical equipment the entire theatre vibrates, probably due to equipment left over from showing T\_h\_e\_T\_i\_n\_g\_l\_e\_r earlier the same week. It wasn't as visually impressive as the 1989 B\_a\_t\_m\_a\_n, but it was a lot more fun. This was Chapter Five of B\_a\_t\_m\_a\_n, for the record.

Film number two was D\_e\_l\_u\_g\_e, directed in 1933 by Felix Feist, then 23 years old. He directed the 1953 D\_o\_n\_o\_v\_a\_n'\_s\_B\_r\_a\_i\_n and several episodes of television's V\_o\_y\_a\_g\_e\_t\_o\_t\_h\_e\_B\_o\_t\_t\_o\_m\_o\_f\_t\_h\_e\_S\_e\_a. Here he was directing a screen version of the novel by S. Fowler Wright. It should be noted that D\_e\_l\_u\_g\_e has long been thought to be a lost film and remains semi-lost. It has been just a couple of years since a copy turned up and it

Deluge/F.P.1

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is dubbed in Italian. For this showing a man at the back of the theatre translated.

The film opens by reminding us that God promised not to destroy the world by flood again and then, after a buildup of nature going very sour, proceeds to show most of the world being destroyed just the same way again. We are told that the west coast has fallen into the ocean but never see it. We do see New York City struck down by tidal waves and we see buildings crumble. If the effects were believable they would be spectacular. However, even a contemporary reviewer complained that the effects were none too convincing. My audience apparently agreed and jeered. Now I like really credible effects. They are a virtue. But a

reasonable attempt at effects is sufficient for me. They are, after all, just a device to carry the plot. When I go to a puppet show I do not complain that the puppets do not fool me into thinking they are real people. Weak effects are quite forgivable as far as I am concerned if the rest of the film captures my interest.

And Deluge is a very interesting film, if not for anything intrinsic at least for where it fits historically. What is particularly interesting is how the film reminds one of films that came after, but not of films that came before. After the holocaust is over and there are just a handful of people left the story has definite parallels to NoBladeofGrass and the excellent British television series TheSurvivors.

Before the holocaust we have been introduced to iron-jawed Martin (Sidney Blackmer), a family man who saves his family by moving them to a stone quarry but is somehow separated from them. And we meet Claire, an athletic swimmer. The storm washes Claire to the doorstep of two criminals. Claire becomes one vertex in a triangle that leads to the murder of one of the criminals. Roger Corman would use almost the same plot for the 1960 LastWomanonEarth.

Claire escapes the killer Jephson only to be found by Martin, alone since the storm. The two of them try to survive together. However, in the mean time, a group of survivors has set up a small town. They have thrown out some undesirables and the criminals pick Jephson as their leader. He leads them on a raid against Martin and Claire. At this point the film has sort of degenerated into a bad Western plot. Surprisingly, things do not work out well for all concerned, and the film does at times touch on questions of whether bigamy is justifiable in a post-holocaust world. The story if crudely done, but that didn't stop much of it from being redone, often no better, by other filmmakers. A good film? No. But not a bad film either and definitely an important artifact.

Waiting for the film to start, I started talking to someone sitting next to me who had just finished seeing F.P.1. He assured me it really cornball with bad dialog. I think I'd like to thank him for lowering my expectations and making F.P.1 such a pleasant surprise when my turn came

to see it. F. P. 1 (1932) is an engineering film, sort of a forerunner to

t h e T u n n e l and its remake T h e

T r a n s a t l a n t i c T u n n e l, and later T h i n g s  
t o

C o m e. Like the Tunnel films, F. P. 1 concerns itself with engineering  
feats to aid transatlantic travel. Instead of being about a tunnel, it  
is about the building of a great floating airstrip and hotel to be built  
mid-Atlantic, the Floating Platform 1.

F. P. 1 is really a German film refilmed in English to give it the  
trappings of a British film. It is the story of engineer Captain Drost,  
who designed the platform but could not sell it to anyone, and his  
friend pilot Major Ellissen, an enigmatic figure who arranges stunts to  
bring the platform to the attention of a shipyard, then competes with  
Drost for the attentions of heiress Clare Lennartz. Ellissen is played  
by a very dashing Conrad Veidt.

F. P. 1 is a spectacular melodrama of a great engineering feat and  
what goes into building it. There is a subplot of a consortium  
dedicated to destroying the great platform for no readily apparent  
reason.

I am glad I went.

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