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THE ESCHATOLOGY OF
CORDWAINER SMITH*part three*

(The previous two installments in this article about the life and work of the late Dr. Paul Myron Anthony Linebarger have been primarily fact. This concluding installment is primarily opinion.)

The Interpreters

The work of Cordwainer Smith had begun to arouse a great deal of critical and scholarly interest during the early 1960's, and this has increased since the death of Dr. Linebarger. The extent of interest in his science fiction, and especially in the epic of the Instrumentality of Mankind, is shown in the years of effort the redoubtable Tony Lewis has put into the preparation of a glossary and chronology of the Smith universe, in the memorial collection of essays being issued this year by the British Science Fiction Association, and by the commentaries on Smith's fiction in books on science fiction as varied as Stephen and Lois Roses' "The Shattered Ring" and Donald A. Wollheim's "The Universe Makers." Lewis even proposes to organize, at the Noreascon this year, a subfandom called (what else?) the Honored Confraternity of Scanners.

There have been three main approaches towards interpretation of of Smith's work. The first, fostered by Australian John Foyster, takes a purely mainstream viewpoint, regarding Smith's science fiction works as nothing more than veiled commentaries on various aspects of modern life. This approach emphasizes the racial parallels in the struggle of the underpeople and the true men: the underpeople are to be seen purely as stand-ins for blacks and the true men likewise symbols for whites. "Alpha Ralpa Boulevard" is interpreted as a "French story" and "Mark Elf" as a "German story," etc. Harlan Ellison, a firm believer in the doctrine of immediate "relevance" for literature, has siezed upon this interpretation, and even collaborated with Theodore Sturgeon on one of his latest Dangerous Visions, "Runesmith," which he considered to be expressive enough of Smith's ideas to dedicate it to his memory.

But Smith's widow, Mrs. Genevieve Linebarger, was puzzled by the result. "I appreciate the dedication," she said recently. "But I honestly don't get the connection."

There is the religious approach, fostered by the Roses, in which little basic difference is seen between Dr. Linebarger's intentions in writing science fiction as Cordwainer Smith and those of C.S. Lewis in using science fantasy as a religious vehicle. The Roses, of course, are looking for religious messages in science fiction generally, but since Dr. Linebarger was a religious man the search at least makes more sense when directed at his work that when applied to that of Robert Heinlein or Isaac Asimov.

Lastly, there is the search for possible hidden meanings in names of people, places and things used in various Smith works. Tony Lewis has pursued this approach in his glossary, from the obvious cases (the city Meeya Meefla being derived from Miami, Fla.) to the not so obvious (the religious significance of names used in "The Dead Lady of Clown Town" and elsewhere, and the origin of the Vomact family name from the German vomAcht -- "outlaw" or "outsider"). Some derivations were missed even by Lewis, but these were so personal to Dr. Linebarger that Lewis can hardly be blamed: "cranch" comes from the name of an abandoned shop, "The Little Cranch," which Dr. Linebarger saw when came to Washington; "Ambiloxi" (in "On the Storm Planet") from Biloxi, Miss., where he had once been frightened by a hurricane when a child.

Yet none of these approaches seems adequate -- particularly when applied to Smith's work as a whole.

A God of evolution

In the remarks made by Dr. Linebarger's friend Arthur Burns for the Australian Science Fiction Review shortly after Dr. Linebarger's death in 1966, two things seem to stand out in relation to the overall meaning of the Cordwainer Smith science fiction.

First, there is the specific nature of Dr. Linebarger's religion: "Paul was a High Church Anglican," Burns explained. "The faith extended and shaped his powerful imagination, and gave his emotions their qualities. I believe that it explains much in (his) science fiction, and not merely the recurrence in his distant futures of the 'Old Strong Religion.' But he simply ignored contemporary religious movements -- especially the secularizing ones directed to social problems. The God he had faith in had to do with the soul of man and with the unfolding of history and of the destiny of all living creatures."

Second, there is Dr. Linebarger's interest in psychosociological ideas. Asked by Foyster why the Cordwainer Smith stories took the form of a cycle of legends set against a consistent background, Burns said: "I don't think it's too pretentious to say that he had a sort of view of mankind and of human nature which he saw as something that was changing and developing in a most complex kind of way, and I think that he saw it as going through certain stages. The period of the Instrumentality, for instance, is really a period of considerable human decadence, brought on by the perfection of something that he often spoke about as having already developed in the Twentieth Century -- something that he called the Pleasure Revolution."

These religious and psychosocial concerns are combined in Smith's epic of the Instrumentality, which taken as a whole can be seen as the projection of the social evolution of mankind -- an evolution with some quite Stapledonian overtones which may in fact have been an attempt to reconcile Christianity with the theory of evolution similar to that of the theologian Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. That Dr. Linebarger was an admirer of Olaf Stapledon is known; it is also known that he was quite familiar with the traditions of science fiction generally. It is true that Dr. Linebarger rarely spoke of his intentions -- and then only of the origins of specific stories. But the internal evidence in his work points to a vast evolutionary conception.

To begin with, his stories are clearly set in different stages of a consistent future history. Despite the carelessness in the citation of specific dates (16,000 years hence for "Mark Elf," vs. 15,000 A.D. for "Old North Australia"), there is a definite progression.

"No, No, Not Rogov" can be seen as a prelude to the series, with its contrast between the experience of the present and the vision of a strange future in which mankind has been transmogrified by experiences of space and alien contact. There is an implicit reference to what are called the "ancient wars" in other stories in the mention of the "ruin and reconstruction" from which mankind has arisen by 13,582 A.D.

The "ancient wars" themselves and the emergence of the elite of prime movers known as the Instrumentality of Mankind figure in "War No. 81-Q." This period is followed by the Dark Age recorded in "Mark Elf," and in unpublished material -- a period "when a stricken and haunted mankind crept through the glorious ruins of an immense past." It is an age in which the true men, exhausted of all vitality, lead weary and contemplative lives in their isolated cities, while the Wild is left to the barbaric tribes of the Unforgiven, the animal-derived Beasts, and the predatory Old Machines or manshonyaggers. The environment has been poisoned by atomic war, and the true men use biological inventions to reclaim the land and sea alike. The position of the Instrumentality in this period is not entirely clear -- it is possible that the Dark Age represents the Rule of the Jwindz referred to in retrospect in "On the Sand Planet." Certainly the true men of the cities appear to be rather inhuman and ascetic.

"Scanners Live in Vain" represents a period of renaissance, when mankind is emerging from its Dark Age, but is still very conscious of evils of the past. The Instrumentality keeps the peace within worlds, and the Scanners between them. Mankind has ventured into space again, and evidently colonized the solar system. Vitality has returned to the cities -- but the Wild still lurks outside them, and electronic fields yet serve the function of castle walls of the Middle Ages. Still later,

in "The Lady Who Sailed the Soul," humanity has regained a civilization much like our own, save that it is world-wide, even system-wide, free of the national and political rivalries of our own age -- thanks to the benevolent rule of the Instrumentality. It is an age of affluence and luxury -- but also an age of daring and high adventure. Mankind has been united, but far from homogenized. Nationalities still exist, if not the nations they once represented; there are competing fashions, fads, and movements. But already, a certain decadence is beginning to set in on Old Earth, and the romantics seek freedom among the stars.

The discovery of stroom, first referred to in "When the People Fell," accelerates this trend. So does the later invention of planforming, which makes interstellar travel a matter of hours rather than years. Four thousand years after the beginning of the second Space Age, in "From Gustible's Planet," we see an interstellar society thoroughly decadent and corrupt. True men live in idleness, but for those who are "programmed" for a few professions, and a handful of pinlighters, Go-Captains and similar free spirits. Underpeople and robots with animal brains do most of the real work. All cultural differences are gone on the worlds controlled by the Instrumentality; even news and history are banned. Mankind has been subjected to a benevolent -- but stifling -- utopia.

Beginning with "The Dead Lady of Clown Town," there is a revolt against this false Utopia, involving both the underpeople and believers in the Old Strong Religion. This revolution reaches its climax in the Rediscovery of Man, which brings back the old cultures and even the old evils to make life worthwhile again. The revolution is a gradual one, aimed at changing the values of a whole society over a period of generations, rather than trying to overthrow the established order. The end result is not clear, for Dr. Linebarger never completed his epic, but it is implied that the true men and the underpeople eventually reach a position of equality and mutual respect -- and confront some sort of common destiny that equates the Christian apocalypse with Stapledon's Supreme Moment of the Cosmos.

The mission of the Instrumentality

There are several common threads running through Smith's epic of social evolution. The first and most obvious of these, of course, is the role of the Instrumentality of Mankind itself.

It may be significant that the word "Instrumentality" has both a political and a theological definition. As politically defined, an instrumentality is an agency of government empowered to carry out some function. Theologically, an instrumentality is an agency of the Divine power -- the Mass and the priest celebrating it, for example, are both seen as instrumentalities of God.

The Instrumentality of Mankind is not religious, yet it expresses a conviction of inspired purpose similar to that of religion. As Mrs. Linebarger has expressed it, the mystique of the Instrumentality in the Smith epic is "neither Communism, nor religion, but some common denominator of both." The Lords of the Instrumentality are not mere politicians or bureaucrats -- though they perform such functions. Rather, they are visionaries, imbued with a sense of mission in regard to the future of mankind.

At first, this mission seems to have been limited to protection of mankind from war. In "Drunkboat," we learn that the Instrumentality "emerged from the Ancient Wars" with the "perpetual slogan" of "Watch, but do not govern; stop war, but do not wage it; protect, but do not control; and first, survive!"

The almost unlimited power granted each Lord, and the use of both inheritance and recruitment (Lord Jestocost vs. Lord Roderick Eleanor) to ensure that only the most vigorous minds are entrusted to carry out this mission show how seriously the Instrumentality takes itself. Even such policies as bribery of its own members to weed out the unfit show the obsession of this elite of prime movers with staying in power. All possible methods are used to ensure that the Instrumentality can never be overthrown -- and thus never fail in its mission to mankind.

Significant too is the fact that the Instrumentality appears not to be a government in itself, but rather something over and above the government. References like "The Earth Government and the Instrumentality" (in "Under Old Earth") suggest it holds a position analogous to

that of the Communist party in Communist countries. The role it plays towards the Goonhogo in "When the People Fell," towards the Old North Australia government in "The Planet Buyer," and towards many planetary governments in the Casher O'Neill stories, reinforces this impression.

Still, it is only during a relatively late period, after that in "The Burning of the Brain," that the Instrumentality takes on the added and -- as it turns out -- misguided mission of creating a utopia. This utopia, like all utopias, is intended to banish suffering and unhappiness -- and succeeds instead in removing all meaning from life. It is never made entirely clear why the Instrumentality sets out upon this course -- hardly any of Dr. Linebarger's stories take place during the period when the false utopia is being established, and none deal directly with the issue. But it is clear that Dr. Linebarger conceived of this type of bland society as the inevitable end product of the secular humanist ethical system -- a system he saw as ignoring the human needs for freedom and variety in favor of emphasis on sensual pleasures and creature comforts, as substituting security and guaranteed happiness in place of liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

But while the decadence of the Instrumentality's utopia was the expression of a secular humanist ideology, Dr. Linebarger also seems to have seen it as an almost inevitable danger created by the dynamics of social evolution.

Vitality vs. entropy

"Vitality" is a word that occurs so often in the stories of the Instrumentality that its presence cannot be an accident. In "Old North Australia," we learn that new members are recruited into the Instrumentality on the basis of their "intelligence, will, vitality, and again, vitality." Rod McBan, in the same novel, contrasts the different sorts of vitality represented by his home planet and Earth. Carlotta vomAcht is praised by Laird in "Mark Elf" for bringing the "gift of vitality" back to mankind. And Lord Sto Odin, in "Under Old Earth," worries that mankind is "failing in vitality, strength, numbers, energy" because of the enervating influence of Utopia.

Dr. Linebarger saw this vitality as the essential life force, or evolutionary drive, in humanity. He could hardly have made it any more clear than in "Three to a Given Star," wherein Folly reflects, "If we hadn't been vital and greedy and lustful and yearning, if we hadn't had big thoughts and wanted bigger ones, we would have stayed animals, like all the little things back on Earth."

The value placed on vitality by the Instrumentality is shown in "Scanners Live in Vain," wherein -- despite their attempted treason -- the Scanners are made deputy chiefs for space instead of being punished. Explains Adam Stone, "You don't think the Instrumentality would waste the Scanners, do you?" Dr. Linebarger realized that willfulness could sometimes go wrong and result in evil -- but considered this far preferable to decadence. In "Old North Australia," the E'telekeli even suggests that evil has a rightful place in human affairs -- surely an odd viewpoint for the patriarch of the Old Strong Religion.

It is the strain of vitality in mankind that advances evolution in the Cordwainer Smith epic by introducing conflict and competition between man and his physical environment and man and man. Yet over the long run, this conflict seems to wear down vitality. Differences tend to be settled, cultures tend to merge, the unfit tend to overwhelm the fit. Dr. Linebarger, as a social scientist, was keenly interested in the ecology of society -- his best created worlds, such as Viola Siderea, Henriada, and Old North Australia itself, take an ecological approach. Beyond this, he seems to have had a conception of social entropy -- of societies being worn down to their lowest common denominator as their conflicts are worn down. There is a hint of a thermodynamic theory of society in "The Dead Lady of Clown Town," when the Lady Goroke decides to order "police fever, one degree" on Fomalhaut III. And a reference to "post-Riesmannian societies" in the same story reveals his interest in social evolution.

It seems clear that Dr. Linebarger believed the tendency towards social entropy to be one of the key problems in the evolution of human society. He has the E'telekeli make this point explicitly in "Old North North Australia" -- human societies, he tells Rod McBan, "reach a point of development and then they stop."

The context of the statement, that men always feel "haunted by themselves," suggests Dr. Linebarger saw a psychological factor in social entropy; that fear of death and fear of the unknown tend to create the desire for a utopia in which men may escape risk and uncertainty. Thus human psychology, ideology, and the wearing down of cultural conflicts all combine to lead human evolution in the direction of maximum social and cultural entropy.

Some force is needed, Dr. Linebarger seems to tell us, to renew the spiritual energies of humanity from time to time. During the Dark Age, which is just as static even if not based on the Pleasure Revolution, this renewal is represented by the advent of the Vomact family, and (by implication) the eventual reintegration of the Unforgiven into human society. The Vomacts and the Unforgiven bring vitality back to mankind after one crisis. In the later and greater spiritual crisis, religion becomes the means of restoring vitality and combatting entropy.

The power of religion

In "Under Old Earth," the Lord Sto Odin is astounded to learn his robot Livius knows what a god is: "a person or an idea capable of starting wholly new cultural patterns in motion."

It is perhaps just as astounding that Dr. Linebarger, the devout Episcopalian, would take such a detached viewpoint towards religion in one of his most important stories. Yet it is characteristic of one side of the ambivalent attitude about religion that seems to run through all his science fiction. On the one hand, he looks upon religion from the point of view of the social scientist, as an emotional force in human psychology and society -- this viewpoint is expressed again in "Under Old Earth" in a reference to "the three bitterest forces in the human spirit -- religious faith, vengeful vainglory (and) sheer vice." On the other hand, he simultaneously looks at Christianity, at least, from the viewpoint of the believer.

The psychosocial viewpoint is reflected from the very beginning of Dr. Linebarger's science fiction career, both in the quasi-religious mission of the Instrumentality and in the quasi-religious rituals that are often associated with, not only the Instrumentality itself, but the various professions followed by the "outsider" heroes. The weird code of the scanners, the byplay between the go-captains and stop captains, the Norstrilian rite of passage at the Garden of Death, the invocation of a revised Hippocratic oath by Dr. Grosbeck, and the trial of Lord Crudelta all share this character.

The believer's viewpoint comes through most strongly in the Casher O'Neill stories and the second part of "Old North Australia" (published in paperback as "The Underpeople"). The story of Casher O'Neill suffers badly as science fiction, despite the vividly-realized planet Henriada (the "Storm Planet") that provides the background for one segment. No great attention is paid to psychosociology; instead, O'Neill and other characters simply invoke Christian symbolism -- O'Neill himself obtains super-powers that enable him to cure the dictator Wedder by laying on of hands. The pseudo-Egyptian background of Mizzer ("Kuraf" = Farouk, "Wedder" = Nasser, etc.), combined with the heavy-handed allegory of the conclusion of "On the Sand Planet" make the whole into a mish-mosh of a mainstream "key" novel and "The Pilgrim's Progress." There is the same problem in the second half of "Old North Australia," in which the psychosocial theme is obscured by a religious one: everyone treats Rod McBan as a messiah (while denying he really is one), and the plot that leads him to confront the E'telekeli seems patently contrived. Even the E'telekeli himself, a mysterious and powerful figure offstage in "The Ballad of Lost C'Mell," seems rather ridiculous in person -- too reminiscent of something from a Cecil B. DeMille movie.

The two viewpoints are best combined in "The Dead Lady of Clown Town," the story of the religious conspiracy that eventually results in both the Holy Insurgency and the Rediscovery of Man. The key figures, Lady Panc Ashash and the Hunter, seem themselves to take a two-valued approach to their religion.

Certainly the Hunter is sincere when he invokes the power of the First Forgotten One and the Second Forgotten One and the Third Forgotten One, whose love will give the underpeople a "clean death and true." And D'Joan and his fellow martyrs die with paeans to Christian love on

their lips. To a non-believer, much of this may seem sentimental.

Yet at the same time, both the Hunter and Lady Panc Ashash play the role of psychosocial engineers; deliberately manufacturing the martyrdom of D'Joan to create a legend that will change the direction of history. A new dog girl has been raised each generation, in hopes that chance or Providence will provide an Elaine. The "dead" Lady consciously seeks to "change the destiny of worlds," and "bring mankind back to humanity." The Hunter is just as conscious of this intent when he tells the Lady Arabella Underwood, "I have killed, ma'am, as always, with love. This time it was a system."

It should also be noted that the underpeople achieve salvation, not merely by being "converted" to Christianity, but by the definitive act involved in their martyrdom: they have demonstrated their right to be considered human by living -- and dying -- for an ideal. It is this that creates the historical impact of the manufactured myth of D'Joan, and the conspirators seem conscious of this as well.

The power of faith? Or the power of psychosocial engineering? It is hard to tell where one begins and the other leaves off.

Dr. Linebarger seemed to recognize the distinction between these two approaches to religion in his work; even the E'telekeli points out to McBan, "We're not ending time (i.e., bringing on the Second Coming or whatever other conception Dr. Linebarger had of the final destiny of true men and underpeople). We are just altering the material conditions of man's situation for the present historical period."

But at times, the two viewpoints clashed. In the Casher O'Neill stories, O'Neill infuses the wind people of Henriada with his desire, so that they may be able to make something of themselves -- yet in the end, he himself accepts a philosophy of resignation: the conception of "vitality" favored by Dr. Linebarger and the submissive virtues of the Christian ethical system could not be reconciled. And in "Alpha Ralpa Boulevard," the theme of Paul and Virginia being freed from the bland determinism of a future utopia cannot be reconciled with the concept of an omniscient God (or is it devil?) as represented in the prediction machine at the Abba Dingo.

Dr. Linebarger's religion strengthened his science fiction -- in so far as it was an expression of the sanctity and dignity of mankind, and a conviction of purpose and meaning in human existence beyond that recognized by secular humanism. But it weakened his science fiction in so far as it led either to the temptation to preach an explicit creed, or to a theological cul de sac.

A Stapledonian vision

The Stapledonian aspects of Dr. Linebarger's work are apparent in specific situations as well as in the overall conception. There is one important difference between his method and Stapledon's, however.

Stapledon's approach, in "Last and First Men" and "The Star Maker," was detached and impersonal. Dr. Linebarger's was quite the opposite -- he disliked impersonal future history and, as Burns put it, preferred to stress "evocations of the emotional and imaginative responses of people in bizarre social relationships and situations -- whether the fighter pilot relying upon telepathic communication with a cat, or the 'gentleman suicide' dancing into existence a religion of sorrow as well as of joy in a world where it was impossible for men to be anything but boringly happy."

But the Stapledonian concepts are there. There are the symbiotic and synergistic relationships between man and other forms of life, and between man and machine -- pinlighting, scanning and planforming. And there are strange mutations in man -- the inhabitants of such planets as Amazonas Triste, Olympia and others; the Daimoni, the experience of the Ncrstrilians on Paradise XII (Dr. Linebarger might have developed these further if he had not been preoccupied with other themes in his later stories). The invasion of Venus by the Chinese is emotionally equivalent to humanity's conquest of Venus in "Last and First Men." In "Under Old Earth" and "No, No, Not Rogov," there are hints of bizarre results of encounters with alien intelligences.

And there are pointed hints that Dr. Linebarger was working up to a Stapledonian synthesis -- perhaps in "The Lords of the Afternoon." A

time when true men and underpeople will "pour into a common destiny" is forecast by the E'telekeli. Social integration of the two peoples is certainly indicated in "The Dead Lady of Clown Town." And references to the Instrumentality in "Drunkboat" suggest that it has ceased to exist at some future date -- though what, if anything, has replaced it is not made clear.

How seriously did Dr. Linebarger take his idea of the underpeople? Most critics tend to assume he intended it only as a metaphorical idea in connection with the American racial situation -- and certainly the underpeople face problems similar to those of contemporary blacks. But similarity is not identity. Dr. Linebarger had clearly been using the idea of animal-derived intelligences (the Beasts of "Scanners Live in Vain") at least as early as World War II, before the personal involvement with the race issue. The underpeople of the stories he wrote in the 1960's were as much an outgrowth of the Beasts, and the Partners of "The Game of Rat and Dragon" as of his feelings about blacks. He tried to endow his cat people and dog people with distinctive psychologies in "The Ballad of Lost C'Mell" and "The Dead Lady of Clown Town." And the societies and cultures of true men and underpeople which clash in his future history bear hardly any resemblance to those of whites and blacks today, save for the existence of group prejudice (compare the strained parallels of novels like Dean R. Koontz' "The Dark Symphony" or Robert Silverberg's "The Tower of Glass" to the situations in Dr. Linebarger's best fiction).

Dr. Linebarger's two great strengths as a writer were the ability to develop intense emotional involvement in situations that were both utterly strange and entirely convincing -- and to do this within the framework of a Stapledonian future history that created both logical and emotional resonances between the component stories. His style was usually quite simple and straightforward (the image of Helen America, wired into her sailship, is intensely poetic, yet uses language that is not at all poetic), though full of euphony and imagery in later years. The resonances are crucial. Even quite a simple reference -- as this (in "The Burning of the Brain"): "An odd figure came out on the veranda. It was a pinlighter in full fighting costume" -- takes on an emotional power for the reader who already knows about pinlighters from "The Game of Rat and Dragon."

When he neglected his strengths, Dr. Linebarger went to pieces as a writer. The second half of "Old North Australia," for example, is of interest more for its background and subplots like the induction of the Lord Roderick Eleanor than for the story of McBan, who seems too much like a character from "Tom Brown's School Days" who has stumbled into the wrong place (for that matter, the contrived plot resolves nothing that could not have been settled in Lord Jestocost's office). Clearly, the author let his preoccupation with the religious message get out of control. The same is true of the Casher O'Neill stories, where he lets the concepts of the underpeople and animal-brained robots become banal (T'Ruth is patient because she is turtle-derived, a robot feels oh so wise because he is owl-brained). Stories like "Think Blue, Count Two" and "The Crime and Glory of Commander Suzdal" seem to lack meaning in relation to Dr. Linebarger's overall future history concept. And a few attempts at injecting humor into the serious epic of the Instrumentality ("Three to a Given Star," with its chicken people; and "From Gustible's Planet," with its duck aliens) can only be called pathetic.

Some writers who are said to be imitating Cordwainer Smith often seem to either imitate his mistakes or fail to recognize his virtues. Silverberg, in "Nightwings," duplicated Smith at creating a background but didn't bother to resolve the story -- there and in other novels, he has his "messiahs" take baths instead of taking action to solve either their own or society's problems. Samuel R. Delany, in "The Fall of the Towers," created a superficially Smith-like society. But Toron has no real history -- futuristic and contemporary elements are thrown together willy-nilly. There is a lot of extremely poetic writing, but the situation never takes on a poetic reality -- there is neither physical nor socio-historical reality behind it. Brian M. Stableford, who seems to be an imitator of Delany, makes the same mistakes.

Dr. Linebarger left science fiction an enduring legacy in the work he wrote as Cordwainer Smith. It remains to be seen whether that work will gain the real understanding and influence it deserves.

LINEBARGER S.F. 1928-66

WAR NO. 81-Q	1928	
SCANNERS LIVE IN VAIN	FBK 1950 #6	Early
(HIMSELF IN ANACHRON)	unpublished	
THE GAME OF RAT AND DRAGON	GAL 1955 Oct	Period
(QUEEN OF THE AFTERNOON)	unpublished	
(THE COLONEL CAME BACK FROM NOTHING AT ALL)	unpublished	
MARK ELF	SRN 1957 May	Transition
THE BURNING OF THE BRAIN	WIF 1958 Oct	
Western Science is so Wonderful	WIF 1958 Dec	Period
NO, NO, NOT ROGOV	WIF 1959 Feb	
The Nancy Routine	SAT 1959 Mar	Late
WHEN THE PEOPLE FELL	GAL 1959 Apr	
GOLDEN THE SHIP WAS, OH, OH, OH	AMZ 1959 Apr	Period
The Fife of Bodhidharma	FAN 1959 Jun	
Angerhelm	SSF 1959 #6	Late
THE LADY WHO SAILED THE SOUL	GAL 1960 Apr	
ALPHA RALPHA BOULEVARD	FSF 1961 Jun	Period
MOTHER HITTON'S LITTUL KITTONS	GAL 1961 Jun	
A PLANET NAMED SHAYOL	GAL 1961 Oct	Late
FROM GUSTIBLE'S PLANET	WIF 1962 Jul	
THE BALLAD OF LOST C'MELL	GAL 1962 Oct	Period
THINK BLUE, COUNT TWO	GAL 1963 Feb	
DRUNKBOAT	AMZ 1963 Oct	Late
The Good Friends	WOT 1963 Oct	
ON THE GEM PLANET	GAL 1963 Oct	Period
THE BOY WHO BOUGHT OLD EARTH (O.N.A.-1)	GAL 1964 Apr	
THE STORE OF HEART'S DESIRE (O.N.A. -2)	WIF 1964 May	Late
THE CRIME AND GLORY OF COMMANDER SUZDAL	AMZ 1964 May	
THE DEAD LADY OF CLOWN TOWN	GAL 1964 Aug	Period
ON THE STORM PLANET	GAL 1965 Feb	
THREE TO A GIVEN STAR	GAL 1965 Oct	Late
ON THE SAND PLANET	AMZ 1965 Dec	
UNDER OLD EARTH	GAL 1966 Feb	

("Instrumentality" stories in ALL CAPS)

INSTRUMENTALITY CHRONOLOGY

NO, NO, NOT ROGOV	1950	Prelude. The ancient wars -- the Beasts, manshonyaggers, Unforgiven. Emergence of the Instrumentality, Vomacts.
WAR NO. 81-Q		
QUEEN OF THE AFTERNOON	5,000	
MARK ELF		
SCANNERS LIVE IN VAIN	6,000	Age of renaissance. Renewed space travel. Scanners, then sailors. Colonization of the stars. Founding of Old North Australia and introduction of Stroon. Planofforming: faster than light travel. Romantic period of new frontiers.
HIMSELF IN ANACHRON		
THE LADY WHO SAILED THE SOUL	6,500	
THINK BLUE, COUNT TWO		
WHEN THE PEOPLE FELL	7,000	
THE COLONEL CAME BACK FROM NOTHING AT ALL		
THE GAME OF RAT AND DRAGON	7,500	
THE BURNING OF THE BRAIN		
FROM GUSTIBLE'S PLANET	10,000	Age of decadence -- probably millenia in length. "People programming," social entropy.
THE CRIME AND GLORY OF COMMANDER SUZDAL		
GOLDEN THE SHIP WAS, OH, OH, OH		
THE DEAD LADY OF CLOWN TOWN	14,000	Martyrdom of D'Joan and the revival of the Old Strong Religion. Oppression of the Underpeople, the Rediscovery of Man. The E'telikeli's Holy Insurgeny in opposition to the Instrumentality. "Space Three" as a source of divine revelation: advent of McBan.
UNDER OLD EARTH	15,500	
DRUNKBOAT		
(THE ROBOT, THE RAT AND THE COPT)	16,000	
MOTHER HITTON'S LITTUL KITTONS		
THE BALLAD OF LOST C'MELL		
ALPHA RALPHA BOULEVARD		
OLD NORTH AUSTRALIA	16,500	
A PLANET NAMED SHAYOL		
ON THE GEM PLANET		Aftermath of Rediscovery of Man. Re-acculturation of the planets, embargo on religion, gains for underpeople.
ON THE STORM PLANET		
ON THE SAND PLANET		
THREE TO A GIVEN STAR		
(projected series with working title: "THE LORDS OF THE AFTERNOON" set in post-Rediscovery period)	∞	Possible coalescence of true men, underpeople, leading to Stapledonian climax.

This was sent in by a self-styled "Revisionist Objectivist" (The designation apparently has something to do with the schism which took place in that movement about two years ago.). While the concern of Mr. Stoddard here is peripheral to science fiction, he professes a serious interest in both S.F. and fantasy. He is working on a thesis on J.R.R. Tolkien and has it in mind to write a "Stapledonian-Randian" science fiction novel. If his case is typical, we may be seeing more of this ideological-academic type of thinking. Comments to follow. -- j.j.p.

PHILOSOPHICAL ROMANCE:

THE AESTHETIC STANDARDS OF A NEGLECTED GENRE

by William H. Stoddard

By 'philosophical romance,' I mean the literary form represented by such works as Dostoyevski's "Crime and Punishment," Victor Hugo's "Ninety Three," Ayn Rand's "Atlas Shrugged" or J.R.R. Tolkien's "The Lord of the Rings." I think that these works are similar in many important ways, and that contained in their likenesses is a literary standard drastically different from those which are now followed by most writers. I think that following these traditions would make literature a good deal more fruitful, and I myself enjoy this kind of novel more than any other and would like to see it better understood, instead of always being rejected on irrelevant grounds. In this paper I will attempt to set forth what kind of form this is and what it tries to achieve; this may at least eliminate some of the criticisms based on its 'failure' to meet standards set within other genres. After this, and separately, I will give my reasons for thinking that, when successful, it serves the proper functions of art much better than any other kind of prose fiction.

There are romances which are not philosophical, from Walter Scott's "Ivanhoe" to Katherine Kurtz' "Deryni Rising." They necessarily include some view of life, but they make no attempt to look at this view as an object interesting in itself or to ask questions which require it be explored. "Deryni Rising" can be taken as an example. Its author, Katherine Kurtz, takes as her theme the struggle for control of a kingdom similar to medieval Wales and the attempts of a race of enchanters, the Deryni, to overcome the suspicion and hatred left behind by their seizure of power several centuries earlier, aided by the support of Heaven for the rightful king and his allies. The values involved are largely taken for granted, rather than examined; they come in the usual mixture -- some mistaken in obvious ways, some in ways which are seldom thought of as mistaken, some valid. The point is that a philosophical romance would have to devote a great deal of time to conflicts centered on precisely these values, and that "Deryni Rising" simply leaves them unexamined. The same can be said about "You Only Live Twice" or "Preserve and Protect;" these novels are well-designed for anyone who can accept the rules of the game, but they don't try to examine these rules. A philosophical romance does just this; the difference is like that between a composer who merely wants to get an emotional development clearly expressed and one who wants to study intensely the basic power of music as a means of expression.

The characteristics distinguishing romances from novels are usually thought of in emotional terms, such as the presence of color, drama, exotic setting, clear-cut action and so on. A more precise description can be worked out, but these will do as an intuitive guide. Jane Austen and Thomas Mann did not write romances, nor did Franz Kafka or Emile Zola; Victor Hugo and H.G. Wells did.

All romances begin with a question and a set of alternatives. This question can be local or universal; the important thing about it is that its answers depend on the choices of individuals, not on accidents, and that its answers should be meaningful ones to the work's readers, and should make some appeal to value-judgments. The question may be, "What is the effect of the entry of violence into politics in America?" or "What is the significance of reason in man's existence," and the range of alternatives may be thought of in terms of common sense or intense philosophical concern; but they are always presented as chosen by the characters, and the choices as based on the way these characters see reality and having meaningful results in reality. The fact that people are shown as making meaningful choices is probably the central feature of romance. Compare this with Kafka's Gregor, who wakes up and finds himself turned into a cockroach, or Hesse's Magister Ludi, who spends

the largest part of the novel concerning him in following the rules of his order, and whose conflicts over them are discussed but not made real, or with Austen's heroines, who act out the conventions of their society in exquisite detail and do essentially nothing else. Even James Bond is constantly involved in a drama of meaningful choice, and what happens to him depends on what kind of choices he makes; this would look out of place, to say the least, in Austen or Henry James. I am going to give such writers the title of 'descriptive novelists,' so that I can contrast them as a group with writers of romances. A descriptive novel can be philosophical -- for example, Hesse's work. The difference from philosophical romance, here, is that the philosophy is a representation of and a response to the character's situation, not a cause of his actions and choices. The same difference appears in nonphilosophical fiction, where the situation is an aspect of past or contemporary history; description tends toward "This is what happened to me," romance toward "This is what I did" -- which aren't the same statement. Rand's formulation is that the two approaches differ on the question of whether man has volition and how much this matters in his life; this is an accurate summary of the matter.

This also applies to the ideas of critics. A man who thinks in terms of description -- this applies to most modern critics -- will have trouble doing justice to a romance, where characters aren't intended to describe what people are like when they let things happen to them, but to show what people can choose to do and what their choices lead to. A critic who thinks in terms of romance will be puzzled by the thought of praising a novel whose function is to describe purposeful action without reference to the fact that it is purposeful. The two groups have completely different viewpoints.

For the writer of romances, the natural course is to choose a theme, ask a question, propose a set of alternative answers, and show people acting on these answers. Since he wants to see his set of alternatives clearly, he will dramatize both sides as intensely as possible, both through the choices made by a single character and by the juxtaposition and interaction of characters who have made different choices; and a major part of his concern is to show the increasing awareness of his characters of what their choices mean, and to put them in situations which test these choices. If he is interested in a philosophical question, he will tend to make the characters involved vividly aware, at least sometimes, of the philosophical implications of their choices (by "philosophical" I do not mean "academic" as such, but "concerning the essence of man's interaction with reality," expressed in vivid realization of one's own viewpoint and motives in their most fundamental form -- for example, Roskolnikov's awareness, in "Crime and Punishment," of his increasing feeling of isolation from the real world and of the falseness of his relations with other people). He conceives plot as the logical working out of a choice or set of choices, in a situation that will make their consequences as real and visible as possible; he is motivated by an idea as to how such choices work out and by the desire to test it by seeing whether he can imagine actual men and women behaving as it suggests. Such an idea may be explicit -- Rand can give lengthy analyses of the philosophical bases for the choices her characters make -- or highly implicit, as in Tolkien's concern with the behavior of men (and hobbits) when they are confronted with ultimate value-choices on which the entire future of their world depends. However, the alternatives are always made visible; a common feature of such novels is the occurrence of moments of intense vision of the implications of a choice and the consequences bound up with it, and the plot-structure of a philosophical romance might be analyzed into a number of such realizations and a set of causal studies of their interactions. Ultimately, there must be an end-point to such a series, a point where all the consequences are brought out, made visible and summed up; this is the basis of climax and resolution in fiction.

This implies a specific type of main character for such novels; his most important attribute is precisely that he does conceive of such choices as possible and bases his actions on them. In fact, this is at least as important to such novelists as the specific problem; their concern is with action (in an Aristotelian sense), and their interest in philosophy is based on its use as a guide to action by a character capable of meaningful choice. James Stephens wrote of Eric Rucker Eddison, the author of "Mistress of Mistresses" and "A Fish Dinner in Memison," "Always, as a guide of his inspiration, is an idea of the Infinite." This is a questionable way of putting it (in my judgment), but

the basic idea applies to all philosophical romances; their authors and their main characters are guided by some view of how things really are which involves the idea that they can make choices which will have some effect on how things really are. This has the freest rein in fantasy, where, for example, in Eddison's "The Mezentian Gate," King Mezentius can discover himself to be God and debate whether or not he should undergo the experience of death and so unmake all of existence for the sake of some new discovery or experience; but even the most "realistic" characters are guided by general principles and undergo conflict on the basis of their loyalty to these principles, seeing them, not as animals or unreflective people see them, in isolation, but in relation to the whole unified nature of their experience of the world and of their basic commitments within it. People who write this kind of novel tend to be in love with this type of person and with this attribute in themselves, and what matters to them above everything else is finding ideas and actions which will give them scope to portray such choices. This is probably the alternative which produces the two kinds of novel: whether the author, or reader, or critic, thinks that he can make this kind of choice, or that he can't, and therefore whether he feels at home in a secondary world which lets him do so, or one that relieves him of any such necessity. The major existential consequences of the action in many philosophical romances can be seen, variously, as symbols or portrayals of the fact that major human events do occur as the result of human choices, and that therefore human choices do have just this kind of consequence and can be made in its light, and philosophical commitments give a basis for them and can be better illustrated by the large choices than by the small.

This is the key point in the debates over these writers. Except for Dostoyevski, none of them has any great critical popularity. This cannot be explained on the basis of their ideas -- Hugo was a socialist and a Christian, Rand is a neo-Aristotelian and an advocate of strict individualism, Tolkien is a devout Roman Catholic and a royalist -- since they are often in complete disagreement on them; nor of their style, since this is at least as expressive and intelligent as that of more admired writers. The objection is to the purpose for which their style is used; the conflict is around exactly one idea, the idea that men can make choices which do make a difference, and govern their actions by such choices. Pound was a fascist, Sartre is a heretical Marxist, Tolstoy was a Christian anarchist and a pacifist; none has had his critical reputation damaged by his ideas as such, since they all followed the basic idea of the impossibility of meaningful choice in relation to one's own contact with reality. Dostoyevski is an interesting figure, being accepted by both sides as one of their own people; but they characteristically admire different features of his work -- one group his portrayals of disease and social conditions, the other his passionate rejection of evil and his "melodramatic" plots. At present, the descriptive approach is on top, and the assumptions needed to provide a basis for understanding romance as a class of fiction are simply forgotten. Even a critic who feels good will toward Rand or Tolkien will find it hard to explain why he likes them, since he takes it for granted that fiction should be descriptive; and most critics have accepted the idea that choice is so completely impossible in their own lives that they feel no tolerance or sympathy for the other viewpoint. This is understandable, and divided loyalties aren't necessarily good, but if the two approaches are in fact incompatible, it would seem worthwhile to analyze the claims of both sides and consider whether these writers and critics may not have come down on the wrong one.

This leads to a basic question in philosophy: what is the function of art in man's life?

Ultimately, the purpose of art is related to metaphysics and epistemology, as the purpose of experiment is related to the natural sciences; both have the function of providing a characteristic sample of reality, the behavior or characteristics of which validate a hypothesis. In art, the hypothesis involved is concerned with reality as an object of awareness and, in varying degrees, with man's awareness and action in relation to it, conceived not in any specialized sense, but simply as a test of one's own awareness. The scientist wants to establish that his mind is right about a particular fact; the artist wants to show that his mind is right in its way of approaching the facts as such. This is why the two schools differ so drastically; each one is confronted by the other with a completely alien style of action, and the assertion that this is what is characteristic of reality -- in fiction, of acting

men. Everything a man does is based on this idea (this is a romanticist view; descriptivists might prefer to say that this idea rationalizes a situation); the attempt to show it wrong cannot be regarded with friendship -- nor can compromise. Both anarchists and totalitarians detest moderates, each side regarding them as apologists for the other.

Ultimately, the philosophical question behind this conflict must be analyzed as such, if we are to have a conclusive answer. There is, in philosophy, a crucial argument against any denial that men have volition and make meaningful choices: it is, simply, that unless men do have these attributes, they cannot choose their beliefs in accord with reality of truth, but must abandon any claim that their positions are true -- including the position that men do not have any volition. It is certainly a valid ground for rejecting a theory, that that theory requires itself to be false. In other words, the basic idea behind all purely descriptive fiction is not consistent or meaningful and can never be made so. (See Nathaniel Branden, "The Psychology of Self-Esteem").

Beyond this, there is the question of the view of man implied in each of the two viewpoints.

For descriptive fiction, man is essentially a robot; for romance, he is a being capable of meaningful choice and action. The claim that descriptive fiction is peculiarly humanistic is simply a sign of the complete collapse of this word into Doublespeak. In fact, fiction which does not show man as making meaningful choices among alternatives is not about man at all, and has nothing to do with any of those powers which are characteristic of man. Whether the situation portrayed is conventional, as in Tolstoy, or fantastic, as in Kafka and Beckett, the "men" presented have given up all thought of making choices; even if they see that past choices led them to their defeat, they have no thought of changing those past choices. An artist writes about what he thinks is essential and characteristic; when his basic idea about these is the image of defeat and helplessness, one is entirely justified in saying that he has abandoned everything that made him human; that he has quite literally dehumanized himself and is now trying to get us to regard his state as natural. The response to this should be the same as Niétszsché's to Kant: here is a thing which is dangerous to life, which is purely destructive, or constructive only in the most limited ways. As a living being, and as a being capable of free choice, one should reject it completely. There can be no justification for it.

Finally, if it is a question of depth of vision, then the argument must go entirely in favor of the philosophical romance. The recognition that men can make choices includes the recognition that they can choose to act as if they had no such power; thus the romantic's metaphysics leaves him free to understand the other side, and if he seldom does so (though romantics in fact have often done so; see Rand's "The Fountainhead, for example), this is because there are often far more interesting things to write about than this peculiar limit case. Philosophical romance includes all of the sphere of descriptive fiction in one of its minor corners; descriptive fiction is not wider nor more inclusive, but unbelievably narrower. From the standpoint of artistic integrity alone --, the standpoint descriptivists love to evoke -- only philosophical romance has any claim to our admiration. "Atlas Shrugged" or "The Possessed" are worth the entire existing body of descriptive fiction, or more.

-- William H. Stoddard

But have you defined a genre? This seems to be a clear-enough recapitulation of the Randite position on romanticism vs. naturalism, though for some reason you do not always use the same terminology as your Fountainhead (pun intended). However, defining the difference between two schools of writing is not the same as defining a genre. Your discussion of philosophical romance as examining a "View of life" suggests that what you have in mind is at least akin to a mainstream genre, the bildungsroman -- or more specifically, those bildungsromans which fall into the romantic (Dostoyevsky, Rand) school as opposed to those in the descriptive (Hesse, Mann) school. But surely Tolkien would not consider himself a writer of bildungsromans; he would place himself in the fantasy genre, along with Eddison and William Morris -- and feel more at home even with a "non-philosophical" writer in that genre like Miss Kurtz. Genres like fantasy and science fiction have disciplines and themes of their own, and it would be improper to make their worlds mere stage sets for bildungsromans. Putting all "serious" writers from several genres into a new "genre" is rather like lumping some "serious" symphonies and chamber works into "philosophical music." -- j.j.p.##

THE UNIVERSE MAKERS

by Donald A. Wollheim
Harper & Row * \$4.95

Lester del Rey, in "Art -- or Artiness?" three years ago, called attention to the need for a "counter-credo" of science fiction against the critics who were then promoting the New Wave-Thing.

"The Universe Makers," which sums up the experience of a man who has devoted more than 40 years to science fiction (and who has held the pivotal position of editor of Ace Books for many of them), was written as a personal statement -- and is necessarily rambling and idiosyncratic at times. Nevertheless, Donald A. Wollheim has drafted what is certainly the closest approach yet to the "counter-credo" science fiction needs, and which will undoubtedly remain so until someone finally comes up with a systematic treatise on the subject.

The great strength of Wollheim's book is in its treatment of the evolution of ideas in science fiction, from the original technological and sociological concepts of Jules Verne and H.G. Wells to the cosmic visions and galactic empires of Edmond Hamilton, Olaf Stapledon, E.E. "Doc" Smith and Isaac Asimov. Wollheim has organized the traditions of science fiction into a "cosmogony of the future" which is an important key towards understanding the social, political and evolutionary themes in the works of authors as varied as varied as A.E. VanVogt, Cordwainer Smith, Poul Anderson, Clifford D. Simak and others. And the philosophy of "cosmotropism" he outlines is something central to the very spirit of science fiction.

It is not that Wollheim's ideas are original -- he makes no such claim, in any case. Rather, the important thing about his book is that it is the first to express these ideas to the general public -- to give those who are not familiar with science fiction some understanding of how the genre evolved and of its true significance in our culture. This could be a milestone in the public understanding of science fiction -- particularly since the principal interpreters of the genre towards the mainstream have hitherto been mostly men like Kingsley Amis with little interest in it other than as a vehicle for social satire. Wollheim has done a neat job of countering the arguments of Amis' "New Maps of Hell," and of demonstrating why the British branch of the New Wave-Thing is essentially alien to the traditions and values of science fiction.

There are weaknesses in "The Universe Makers," however. Most of these stem from overplaying the dichotomy between Vernian and Wellsian science fiction. The two strains were admittedly quite distinct in the hands of their creators, but in these latter days of multiple influences they are at most points on a spectrum rather than separate forms. Too, while all Wellsians may have social concerns, all writers with social concerns are not necessarily Wellsians. Some of those Wollheim cites as being in "crisis" are no more Wellsian than Hillaire Belloc. For some reason, he can't seem to recognize that Kurt Vonnegut and his emulators are more nihilistic in their fundamental approach than Frederik Pohl or Cyril M. Kornbluth. And he sadly lets his ideological bias get in the way of his appraisal of John W. Campbell and Campbell's role in modern science fiction's development (yet this unreconstructed Futurian has a great deal of admiration for Robert A. Heinlein, nevertheless).

A few obvious errors have crept in, too. VanVogt's "Slan" is mentioned as if it had come after "The World of Null-A," for example. And the wrong date is given for Theodore Sturgeon's "Thunder and Roses" (it should be 1947, not 1955). There are also peculiar choices by Wollheim on what to emphasize: why is E.E. Smith's role in popularizing the idea of a galactic community of worlds skipped over -- especially in view of the fact Wollheim credits Stapledon's "The Star Maker" with having had little impact until after World War II? Certainly the larger roles he assigns Hamilton and even Ray Cummings are partly dictated by nostalgia and the fact Ace has reprinted their 1920's classics.

But the virtues of "The Universe Makers" far outweigh its faults. Here, for the first time, is a serious treatment of the ideas in science fiction, as seen by an insider who understands them -- rather than by that too-frequent outside critic or trend-hound whose kind has plagued the genre since it became Noticed in the wake of Hiroshima and, more recently, Apollo 11. Wollheim's book is an absolute must for anyone who seeks a real insight into science fiction.

-- j.j.p.

THE ECLIPSE OF DAWN

by Gordon Eklund
Ace 18630 * 75¢

Perhaps Gordon Eklund's first novel can also be called the first post-New Wave science fiction novel. And perhaps Eklund is the genre's first post-New Wave writer.

Certainly "The Eclipse of Dawn" is one of the queerest things to have come out of the Ace Special line since it was started. Whereas the most celebrated New Wave novels of recent years were devoted to militant pessimism and the destruction of "traditional" values of science fiction, the post-New Wave as represented by Eklund seems to lack any real sense of direction.

"The Eclipse of Dawn" is supposed to be a novel of regeneration, it seems -- of an America recovering from a typical New Wave disaster. It's a pretty preposterous future, at that. There has been a civil war between blacks and whites, of course -- and all the blacks have gone back South and restored the Confederacy (honest!). The rest of the world has an embargo on trade with the United States, but nothing else seems to be going on abroad (apart from Japan sending a space probe towards Jupiter). The American economy has apparently collapsed, and the trains don't run any more -- yet Los Angeles miraculously has more cars or, at least, more smog, than ever.

Characterization is typically New Wave. The protagonist, a down-and-out writer named Jacobi, is hired to do a campaign biography for a presidential candidate named Colonby during the election of 1988. As it turns out, Colonby is insane -- a typical right-wing stereotype of the sort that has been done to death in left-wing fiction. Jacobi's sister is insane too -- she believes in Octaurians from Jupiter who are going to Save the World. Other members of the Colonby entourage are hardly less crazy. Yet, incredibly, out of all this, Eklund preaches a message of salvation rather than damnation.

Can he be serious? Is he the voice of the Silent Majority? There are glimpses throughout the Colonby campaign tour (which ends in a very grisly climax) of such developments as the Church of the Resurrected Republic which suggest that the American Spirit will triumph -- and the incumbent president argues that it doesn't matter whether Colonby is insane: maybe salvation lies in insanity. The whole novel seems to be an incredible juxtaposition of naturalistic plot and characterization with nostalgic sentiments and values. Somehow it conveys a Nineteenth Century mood -- or, more precisely, a mood akin to that of the parallel world of Ward Moore's "Bring the Jubilee" -- even though this makes no sense in terms of a future situation.

If this is indeed the first post-New Wave science fiction novel, it is more puzzling than any of the New Wave examples (for all of their alleged "complexity" or "obscurity"). "The Eclipse of Dawn" is going to leave a lot of readers shaking their heads.

-- j.j.p.

THE WIND WHALES OF ISHMAEL

by Philip Jose Farmer
Ace 89237 * 75¢

In case you hadn't noticed, Philip Jose Farmer is absorbed in the writing of potboilers again. But since a Farmer potboiler is often far better than the "serious" efforts of most other science fiction writers (sometimes better even than what he himself considers one of his more "serious" works), this isn't necessarily bad news.

As in "The Stone God Awakens" (which was surprisingly good, once you got past the atrocious cover illustration), "The Wind Whales of Ishmael" is set on Earth as it might be millions of years in the future and combines an adventure story in the spirit of the old Argosy with a "soft sell" of environmental consciousness.

Yes, the protagonist is the same Ishmael who survived the sinking of the Pequod (how he found time to write "Moby Dick" is unclear, since the Rachel falls through a time gate, Queequeg's coffin and all, before once making it back to port). He finds himself in a strange world with dead seas (evaporation over millenia, you know), ever-quaking land (the Moon has drawn closer) and a complex ecology (metals are exhausted and the human inhabitants use biological substitutes for technology).

The background -- especially the wind whales and aerial plankton on which they feed -- is fascinating. Unfortunately, the plot isn't as interesting as that in "The Stone God Awakens." Farmer falls back on the old Rival Cities routine, which was done to death by Edgar Rice Burroughs 40 years ago. An attack led by Ishmael on one of the cities depends too much on stock contrivances and "menaces."

It's amazing that Farmer is able to create such a fascinating and convincing world for a mere potboiler, then throw it away on a rather standard plot instead of giving it the epic treatment it deserves. The same was true (to a much lesser extent) in "Stone God," where emphasis on physical action left the appetite for more development of the idea of the vegetable-computer Wurutana unsatisfied. And it seems odd that Farmer, after wallowing in kinky sex two years ago, should now go to an opposite extreme and not get the hero and the heroine in bed at all. A sensible balance can surely be struck between sex and other elements in an adventure story -- and it isn't as if Ace had taboos any more.

Don't misunderstand. You couldn't ask for a better potboiler than Farmer writes. But continue to hope for another "Flesh" or "The Lovers" from him when he has more time.

-- j.j.p.

18 GREATEST SCIENCE FICTION STORIES

ed. by Laurence M. Janifer
Tempo Books * 95¢

This book -- called "Masters' Choice" in the hardcover edition of 1966 -- deserves to be considered one of the new standard anthologies. The "eighteen greatest" here are drawn from a list of 164 named by 20 writers and editors whom Janifer asked for "five stories which they feltamong the best of all time." (But the lists submitted "ranged in length from two stories to thirty-two.") Unfortunately, this paperback reprint does not list the complete "Honor Roll" of 164 stories -- only the 34 that received more than one vote.

Of the five stories that received four votes (none reached five), Janifer includes two in the anthology: Tom Godwin's "The Cold Equations" and Fritz Leiber's "Coming Attraction." The others were Isaac Asimov's "Nightfall," C.L. Moore's "Vintage Season" and Stanley G. Weinbaum's "A Martian Odyssey." ## So why did Janifer omit them? -- j.j.p. ## Seven stories got three votes, and of these Janifer includes Lester del Rey's "Helen O'Loy" and Robert A. Heinlein's "Requiem." ## Left out: Moore's "No Woman Born," Henry Kuttner's "The Twonky," Cyril M. Kornbluth's "The Mindworm," Walter A. Miller's "Vengeance for Nikolai" and John Cheever's "The Enormous Radio" (!) -- j.j.p. ## And there are three stories that got two votes: Ray Bradbury's "The Veldt," Kuttner's "Don't Look Now," and Moore's "Bright Illusion." The rest of the stories, according to the poll, are no "greater" than a great many others, so the omission of the complete list is a serious one, and the title calls for forgiveness.

Although the stories here are familiar in general, Janifer does include three never reprinted before (or since, that I know of). These are Willard Harkins' "The Dwindling Sphere" (1940), Murray Leinster's "Politics" (1935) and Moore's "The Bright Illusion" (1934). These are "among the best," and "The Bright Illusion" deserves to be called "great." All the other stories had not only been reprinted, but reprinted in earlier anthologies, with the exception of William Tenn's excellent and moving "The Custodian," which had appeared in his own collection, "Of All Possible Worlds," but not in any anthology. But even if I happened to have a copy of the October 1934 Astounding, I would want this book for "The Bright Illusion."

The "Masters" polled are listed on the back cover of this edition: Poul Anderson, Asimov, Alfred Bester, James Blish, Frederic Brown, John W. Campbell, Arthur C. Clarke, del Rey, H.L. Gold, Damon Knight, Leiber, Leinster, Judith Merrill, Clifford D. Simak, E.E. Smith, Theodore Sturgeon, Tenn, Jack Williamson and John Wyndham. You can't blame Janifer for not asking X, Y or Z. He did ask three other people, who didn't have the time. And, with the exceptions of Merrill and Knight, it's a good list of Masters: if the stories were important to these people, they are of interest, at least, to most S.F. readers. I except Merrill and Knight not only because I dislike her idea of S.F. and have reservations

about his, but also because of their own anthologizing. The Honor Roll includes many stories that had appeared in their own anthologies -- and many of these stories received just one vote each. But I think Janifer's poll was more significant than the S.F.W.A.'s -- and that his anthology is more likely to add to anyone's collection than is the "S.F.W.A. Hall of Fame."

Janifer's preface is arguable -- as he realizes. "The basic form of science fiction, for a great many years," he says, "was the short story." There were many of them, of course. But he also points out that "individual pieces as long as 35,000 words were listed." And if he had asked for lists of works of any length, the results of his poll would have been quite different. If you leave out novels, you leave out a lot of basic S.F. Janifer thinks his poll can show "what S.F. thinks S.F. is" -- but generalizing from it would be dubious. He gathers that S.F. "separate(s) itself into three distinct forms" -- and proposes a categorization that would call for reading authors' -- and their societies' -- minds. A simpler answer to his question, "What have we got?" is that we've got all kinds of stories -- or almost all kinds. Kornbluth's sour "Theory of Rocketry" is close to (S.F.) naturalism -- but not quite that bad. And of course, there is no New Wave "S.F." here.

-- Richard M. Hodgens

FURTHEST

by Suzette Haden Elgin
Ace 25950 * 75¢

Here we have another first novel as an Ace Special, this one by a woman writer who greatly distinguished herself two years ago with "For the Sake of Grace" in Fantasy and Science Fiction.

The point has been made before that very few women write science fiction -- but that those few have been among the best: Catherin  Moore, Leigh Brackett and, most recently, Ursula LeGuin. There seems to be a distinct emotional quality in their writing that few men have been able to duplicate.

The problem with "Furthest" is that Mrs. Elgin hasn't been able to either -- not at novel length. The plot involves an anthropological mystery on the planet Furthest which threatens to create a political crisis on the Tri-Galactic Council. The alien society theme is supposed to be serious and dramatic -- and in the hands of Mrs. LeGuin it would have been.

But Mrs. Elgin makes a mistake from the start in setting up her galactic empire, which is too comical to be taken seriously. The agent of the Tri-Galactic Intelligence Service, Coyote Jones, is sort of like Christopher Stasheff's Rod Gallowglass, only not as funny. But this is not a funny story -- there is even tragedy in it -- and it is no place for a secret agent who is supposed to be funny, nor for a superior who is supposed to be funnier. If art is an orchestration of emotions, the trouble with "Furthest" is too much emotional dissonance.

Put this down to inexperience. Mrs. Elgin had no trouble keeping "For the Sake of Grace" at a serious level. The development of strongly emotional themes is a womanly talent that should not be wasted.

-- j.j.p.

TOMORROW IS TOO FAR

by James White
Ballantine 02150-9 * 95¢

No, once again James White has not topped "The Watch Below." Not quite. But "Tomorrow is Too Far" comes closer to equaling that classic than anything else he has written since 1966.

Whereas "All Judgment Fled" depended too much on a minor variant on the old alien contact theme, and the Hospital Station series seems to be losing its imaginative vigor (despite some nice angles in "Major Operation"), this latest novel seems to break fresh ground for White.

"Tomorrow is Too Far" offers a really fresh idea of time travel, and the plot development incorporates the best suspense techniques of writers like Alistair MacLean and L.P. Davies, while avoiding mistakes those writers often commit in setting up the basic situation. But there is one serious flaw: White telegraphs the solution to the mystery which

confronts his protagonist. Joseph Carson is the security chief at one of the British aerospace firms. A man with a routine job -- until one day he discovers that there is a project going on that is so secret even he hasn't been let in on it.

There have been stories about possible paradoxes of time travel before -- most of these have involved the time traveler meeting himself or killing his grandfather or some such thing. But White doesn't go over old ground, however fertile. Instead, he has developed, in a completely logical and convincing manner, a psychobiological paradox that has quite possibly never been used before in science fiction (this reviewer, at least, cannot recall any precedent for it).

The peculiar nature of White's paradox gives "Tomorrow is Too Far" a serious human interest dimension that sets it apart from time travel stories based solely on the "rules of the game." The novel's character development and relationships are somehow more compelling than those of anything White has written before -- with the exception, of course, of the ones in "The Watch Below." In particular, his resolution of Carson's romantic problem with his wife Jean -- a problem indispensably tied in with the time paradox -- conveys more emotion than White has ever been able to put into a love relationship before.

"Tomorrow is Too Far" may not be an award-winning novel, but it's certainly one of the most refreshing to read that has come out so far this year.

-- J.J.P.

CORRESPONDENCE

Algis Budrys begs to differ "slightly" on the account we ran last issue on how Regency Books came to publish Cordwainer Smith's "You Will Never be the Same." Our account had been based on information given us by Robert Silverberg.

"Our problem with getting any good science fiction referred to original short stories for a projected series frankly modeled on Fred Pohl's Star anthologies," Budrys writes. "I did complain about it, but that was long after Bob had made his original -- and then unworkable -- suggestion that we do a Smith collection." The "suggestion," according to Budrys, was not oral, but "two typewritten lines on a piece of yellow paper which resided for a long time in the idea file that had been Harlan Ellison's before me."

Later -- partly through "survival reflexes," Regency broke with its "all-originals policy," Budrys explains. "Then I called up Harry Altshuler, or dropped in on him at the New York Mirror city room, which was one of the places where I'd pick up manuscripts from him if I happened to be in New York, and got a bunch of Smith tearsheets.

"The arrangements were a snap; the materials existed, I knew exactly the stories I wanted, the price was acceptable to Dr. Linebarger and in due course out came a very good book." Ron Bradford did covers for the book, and Earl Kemp "spent much more than the usual amount of his time on our staff in getting the stories into exactly the right order." Budrys implies he did the blurb, but that only Kemp knew "Smith" was Dr. Linebarger.

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NOTICE!

Continued inflation, taxes, and increasing distribution have made the continued free circulation of Renaissance an intolerable burden. As a result, there will be a charge of 25 cents per copy, or \$1 per year, beginning next issue. No more free copies will be distributed, except as exchanges and to a very few favored friends. Take heed!

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"Towards a Theory of Science Fiction," the new position paper of the Second Foundation which was promised in last fall's Renaissance, is now available. Just send 50 cents to John J. Pierce, 275 McMane Avenue, Berkeley Heights, N.J., 07922. Or see Mr. Pierce at the Noreascon (29th World Science Fiction Convention), Sept. 3-6, 1971, the Sheraton-Boston Hotel, Prudential Center, Boston, Mass.

Have you signed up for the Noreascon yet? Registration fees -- \$4 supporting, \$6 attending to: Noreascon, P.O. Box 547, Cambridge, Mass., 02139. All members privileged to vote on Hugo awards. Guest of Honor: Clifford D. Simak. Fan Guest of Honor: Harry Warner Jr. Features: panel discussions, movies, auctions, speeches, banquet, Hugo presentations.

Added attraction: the Hon. Anthony Lewis will induct the chosen into the Honored Confraternity of Scanners.

For information on all science fiction conventions, be sure to check the S.F. calendar in If magazine regularly. Also read If for book reviews by Lester del Rey, First Speaker of the Second Foundation.

Time limitations on the part of the editor preclude taking up a regular correspondence with the scores of readers who have written in to express their appreciation of Renaissance. Be reminded again that we appreciate all your comments. Perhaps we shall be seeing some of you at the Noreascon (another reason to attend).

This issue of Renaissance is being published in time for distribution at the 1971 Lunacon, April 16-18 at the Commodore Hotel in New York City. Next issue (hopefully) to be out in late July, in time for the Hugo balloting deadline.