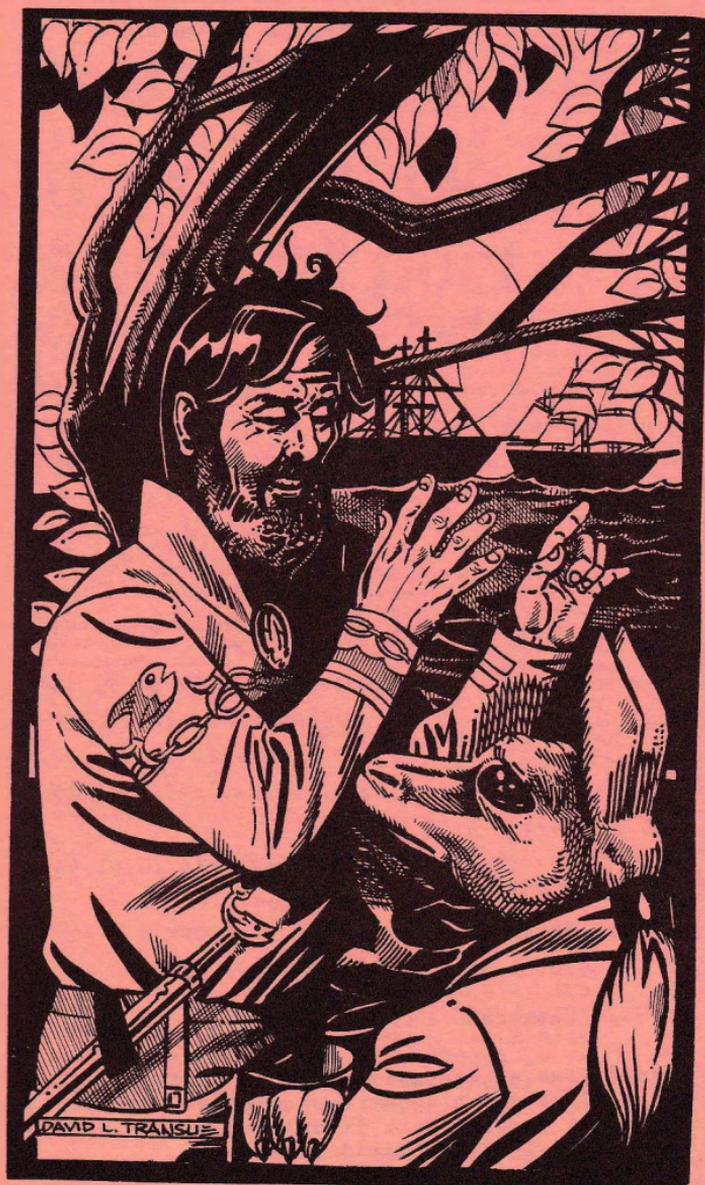


RIVERSIDE QUARTER



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RQ Miscellany

Her dead
Body wears the smile of accomplishment,
The illusion of a Greek necessity
Flows in the scrolls of her toga.

Sylvia Plath, "Edge"

The sequence begins with my sending a proof sheet to a poet, Elizabeth Ann Burton, in September -- and receiving from her mother a letter explaining her disappearance. Accompanying the letter was a clipping that's reproduced here.

Body found in Accomack is that of poet

FRIDAY
AUGUST 16, 1991

By Karen Jolly Davis
and Tony Germanotta
Staff writers

The body found Wednesday in an irrigation pond near Painter was that of Elizabeth Ann Burton, a talented and tormented Eastern Shore poet who disappeared in December on the way to a dinner with her minister.

Accomack County Sheriff Robert Crockett said Thursday that the state medical examiner used dental records to identify the 32-year-old woman.

Crockett said Burton, who had a history of wrestling with deep depression, probably drowned in an accident. "All fool play has been raised out," Crockett said. "There were no signs of trauma to the body at all."

In June '92, about six months after publication of our last issue, I received a letter that I quote in full:

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

Dear Leland:

It was a pleasant surprise to receive RQ #32 today. I enjoyed all its essays, and especially those by Justin Leiber and Karen Michalson. But I also have a puzzlement which, although it is only a small part of my reaction to the issue, will, alas, be the main topic of this letter. Thus:

(continued on p. 66)

quiet person who was focused on her writing.

"She mainly talked about the books she was writing and what she wanted to do with them," said Jan Martin, who, like many people in the small Eastern Shore community, knew Elizabeth and her parents. "I think her last book was two-thirds completed when she disappeared, and her father said it was her best one."

Burton had finished a book of poetry, "Waiting for the Messiah," which was put out last year by a Chicago publisher.

She had also been published in the most recent volume of "The Poet's Domain," a book-length periodical of original works by authors from Virginia, Maryland and

Washington.

The periodical is "a small-run (book), as poetry always is," said publisher Donna Robinson, of Fairfax, Va. She said 600 copies are printed of each volume of the anthology, which comes out in February and October. Burton had two poems in February's volume, Robinson said.

Dr. Joseph D. Adams, a poetry professor at Northern Virginia Community College and editor of the anthology, described Burton as "really quite a good poet."

Adams said he never met Burton but was impressed by the two poems he recently published and two others she had submitted earlier under the pseudonym Mercedes Itzenblatt.

Those were cut on her first volume, he said, after he learned that they had been published elsewhere. Burton's writing was "very graphic, very descriptive, but it wasn't dramatic," he said. Her poems had a "very quiet kind of impact" ... and

made one think."

"She had a kind of penetrating insight," he said. "She was very, very strong in terms of her own perception of things, as if she had a sort of second sight."

After accepting a work, he said, he asks writers for a biography to go with it. Burton submitted one saying she had worked as an equestrian, reporter, reviewer and laboratory technician.

Martin said Burton's parents were physicians who had gone to medical school in North Carolina together. Burton was the third of five children and had loved riding horses in her youth. She graduated from Old Dominion University with a degree in English literature and was working on her master's in English.

In 1987, Burton had worked part time at the local hospital and was training to be a histology technician. Histology involves studying the structure of tissues.

When talking about Elizabeth, no one mentions any romances. "She didn't seem to be interested in that sort of thing," Martin said. "She spent a lot of time at home with her mother and was very close to her mother."

HARMONY
by
JIM HARMON
"ASIMOV"

In February 1992, Redd Boggs mentioned in a letter that he had heard that Isaac Asimov was seriously ill and for the first time in more than twenty-five years had missed writing his science column for Fantasy and Science Fiction. I told Redd to let me know the outcome of this. I guess I was thinking he would hear through the pages of some fanzine I did not receive. I think we had forgotten how important Asimov and s-f people in general had become. When the sad news came, it was as the second or third most important item on most radio and TV newscasts. (Redd heard a radio news capsule where it was the top item.) Isaac Asimov was dead.

Other professional interests have taken me outside the s-f field for many years. I know Harlan Ellison had a long friendship with Ike Asimov, and no doubt there were others who knew him longer and better. But I did know Asimov, when we were both young (although he was some fifteen years older) and for a period in the late Fifties and early Sixties, I think it might be fair to say we were buddies. He was completely devoid of the elitist snobbery common to many s-f writers and even fans.

Asimov was very intelligent, although I would not say he was the smartest man I ever knew. I would give that title to another deceased s-f writer, Kris Neville. Certainly, Asimov got further in the literary and scientific worlds, but Kris could put ideas together more rapidly and come up with not one solution to a problem, but with dozens. But it was Asimov who could come up with one single solution and make it understandable to all.

All the news reports dealt with what a workaholic Ike Asimov was, going from about seven in the morning to ten or ten thirty at night, writing copy for his various books. That must have been in later years, after his heart attack, when he felt the night coming on and wanted to produce as much as he could while he was here. Even during this period, he had a life to lead, and had many personal encounters with the famous and the unknown which he used as grist for his columns, his Black Widower mystery shorts, and the rest of his writing.

When I knew him best during the period mentioned before, I'm sure he told me he wrote mainly in the mornings only. And of course, I knew him from the circuit of s-f conventions we went to--the Midwestcon, the annual World Con, and many others. At these affairs, he was what we would today call a "party animal."

I would see Asimov with several different young ladies a day, and I presume they were not just discussing the Foundation series or the Laws of Robotics. After I slimmed down--even slimmer than the celebrated doctor--I conversed with some of the same young ladies, and found their attention span short for intellectual discussion. The word "groupies" either had not yet been invented or was not in general use, but that is what we would call them now.

In fact, Asimov went after a young lady I was seriously interested in at the time, and I'm sure, made some headway. The following day, apparently after talking to some people, he came to me and apologized. I told him that it was okay, that I knew things were not going to work out between the young lady and myself for a lasting relationship. Today (to use the word again) I suppose this might be seen as two males clarifying their property rights over a female. Then it was considered an honourable attitude promoting "male bonding." Neither Asimov nor myself were the type to sock each other on the bicep, but it was that sort of thing.

He was also a great wit, producing not merely devilishly clever lines over which one would smile in admiration, but doing impromptu routines that would reduce listeners to fits of uncontrollable laughter. He would do this at banquets and often anywhere there were a group of listeners. He seemed to need an audience. In the all too few times I was alone with him he tended to be serious and to give me good, generalized advice about my writing career (never anything specific like, "Try hitting Gold with a twenty thousand worder about time-travel--he needs one"). He also told me some of his personal problems. I don't recall them all, and would not repeat them if I could, but in short, he was not terribly happy with his lot in life in the late Fifties. I think he worked out all those problems with the institution for which he worked, etc. and was very content for the last two or three decades.

I recall having breakfast with Asimov one day at a Midwestcon. Coming from a Protestant upbringing in Mount Carmel, Illinois, I knew little about Jews (and did not suspect I would marry one, Barbara, in the Seventies). I thought they were all kosher, I guess. Ike ordered pork sausages--surprise enough, but then he specified eight sausages. Not a Falstaffian feast but twice as much as one normally gets in a restaurant. On reflection I suppose he needed to replenish his supply of protein.

After I moved to the Los Angeles area and stopped compulsively going to every s-f convention, I generally lost touch with Asimov. While he was "Science Editor" at F&SF, he was given the task (for a time) of improving the science in s-f stories they used. I wrote a story about a tunnel through the world, based on the old idea of digging a hole to China, and he "corrected" my use of building the tunnel out of "impervium," a metal that would resist the forces of the Earth and keep them from collapsing the tunnel. He instead used force beams. Both ideas seem equally science-fictional to me, and both rather far from practical science, but the editors liked his idea. In the letter I saw, he also strongly recommended the editor buy my story. It appeared as "The Depths."

When I became editor of Marvel Magazines' Monsters of the Movies in the Seventies I asked Asimov to contribute something but he postcarded me he was too busy to do so. Probably he wasn't that anxious to appear alongside pictures of drooling fiends and headless corpses and the few pages of comics in each issue. That was, I believe, our last personal contact.

In the years that followed, I often saw him on TV and was pleased to see he had taken off weight and (unlike myself) kept it off. He also grew that set of side whiskers. At one time I also did that, but shaved them off after the hippie-filled Sixties. They did give him a distinctive appearance, and public figures need that. But now, he certainly was a public figure, nationally known, and seemingly consulted on everything from the state of television to the need for a space station.

I tried reading his Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction magazine. His editorials and his own stories were entertaining enough, as were occasional stories by Robert Silverberg, Fred Pohl and some older hands. I found most of the newer writers unreadable and gave up after a couple of years of mostly unread magazines stacked up.

His own new novels of the Foundation and the Robots did not fare too much better with me. The writing seemed okay, but I could not recapture a youthful desire to actually finish them. Mostly what I read of Asimov's in recent years were his Black Widower tales in Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine. They were always enjoyable reading, and in them I felt I got glimpses of Asimov's own personal life. But some seemed based on such weak premises, such transparent clues, that I think only someone of Asimov's renown could have sold them.

In recent months, I prepared to get into producing new full-cast dramatizations for "talking books," a new field for me. I had never actually listened to the "talking books" out there and one of the first ones I monitored was Asimov reading his own book, Foundation. It was good to hear his voice again, and he was a good reader (for a writer). The story itself I personally could only accept as a period piece. As Asimov himself said, his work was virtually devoid of style, and reading his work aloud showed that up vividly. It was a vital pioneering effort, but others have built upon what Asimov opened up.

That, I think, was the last time I heard his voice while he was alive. Perhaps I caught him on some newscast or TV documentary, he was so ubiquitous; but I think the tape was it. The announcement was a shock. I did not think of him as old. Then too, as you see the Unknown Gardener plucking the daisies around you, you realize your own bloom will not survive the winter.

While he probably never thought of me over the years (I checked to see if there was even a name mention in his autobiography) I did not forget him. I remember him now as a young man full of life, wit, knowledge--a great guy I'm happy to have known.



ORIGINS

When the neolithic stone split out teemed a long-headed race of chips, laying an Afro-Spanish trail for Arabs. Ligurians cut into Italy's womb to await further fission. Dirty bronze came on northern spears forming trapezoidal lakes to save the bellies. Swimming away was out. Little clans clawed each other to the tune of terremoto, for they could not pummel already bearing brides. Terracotta took romantic forms. When iron penetrated bronze Villanova became king of moats until his forge ate through the drawbridge, rusting his fingers. Then Etruscans jumped from minor to major and drained the moats. They painted crusting walls, poles, bodies, anything unable to protect itself. They worked war into art, then pouting, gave these new twists to their gods and made the goddesses bear the guilt. By then strange colonies of creatures genus magna graecia were crawling into hideouts. Romulus pitched his camp against all this, and today Roman men love long girls with tall hair flowing wild.

-- Thomas Kretz --

ON BECOMING LOVERS

An egg cracking, a skin
 shedding itself,
 a tiger's paw
 soft with sucked in
 claw. My ego
 dry clump
 gone to mush, oozing
 into your own
 brain of jello. Now tell me

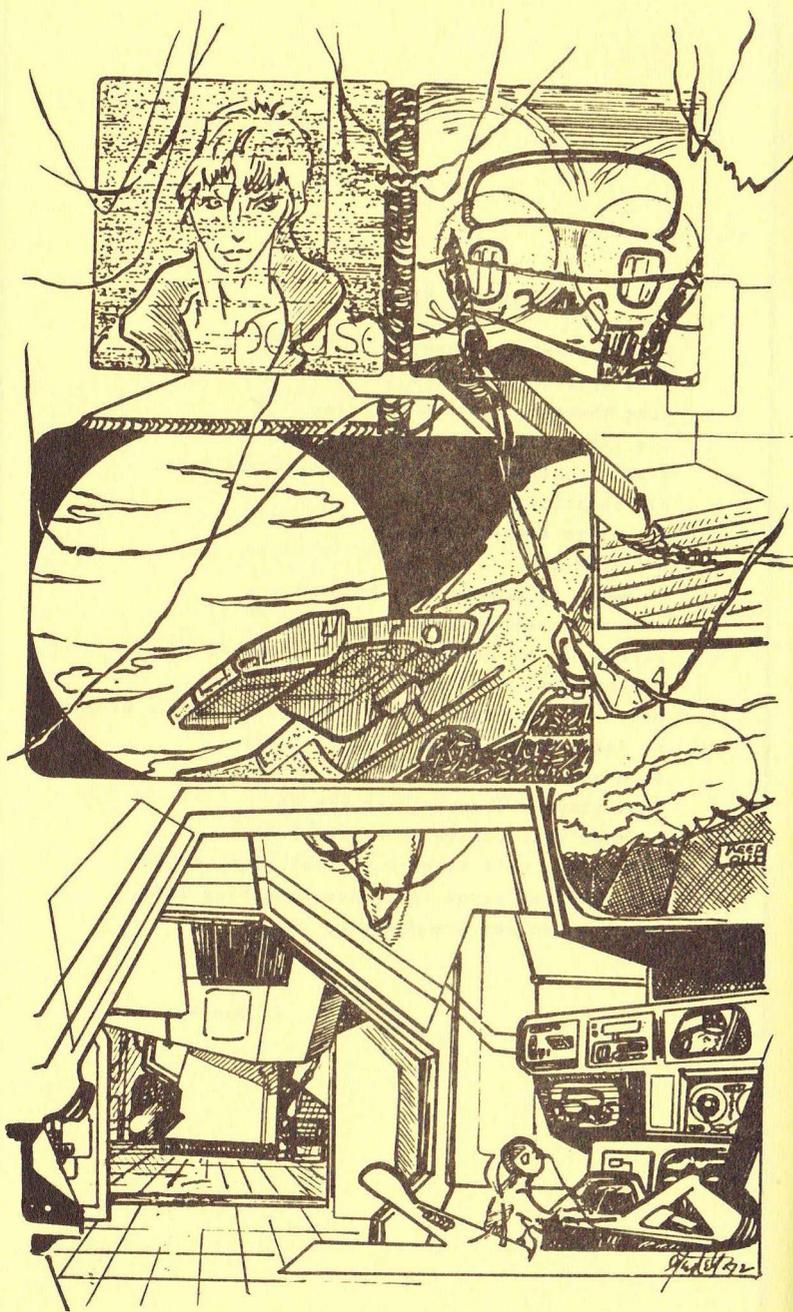
does a cat
 need cliché, a stunned
 chick, eyes sealed
 shut, ask why have I
 broken open, a snake,
 all new and smooth
 in spring sun, hot rock,
 strike
 any closer?

-- Julia Thomas --

NIGHT

Night's essence, time:
 dead weight taken from the shoulders
 none there to witness miracle.
 Fog lifts, drifts; the river winds,
 a silver strand of ribbon through the dark.
 All is still;
 no way to travel, then,
 but inward;
 no means of motion but the mind --
 machine fine-tuned through ages,
 idling to the rootless dream. Muscles doze,
 staring eyes are blind.
 But, oh! The mind! That wondrous wizard's dream
 no logic ever culled a theory from;
 sure steel
 that stays and stays, and yields
 to none that cannot, somehow, feel
 that night will never end, that night is but
 the prelude, proof of cycles breathing life,
 the godsend men are dreaming of:
 love.

-- Dan Pettee --



Objects Are Closer than They Appear in Mirror

by
Leonard Orr

Early every morning, before the real heat of the day blasted the pitted surface of the white buildings, Jagger would walk through the base. Closed down only three years, the base already had the look of military installations left from some long ago war: the cement was cracked in tiny fissures and great, powdery chasms, and thick brush grew through the runways or pushed through walls in hairy tufts. The paint had peeled from the metal surfaces, shiny from the blowing sand, but there was little rust. By early afternoon most days the blacktop became sticky from the searing heat.

When NASA suspended most of their operations after the murders, he knew he had to return to this base. All the salvageable, strippable stuff would be gone, he knew, but even if there was just the exoskeleton of the base, Jagger had to see it again. "Unhealthy and morbid," Dr. Ferenczi called him during the Senate investigations, and perhaps his nostalgic attachment to the base was just that.

Guards rarely checked the base anymore. When he first moved in, thirteen months earlier, a police patrol or a jeep with two or three hot, bored soldiers made the trip from an Air Force base forty miles away every three weeks or so. Now they only came by once in three months, or else a helicopter flew low over the buildings. With the surveillance cameras and sensors he had reactivated, Jagger had warning of anyone approaching a two-mile perimeter of the base. He kept his car under a tarpaulin behind some empty 55 gallon drums in one of the underground access tunnels. He painstakingly wiped away the tire tracks after his infrequent excursions to buy supplies.

The small holopsych room was at one end of the second sub-basement. Most of the hot part of the days and again for a couple of hours at the end of the evenings, he sat before his equipment, spinning out holograms, cutting and pasting his memories, images of the space station, Margo's last mad talks, and clips from their months of downloaded holopsych therapy. He began treating Margo when she was first accepted as a specialist in the space station programme; he spoke to her after the first murders. The three years in between were all there in the memory cubes he brought with him, with extra back-up copies in three other locations. Ferenczi thought the FBI had found everything when he recommended that Dr. Jagger not be allowed access to the records in the future.

"If I cannot die in space I would like to die in the desert. You are like that, too, Jagger, that is what we have in common." The reproduction of the voice is perfect.

Only by some shimmering of the bright colours at the edges of the image can someone tell it is a hologram. Margo is wearing a khaki shirt and shorts with rolled up cuffs, her nose white with zinc oxide. Her face is shaded by the broad-brimmed Australian outback hat she wore outside, and she leans back to drink from the canteen. Her clothes are darkened with sweat and she squints against the sun. "Even out here there sometimes seem to be too many people, too closed in," she says. Jagger touches a few keys and Margo is wearing only a white NASA T-shirt, the left sleeve and shoulder flecked with blood; she is explaining how she used the robot arm to fling the body of Commander Breitkorp toward the sun, how he was going to have her cut from the space station programme because of her attitude problem. "I'm not the one with the attitude problem." Jagger freezes the hologram at that point, caught by her look, the white reflection of moisture on her lips as she makes the last syllable.

Now dreams were unpleasant. He hated looking at the photographs the FBI men pushed before him. "What about this group? Recognize any of them?" asked agent Haldeman. "No, I have no idea, no idea." "Look carefully."

They are playing a hologram of Margo from one of their sessions; she is not speaking, just quietly smashing a model of the space station which was suspended near his desk. "What did she say to you then? Didn't you know she felt this violently about it? Why didn't you say anything? You could have cut her from the programme and none of this would have happened."

"I didn't realize. It seemed like the usual fantasizing. Quite common among the group, really."

He was wired to a polygraph machine or an EEG, or to anything else that might note when he was lying. He was put into a sensory deprivation tank or locked in a completely white room while special agent Erlichman played Wagner much too loudly through powerful speakers. He was being stripped and restrained, given injections and red pills, he was being given paper and a pencil stub and left in an entirely mirrored room, he was being tied next to a microphone in a completely black room, he was being given small shocks as an incentive, large shocks as a punishment. He is watching the films from the cameras aboard the space station, watching this one bludgeoned, this one stabbed, these three forced into an air-lock, watching Margo overriding Houston's commands for the computers, taking the station more and more into her own peculiar orbit.

Discredited but not unlicensed; responsible but not criminally so; too involved and too detached. Finally he is set free. His deal with NASA is two years of paid leave in exchange for disappearing, in exchange for turning over all his memory cubes and forgetting it all. No speaking to lawyers, journalists, TV people, screenwriters, or anyone who shows the slightest interest.

But people are increasingly interested and worried while the astronaut cult grows. Bootleg tapes of Margo in the space station are sold everywhere and the mini-series is a great success. Teenage girls cut their hair short, dress in white NASA jump-suits, and take the latest drug (blue and white pills they call Warp). The hologram booths are busy with private showings of the space-station tapes, or loops that replay and replay the take-offs and killings, the conversations between Margo and Dr. Jagger, attempting to find out what tripped this. High schools ban the NASA logo and new zoning laws move against the hologram booth theatres.

Tensions rise throughout the Senate investigations, the Congressional hearings, carried in foto on C-Span. These proceedings are enlivened by seemingly related actions off-screen. Three high school football players, lifting weights, are beaten by eight to ten women in masks and NASA jump-suits. The head of NASA at the time of the station murders is machine-gunned as he gets out his car; the Secret Service places guards at several Washington homes.

Dr. Jagger has been seen on TV repeatedly and received hundreds of denunciations and requests for souvenirs of Margo. His fellow holopsychs disassociate themselves from him and the FBI advises him to go into hiding and change his name. His ex-wife appears in several tabloids to complain of his instability and sexual habits. His behavior is discussed on "Nightline," "Geraldo," "Oprah," and "Donahue." He is condemned by the dark-suited men and extravagantly praised and sought after by the young women in the white jump-suits. These women begin leaving their homes and joining in remote communes to indulge in their space visions, and the attention turns from Dr. Jagger to Margo and her "daughters."

At night Margo changed her pillow often because it became heavy, "sodden with dreams," she claimed. Dr. Jagger was interested in the physical way she reified her mental activities. The plastic helmet used in the holopsych treatments, festooned with brightly coloured electrical components, a rainbow of intertwined wires leading into the sensors and computers in the holopsych room, always fascinated her. She watched the preparations for each session in the mirror he placed for her above the holopsych couch.

Although at first he asked her not to, she preferred to remove her white NASA jump-suit completely before getting on the couch; most of Dr. Jagger's holopsych patients just zipped the uniform open enough for him to attach the twelve sensors (each with thin wires and bright colour-coded plastic circle); she didn't move even when he placed the genital activity sensor. She stared at the mirror and said, "Bride of Frankenstein. I look like the muse of electricity." She became calmer and happier where most patients became increasingly nervous as the preparations continued and he tested the sensors. He placed the earphones and he lowered the video unit, attaching it to the holopsych helmet. Then he placed the thin clear tubes in each of her nostrils and below her tongue. Now they were ready.

Her favourite scenarios were those of the greatest visual sweep and isolation: space, oceans, the desert, the arctic, the plains, the tundra, moonscapes. His other patients, seeking diversion from the remote landscape of the training base, asked for crowds, cities, filled stadiums; one of the most popular was a fussy collection of Victorian rooms filled with bric-a-brac, draperies, and too much overstuffed furniture. But in Margo's holopsych fantasies she was often the only person, in a land-rover or on a horse, alone at the space station console she knew so well, or in a small sailboat or on top of a mountain. Sometimes he attempted to insert into the dream a hologram companion or a group, but this often led to some violent confrontation or to the end of the fantasy. These deviations from the norm were supposed to be reported, but Dr. Jagger did not want her cut from the programme. It would kill her, he thought, and, as he realized later, he loved her.

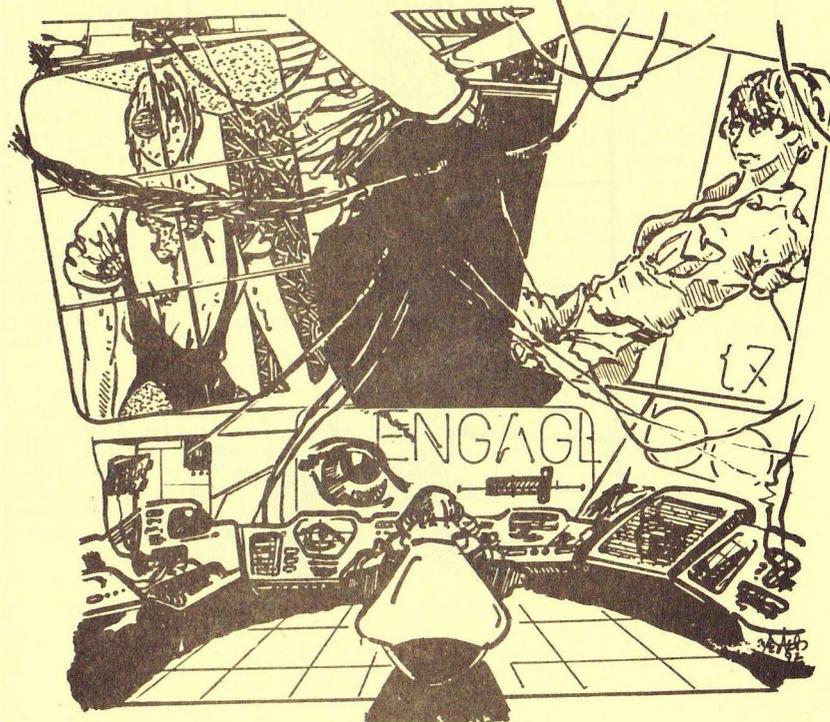
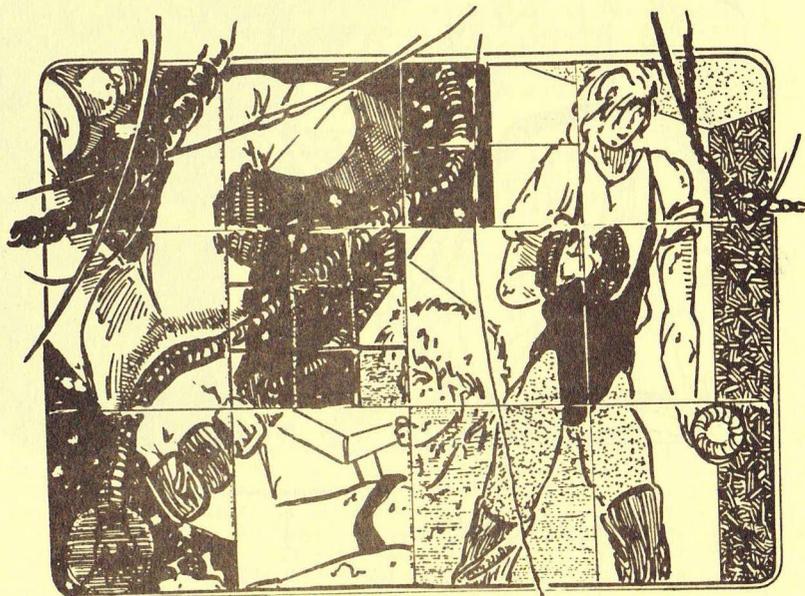
Once, during his walk in the desert, Dr. Jagger thought he saw a car approach in a cloud of dust on the highway. He jumped below a ridge to wait for it to pass. It was a small black pick-up truck, he saw, with tinted windows. He watched as it drove up the small side-road and stopped near the padlocked main gate. Two women emerged from the car and stepped up to the gate. They had very closely cropped hair, and they wore white jump-suits and mirrored sunglasses that reflected the desert sun like lasers. One of the women looked through the gate towards the buildings with a pair of binoculars, scanning and speaking while the other consulted a clip-board. Although he couldn't see at this distance, he assumed they wore NASA logos.

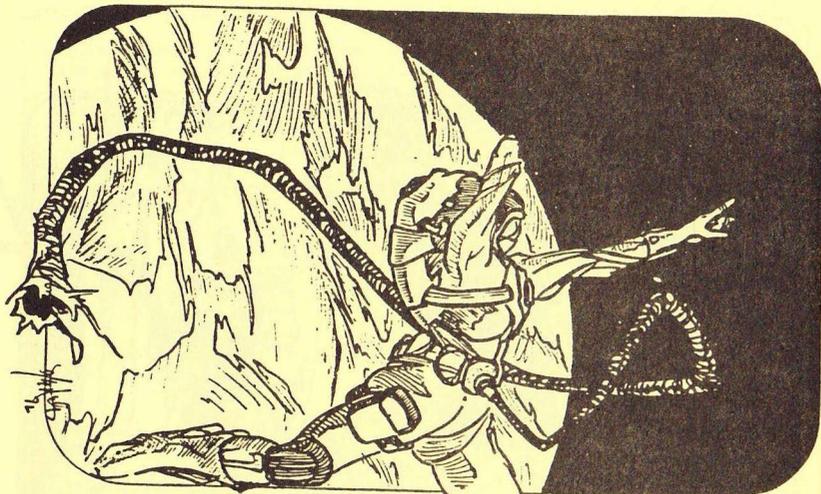
"Shall we talk about it? Anything you want to say?"

That morning, playing tennis with another communications specialist, Ludmilla Pelc, Margo has lost control. While rushing the net, Margo had viciously slashed at the ball with a two-handed return, smashing the ball into Ludmilla's eye. Just before Margo arrived for the holopsych session, Dr. Jagger heard about the incident and that Ludmilla was taken to a military hospital; she would probably be out of the space station programme for good.

"Nothing. I'm sure you understand it better than I do." Margo stared at the overhead mirror while he removed the sensors from her body, took away the headphones and tubes.

Not surprisingly, she chose the space station scenario when she arrived; he said nothing about the incident in the tennis court. But when she was well into her dream he inserted the hologram of Ludmilla sitting at the control panel of the station. Ludmilla was staring at a screen and talking into a small mike; she turned and said something dismissive and haughty about Margo. Margo rose from the communications console and stood behind Ludmilla; very calmly, without signs of passion, she pushed Ludmilla's face into the computer screen. While the hologram Margo smiled and went back to her console in the space station, both the real Margo and the hologram Ludmilla screamed for a tense minute or so, and then Margo came out of the fantasy and wanted to stop the session.





If Dr. Ferenczi found out about this dream and her violence Dr. Jagger would probably have been tried for criminal negligence after all. But after viewing it a few times and speaking further with Margo off the record, away from the holopsych room, he erased the entire record of the session.

Throughout the time he was under "protective watch," as they called it, used as a witness and scapegoat during the various hearings and Congressional Investigations looking into the space station murders, he was kept in a special hospital room. Outside were Federal Marshalls or FBI; in his room, in the halls, wherever he went, there were closed circuit TV cameras; whenever he left the building to be taken to court or a hearing there were dozens of video cameras of journalists to greet the car. It helped him understand Margo a bit more.

Margo was never shy about the cameras which were throughout the training base. All of the tests for potential space station crew were videotaped and she often watched these in a viewing booth, freeze-framing her favourite expressions or most dramatic moments. She liked seeing the faces of her fellow trainees when they were undergoing artificial gravity or powerful centrifugal force, the rippled and distorted foreheads and cheeks, the clenched teeth and stretched lips. Her instructors thought highly of the time she spent in the viewing booth because they thought she was trying to perfect her own performances.

She didn't mind the hundreds of hours of tape Dr. Jagger collected of her; and while she was rarely forthright or revealing outside of the holopsych room, on tape she spoke freely about her feeling toward the others, about her fears, about her sublimated violence. On the four occasions Dr. Jagger visited her after she left the space station training base, just before her last and fatal trip, he noted how uneasy and lacking she seemed without a camera or two to capture the moment.

Her last film was one she directed just before the so-called "rescue mission" reached the disabled station. As communications specialist, she kept a steady stream of video images of horrific and rambling talk directed towards satellites and earth receivers. She edited the images, cut to show what was going on with the other specialists and the pilots, the engineers.

She didn't show the plastic explosives she had packed around the airlocks to greet the men from the rescue mission. But she did replay Commander Breitkorp heading toward the sun, and the construction crew, without their spacewalking equipment, locked in the airlock, mouths without sound. She wore her mirrored sunglasses, recited poetry, discussed ice cream and her own desert places, her delight in vigorous tennis, and her feelings about the moon.

Dr. Jagger was lying on the holopsych couch, crashing waves sounding through the earphones. The video unit was clamped to the holopsych helmet and through the tube in his nostril he could smell the chemically simulated ocean spray, almost feel the motion of the ship. He was watching Margo in a black bikini and mirrored sun-glasses walking along the otherwise empty deck of a silent and smoothly racing sailboat. He had made a new and entirely cheerful holotape about thirty-five hours long, splicing together her favourite scenarios and her favourite costumes and events, using the exotic stock footage of the ocean and mountain tops or imagined planet-scapes. He spliced in conversations from their sessions together which sometimes were very odd in combination with the beautiful scenery and Margo's generally happy facial expressions. She turned to him on the deck and pointed to something in the distance, off "camera." He was reflected in her mirrored lenses. His own voice came through the earphones, startling him. "The return of the repressed," his voice said.

The footprints, recently made by two women wearing sneakers, were very worrisome to Dr. Jagger. He found the hole they cut in the security fence and he had glimpses of them on two security cameras as they walked around on the outside of the building. Two would-be Margos looking for souvenirs. He waited until he was almost entirely out of food, three days later, before he went outside the building. Most of the time he alternated between checking the security monitors and watching his new tape of Margo. "Memories artificially enhanced," he had once explained to her, when she first started therapy and was suspicious of him. He could take unpleasant memories or fearful episodes, splice them with alternate versions of the scene, using the computer generated holograms, and recreate the scene more authentically than the patient could remember. The new and improved version of the past could be shown to the patient again and again until it replaced the unpleasant real memory. He was finally curing himself, he knew. So that he didn't die from starvation or dehydration, he set the computer to dissolve the loop after three hours.

He drove to a town eighty miles away for supplies, first carefully concealing his tire tracks and relocking the gate. The problem with these small towns was that the store-keepers all asked questions, made conversation. He tried to remember in which town he had passed himself off as a paleontologist, where he had said he was a professor on sabbatical.

After he bought his supplies, mainly dried foods and canned fruits and vegetables, he went to the café for lunch before heading back to the base. Soon after his food was brought to his table he saw the two women, diagonally across the room from him, sitting in a booth, sipping ice tea. They were not in the NASA jump-suits; even out here there must have been a lot of bad publicity and suspicion about "the astronaut cult," as the magazines called it. They wore shorts and T-shirts and seemed like average tourists. When he left they were still there.

An hour later, about thirty miles away from the base, he could see them trailing behind him, the black pickup with its impenetrable tinted windshield reminding him at once of Margo on the deck of the yacht. He considered turning off at an intersection, of spending a few days at distant motels before returning. "I expect they'll get you one day," agent Haldeman had said when they escorted him to the airport after the investigations. "It won't take long," said agent Erlichman. But while he was still considering what action he could take, the black truck suddenly gathered speed, got into the left lane, and passed him with a roar of the engine. "Warp drive," Margo used to say when she drove like that.

Three nights later he was with Margo, camped on a snowy ledge, looking down at clouds and snow-topped mountains thousands of feet below. The sun was going down and they had a small fire going outside of their orange high-tech tent. Margo was sipping from a steaming cup and talking of an incident that took place during her seventh birthday party. He was about to reply when the screen blackened and someone removed the video unit from above his head.

"Dr. Jagger. We are very happy to finally meet you."

Nothing was the same for him after that. At first he thought they were just going to kill him. They both had automatics and seemed to be quite efficient. But instead they wanted to join him in his life at the base, find out all they could about Margo and his relationship with her, all that they felt had been left out of the investigations. They seemed to have memorized every fact in the nearly four thousand pages of the official report that closed the Congressional hearings and almost stopped human space exploration. Their names were Linda and Sharon, but they reminded him of the two FBI agents who had interrogated him.

He could not hide his collection of Margo holograms from them, since he was caught surrounded by them, the new tape he had made of only pleasant "memories" playing through his helmet when they broke in. After a few days he was showing it off, explaining it to them with a director's pride while they viewed the tapes. He found himself wandering around the base at a loss while they used his two holopsych helmets to view the tapes by the hour; alternately prisoner, technician, and servant, he prepared the equipment, started the tape they requested, made alterations, served lemonade.

The shock came when they asked him to edit himself out of the new tape and put them in; they wrote new scripts for the scenarios and made excessive demands. They replaced the holopsych couch with two desks covered with sleeping bags so that they could both receive the same stimulus simultaneously. He filmed them making love and spliced it together so that it looked like they were alternately making love to Margo. Suddenly the yacht deck or the mountain-top seemed overcrowded and he longed to leave.

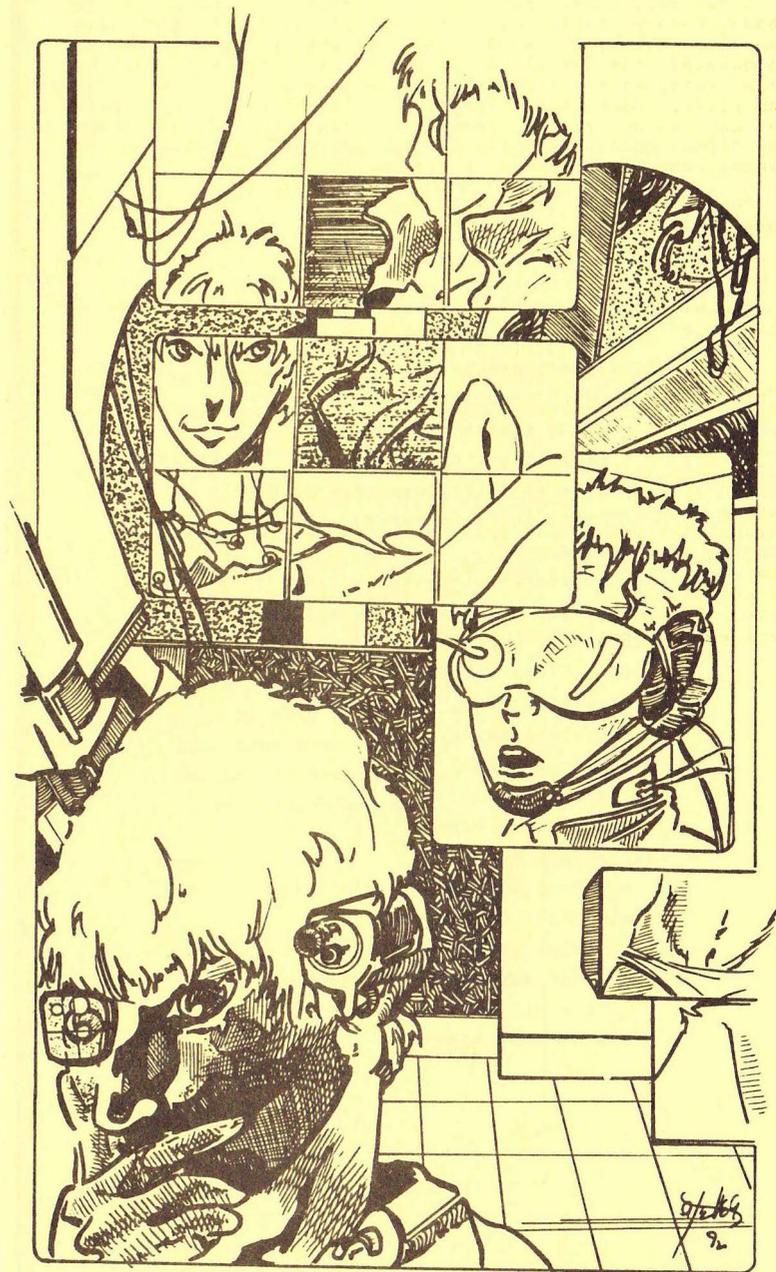
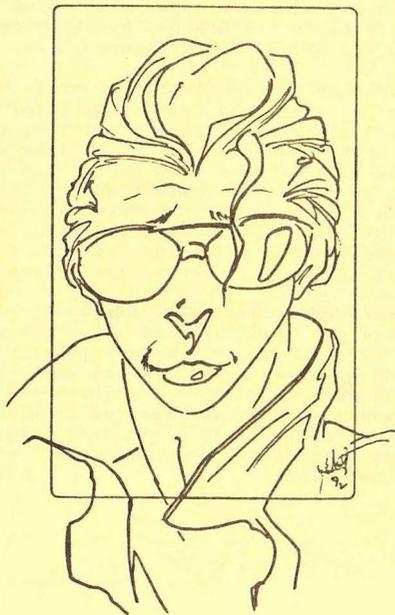
A few days later they asked him to prepare the newly edited "happy memory" tape, now fifty hours long, filled with sensationalist dreck; he couldn't bear it anymore, the tapes were so mangled, the artfulness so distorted. They were waiting impatiently on the sleeping bags, amid their discarded clothes and plastic packaging. They hadn't left the holopsych room for days at a time and rarely dressed or ate. He had prepared the video, checked all the connections, and was setting the timing when Linda pointed a pistol at him.

"Don't set the timer," she said. "We want a continuous loop."

"It's fifty hours."

"We know. We want a continuous loop, and we want you to leave the base. Lock the door behind you."

Dr. Jagger followed their directions. He connected the overhead video unit to their helmets, put on their earphones, placed the nasal tubes. They looked like they were returning to Earth after far too much time in space; too white, very thin, poor muscle tone, slightly bulging eyes. He gathered all of his hologram cubes into the four boxes he used fifteen months earlier when he left his office in Houston. He could make a new tape from the originals. There was a NASA base in Nevada that was closed down when operations on the space station were halted. It should have what he needed. He locked the door to the holopsych room when he left and hid the tire tracks once his car was on the other side of the security gate. A continuous loop. Sometimes patients intuitively knew what was the best treatment for them. Who was he to interfere?



TRAVELLERS

This is what crazy is:
 Animal people colliding --
 Disabled travellers
 in this trainless station
 choking aisles with baggage:
 carpetbags, cardboard boxes, backpacks,
 lizardskin luggage crammed with
 crazy animal memories.

The conductor,
 undecidable platypus, ambiguous amphibian,
 smiles a nondescript duck-look.

Subtracted animals travel together:
 flightless and afraid kiwi,
 barkless dingo, mute giraffe,
 graceless goony,
 blind cavefish,
 limbless snake,
 featherless biped...

All scheduled on
 one long commotion train trip,
 age their only ticket,
 milling, queueing, waiting...

Each year another hole punched
 by the platypus conductor
 and no-one leaves.

-- Alan R. Kaplan --

STALKING

Something entirely different stalks me,
 In the shadows and the daylight;
 Haunting peculiar ironies out of my soul.
 Laughter flees, and, tears, for
 I remain in silence;
 No veil to rend, I feel none there;
 Presence, though, is all too clear,
 Like watery reflection, gone,
 when not directly imaged.
 Tell me, tolling bell, do I
 imagine pre-storm quiet.
 My eye searches; my mind hears
 Chiming of a different kind,
 Like some ghost-elicited scream,
 Or, to the dreamer, only the passing
 of a night's dream.

-- Joy Belsheim --

FESTINA LENTE

Two pure spirits
entered the forest.

On Thursday the 28th.

Just before midnight.

Two saints alone
with only their bodies.

Entering the darkness.

Entering the light.

FUTURE

Why does the moth seek
the transparent flame?

Why does the blue horse run
from meadow to meadow?

The storm clouds drench my soul,
the flower lives in stark reality,
a dead man waits for the twilight.

What are you doing tonight?

-- George Gott --

DRIVING WEST

Just a sunset, goldfish orange
backlighting bruise gray
globules of cloud with jelly
fish tendrils trailing.

Not
so grotesque really. Really
more itself, intractable
and vicious as a hill farm
of spotted cattle in Virginia,
Smokies behind -- as sand dunes
of sea oats, tan girls,
white shells.

A camera
could snap it up, but probably
it'd snap back. Things like this,
warm to look on, eat art.

-- William Green --

On Future History as a Basic S-F Literary Form

by
Joe Christopher

Every regular s-f reader knows what is meant by "future history." It is a series of fictions--perhaps short stories and novelettes, perhaps novels--that depicts a series of developments in an imagined future. There is a thin line that divides this type and a work followed by sequels. Essentially, there must be enough time lapses between stories in a future history to give the effect of cultural changes; a work with sequels, on the other hand, is likely to involve the same protagonist over a fairly short period -- someone's lifetime, for example.

In Brian Aldiss and David Wingrove's Trillion Year Spree there is a comment on Poul Anderson's Technic Civilization series:

We may regard Anderson's attempt to sketch out a future history--from our century to the seventy-second century --as slightly futile. The future is certain to be anything but what we imagine it to be.¹

Very little, if any, of the future is going to be like it is in s-f. If one wants to discuss the utility of s-f, it lies not in its predictive quality, but--as Alvin Toffler and Isaac Asimov have argued separately²--in its preparation for change.

Not being utilitarian, I would like to suggest that a future history is judged in two ways, as individual stories and as a story sequence. Only the latter is my concern here.³

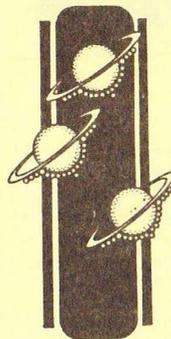
The story sequence is a more complicated topic. Fiction readers are aware of the form: they know James Joyce's Dubliners, Sherwood Anderson's Winesburg, Ohio, James Thurber's My Life and Hard Times --plus more complicated sequences, approaching the length of Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha County series.

I would suggest two possible attitudes toward the future history: that the future repeats the past, with essentially minor variations, or that the future will be radically different from the past. Offhand, a critic might assume that the second type is inherently the better s-f, even though Isaac Asimov's essay, "Social Science Fiction," argues for repetitive cultural developments as a defence of his Foundation series. Despite Asimov, it would be easy to argue that the repetitive cultural thesis belongs to those in s-f who cannot invent really new developments.

I suspect that the future history is sometimes depreciated because of s-f's commercial background. Larry Niven's short article about his Known Space future history ends with five reasons for other s-f writers to create such a series. The fifth reason is most succinct: "They sell."⁴ But there is commercialism involved in almost all fiction production. Both Poul Anderson and John Updike earn their livings by writing. To depreciate the good future histories as hackwork is like lumping Updike's Too Far to Go with the marriage-problem stories in Good Housekeeping.

To return to my basic topic--most discussions of future history begin with Robert Heinlein and his wall chart, imitated from Sinclair Lewis. But I want to start earlier, with H.G. Wells. I believe that Mark Hillegas, in The Future as Nightmare, was the first to point out that Wells wrote a connected series: first came The Time Machine (1895), which traced the future episodically. The first stop is the year A.D. 802,701 in which humankind has degenerated into two species, the Eloi who live a pleasant life above ground and the Morlocks who come out of their caverns to catch and eat the Eloi. The second and third stops are at the end of the world, the latter about A.D. thirty million: the sun has turned red and cooler; the earth has thinner air; humanity has disappeared; at the final stop, most animal life is gone and the cold red sun is huge in the sky, presumably pulling the earth into its dying flames. The motif is that of the memento mori, not a skull for the individual but a dying world for the species.

Wells's other three stories in this future history are laid about the year 2100. These consist of a novel, When the Sleeper Wakes (1899) and two short stories, "A Story of the Days to Come" (1897) and "A Dream of Armageddon" (1901). The main tie to The Time Machine is chapter 21 in When the Sleeper Wakes, where the protagonist visits the underground factories and sees the workers who will evolve -- so the future history implies -- into the Morlocks. "A Dream of Armageddon" depicts the beginning of the fall of this 22nd century society.



Catherine Schubert

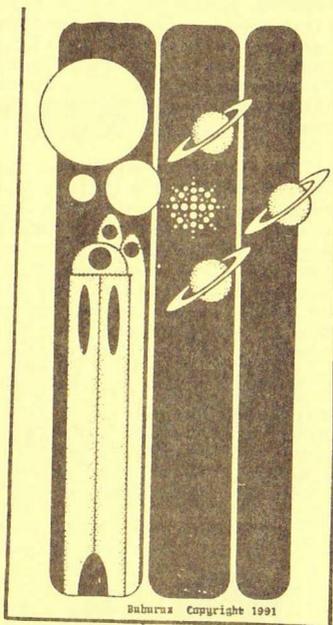
What I find significant in Wells's sequence is that significant changes occur. Our present civilization lasts until the 2100s; it falls and humanity evolves in strange ways by 802,701; by A.D. thirty million, humankind is gone with the dinosaurs and passenger pigeons. and the earth is soon to die.

Let me mention another sequence of only a slightly later date, George Bernard Shaw's Back to Methuselah (1921). Shaw's work is made up of five short plays, which I will call playlets -- each precisely dated on the contents page.⁵ These being Shavian (or intellectual) comedies, they show affinities with Aristophanetic Old Comedy. For example, the first playlet is laid in the Garden of Eden and is dated 4004 B.C.; the fifth playlet has the birth of a young woman -- who looks to be seventeen -- from an egg. (Shaw never explains how such a large egg gets laid.) My point is not that Shaw is borrowing from Aristophanes -- he is not -- but that the same type of satiric fantasy that a reader or playgoer finds in The Frogs or The Clouds is found in this sequence. Thus the tone is different from most s-f.

The second playlet, "The Gospel of the Brothers Barnabas," is laid in Shaw's present day, 1921; in it, what is called a political programme of extending human life to three hundred years is announced. This is actually the call for an evolutionary change, not just politics. In the next playlet, "The Thing Happens," laid in A.D. 2170, several of these mature individuals have appeared. In the fourth, "Tragedy of an Elderly Gentleman," laid in the year 3000, the British Isles and Ireland have become the territory in which dwell those long-lived supermen (to borrow a term from Shavian concerns elsewhere). This drama foreshadows the killing of the short-lived immature humans by the superman -- a touch of Nietzschean amorality, I assume.

The final playlet, "As Far as Thought Can Reach," is laid in A.D. 31,920-- thirty thousand years after the play was written. In this drama, the age of the supermen is no longer limited to 300 years but is endless unless some accident befalls them; the drama predicts the next evolutionary step is to slough off the body entirely, and for these people to become immortal vortices of thought.

What can a critic make of Shaw in this context of future histories? It would be easy to note that his thought can only reach to 31,920, while Wells can imagine to 802,701, as far as humans are concerned, and even to the end of the world in A.D. thirty million. The difference in the time frames, however, is because Wells accepts Darwinian evolution for humans and (one assumes) a likely date for the end of the world according to the science of his day. Shaw, on the other hand, is arguing from a type of idealistic, Lamarckian evolution (cf. Shaw's preface, 14-15, 17-20). That Shaw's theories are, so far as one can judge, pseudo-science rather than science does not wholly invalidate them in art, for the playlets embody an important strand of human desire. Shaw wants evolution to produce human maturity through longer life; this maturity turns out to be primarily a life of thought, not action; finally, these philosophers are to give up their physical life altogether, for an eternal, mental life. Are not these Shavian supermen much like the Gnostics and other Christian heretics who have denied the body, calling it sinful, and asserted the importance of the spirit? For that matter, are they not like Plato's Socrates who, in "The Symposium," advocated climbing the ladder of love, passing from the love of a human body--passing from it and abandoning it--as one moves toward more philosophical loves? Shaw's grotesque images and neo-Lamarckian views should not hide the philosophical thread that ties together the future-history sequence. Shaw has taken a modern generic form to make an ancient point.



For two other examples, I move to modern s-f. Walter M. Miller's *A Canticle for Leibowitz* (1959) is a one-volume future history, made up of three stories that appeared in *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction* in 1955, 1956, and 1957. The book's contents page calls these stories Parts I, II, and III, changing their original titles to "Fiat Homo," "Fiat Lux," and "Fiat Voluntas Tua." The sequence is set in the American southwest after an atomic war had reduced civilization to a fairly primitive level. The stories centre about a Roman Catholic abbey in what seems to have been southern New Mexico.

For my purposes, the plots of the stories do not matter greatly. But the cultural changes from one story to the next are very important. The first story echoes the mediaeval period in Europe. Since Miller wrote these stories before the changes introduced in Roman Catholicism by Vatican II, including the change from Latin to vernaculars in the liturgy, it was appropriate for him to include much Latin in his depiction of this Roman Catholic future (e.g., a devotional manual, 8-9). But the basic indication of the mediaevalism being invoked is in a history of the deliberate destruction of knowledge--especially books--after the atomic war. The setting of the first story is "after six centuries of darkness" (54). In short, in America as in Europe, the monasteries are the centres of what written culture remains, after a Dark Age. In this particular monastery, the monks make handcopies of ancient works--algebra texts and blue-prints, for example (56,61)--as monks in mediaeval times copied classical texts.

The second story is set in A.D. 3174, and it recapitulates the Renaissance period, the rise of technology and of uncontrolled nation states. The third story is set 607 years later, and it imitates the modern period with spaceships, euthenasia -- and atomic bombs. Miller's book obviously is one of those future histories that recapitulates the past. He intends to warn his readers: his retelling clarifies the historical patterns he sees, and ends with a statement about the destructive nature of a secular, power-based society. By projecting that human society has destroyed itself once and destroys itself more completely the second time, Miller is giving a warning to the present day--and the historical repetition is obviously valid for his purposes.

If Miller's repetition is valid, what about the more common variety of rewriting the past into the future? Damon Knight, in his answer to Isaac Asimov, asserts, "history does not repeat." But there are those who say that it does. Consider Poul Anderson's Technic Civilization series, which Aldiss and Wingrove were complaining about. Anderson's is one of the most elaborate future histories in s-f, consisting of (at my last count) twenty-seven short stories or novelettes and fourteen novels. No one, I think, would argue that Anderson is a writer at the level of the three just discussed. He is a typical popular writer, turning out s-f adventure stories or s-f puzzle-suspense stories for commercial reasons. But he is also typical of some popular writers in that he mixes his entertainments with some stories that say and mean a goodly amount more. After all, Graham Greene used to separate his book-length fictions into "Novels" and "Entertainments." Anderson's percentage of meaningful works is not as high as Greene's, and he tends to make his serious points as minor parts of his conventionally structured stories. However, neither of these quibbles invalidates the basic comparison to Greene. A basic contrast may be added. Primarily, Anderson is concerned with the socio-economics and the politics of this world, not with faith and sin.

Thus, in his Technic Civilization series, Anderson has sketched a cycle of an interstellar society's "rise, ruin, decay, and fall." Most of the stories divide into two clusters--the "earlier" concerning a still strong mercantile civilization that has failed to solve a basic problem and is beginning to falter; the "later," an empire that has developed and is still shifting from enlightened to oppressive. I will not try to sort the meaningful from the merely entertaining in Anderson's fiction, for, with one exception (cited below), I am interested in the sequence as a whole.

In his essay, Anderson has tied his understanding of these cycles to the work of a modern historian, John K. Hord, who has developed a more complicated version of Toynbee's scheme of a basic pattern of a civilization. Thus, Anderson is saying, based on appeal to authority, that history does repeat itself. His basic sequence which shows this repetition runs from A.D. 2150 until 3047. There are three stories--from A.D. 3600 to 4000--which follow after the fall of the empire, plus a final story, "Starfog," dated A.D. 7100. About this final story, Anderson says that it "hints that it may, after all, be possible to make an entirely new beginning, one that breaks away from the old cycle" of a civilization's growth failure, decay, and fall. "That beginning is founded on freedom."

In what I believe to be the basic passage in this story, the protagonist explains his civilization to another human who has lived in a lost, isolated planetary culture:

"Civilization's gotten too big out there for anything but freedom to work. The commonality isn't a government. How would you govern ten million planets? It's a private, voluntary, mutual-benefit society, open to anyone anywhere who meets the modest standards. It maintains certain services for its members, like my own space rescue work. The services are widespread and efficient enough that local planetary governments also like to hire them. But I don't speak for my civilization. Nobody does... In the same way, we can't have a planned interstellar economy. Planning breaks down under the sheer mass of detail when it's attempted for a single continent. History is full of cases. So we rely on the market, which operates as automatically as gravitation. Also as efficiently, as impersonally, and sometimes as ruthlessly--but we didn't make this universe. We only live in it." (pp. 261-2)

Anderson's own political philosophy is libertarianism (*ibid.*, 9), and I think it is obvious that he is writing his own position into this last story. Whether or not a huge enough civilization allows for any other means of organization is a different question. At the moment, with the aid of computers, we are trying our best to keep much of a continent organized. But Anderson's projection is an interesting one and a fitting conclusion to a largely political future history which, because of Anderson's understanding of civilization's patterns, up to that point had recapitulated earthly motifs.^B

There are several other future histories that could be discussed--those by Heinlein and Niven are particularly appealing--but they would not change the basic patterns established here. Wells presents evolutionary changes in humanity; Shaw presents a different, more optimistic view of human evolution; Anderson in his last story suggests a basic political change. If humankind tends to repeat the past, the future history can also show this--either for instruction, as in Anderson's occasionally meaningful earlier stories, or for warning, as in Miller's.

But I must confess that my heart belongs with those sequences that show changes, basic changes in humanity. If s-f is primarily a fictional mode that depicts change, then I believe that the future history is the best structure to depict it.

FOOTNOTES

- 1) Brian Aldiss and David Wingrove, Trillion Year Serec: The History of Science Fiction (New York: Atheneum, 1985), p. 314.
- 2) Isaac Asimov, "Social Science Fiction," Modern Science Fiction, ed. Reginald Bretnor (New York: Coward-McCann, 1953); Alvin Toffler, Future Shock (New York: Random House, 1970).
- 3) I should mention that in terms from Northrop Frye's Anatomy of Criticism, s-f tends to be anatomies or romances, or quirky combinations of the two, not novels as purely understood or confessions. Frye suggests that anatomies call for different critical emphases from novels, which explains some problems mainline critics have with s-f (312-313).
- 4) Larry Niven, "Future Histories," SFWA: Bulletin of the Science Fiction Writers of America, 14: 3/71 (Fall 1979), 15-16.
- 5) Bernard Shaw, Back to Methuselah: A Metabiological Pentateuch (1921), Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1970.
- 6) A somewhat messy chronological chart appears in the front of The Earth Book of Stormgate (New York: Berkeley Publishing Corp., 1978), ix-xii, listing all the fiction then published in this future history. At least one novel has appeared since then, The Game of Empire (New York: Baen Books, 1985).
- 7) Poul Anderson, "Concerning Future Histories"--in the SFWA Bulletin cited above--p.6.
- 8) Brian Aldiss and David Wingrove (*op. cit.*, p.482) fault Anderson's future history, and two others, for neglecting changes in human psychology due to developments in genetic studies. Such an objection is legitimate in its way, but Anderson's isolation of political motifs may say more to modern readers than a more genuinely extrapolative future history.
- 9) Implicit in this essay is an emphasis on closure; Wells ends the world; Shaw has humanity shuck off its physical aspects; Miller has another atomic war (with monks and some others escaping in a spaceship), and Anderson has an implementation of libertarianism. Niven has a logical (if gimmicky and unrealistic) closure to his Known Space series with the spread of a gene for good luck, which ends all adventures. For many years Heinlein had a final story listed in his "The Past through Tomorrow" future history chart (reprinted in most early volumes in the series): "Da Capo." He finally used "Da Capo" as the final section title in Time Enough for Love (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1979), but then went on to write other related volumes. His series has no logical end.

SHADOW CHANGES

Father Noon is landlord of my lot
 I listen to him mellow
 speaking
 it is whitest pearls draped on
 sparkling chains far outside the frigid city
 alluring, yes
 my warm summer has come this way
 sliding into the centre
 of my life --
 what a sun, swinging its brilliant lantern
 before my eyes
 "once" is honey, I need to smile
 "twice" is joyous pleasure, I need to laugh
 and then
 the simplest of things occurs
 a flower comes
 its jaws gentle white-cast teeth
 from inside it a girl comes forth
 breathing delicacies into my breath
 mint tasting --
 only scantily clothed
 her finely proportioned body
 calling me away, beyond
 we move into a whitewash-stuccoed villa
 overlooking six hills of Rome
 the daylight says it will stay
 highmost noon --
 I am the Landlord now
 we have plentiful flowers of fragrance
 all firm-green stemmed
 topped with purest white
 far distant
 in the fertile valley a city seems in ruins
 we dare not mention our solitude
 we must not speak of the seasons
 curving far away from summer
 back into silence

-- Jim DeWitt --

THE SLEEPERS

They sleep in the afternoon
 all the aged progenitors
 mothers of the world
 fathers of the universe
 unite
 in a single snore
 louder than thunder
 endlessly rolling
 reverberating across
 the long soft pat paws of rain
 drowning out the sound
 of dogs chewing Alpo
 softly breathing the world's breath
 on a solitary afternoon
 when the rain falls
 incessantly.

-- Hillary Bartholomew --

ZOMBIES

Marionettes, unstrung,
 Long-bodies, loose-jointed,
 Climb the hill from the barracks
 To work the fields, the factories,
 Blank-eyed at their places
 With hoes or wrenches; no gloves
 needed for them.

The sun shines, but they don't see.
 Daylight cannot rouse them.
 The light of tools, of machines
 is the only glow that warms them.
 Stone-faced, lack-limbed puppets,
 They move with untutored grace:
 Hired muscle only.

The sun sets. Owners weary.
 The doors open to twilight
 And the men, like carvings, go
 Out of the fields, the factories,
 Down the hill to the barracks;
 Lie down on the bare-board cots--
 Filmed eyes staring.

-- Brian E. Drake --

THE INCUBUS

A wound festers. A sky darkens.
 An incubus, fleet of foot and deed,
 Does his duty, leaves his seed, makes his escape.
 A conscience, self-torn, screams:
 A maiden wakes, shudders. But wait, she thinks:
 Was that a dream -- or was it real?
 Or: Was it both?

To know becomes her essence.

A trip to the mirror provides no answer.
 For the mirror reveals two faces: the maiden's own,
 And one that melts in and out of it.
 She can't be sure if the face, blurred, is hers.
 Suddenly it focuses: Now, it is hers.
 The face is ugly: the ugly is hers.
 "Who are you?" asks the maiden. "I am you," says the face.
 "And you, me. For beauty and corruption
 Exist in the same vessel. As here."
 The face flames: The maiden cries
 "Wait! Do not leave, nor die; for me you are,
 And beauty is naught less the ugly contrast."
 The flames die. Ugly-face returns, leers,
 Reaches with cloven hands
 And clutches her face, irredeemably, into his:
 "No contrast. No contrast at all."
 Again the face flames: it disappears not.

The maiden wakes. Looks. Wonders at the blackened mirror
 And the charred remnant of her face.

-- Richard F. LaMountain --

Fritz Leiber . Swordsman and Philosopher

by

Justin Leiber

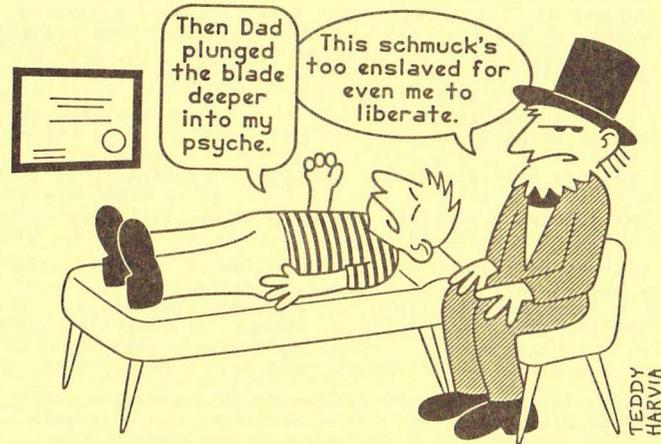
Part Two: Philosophical Dramatizations

Standing just outside his ramshackle cubical in Building 20, the dilapidated barracks-like MIT structure that housed the most substantial braintrust in linguistics and cognitive science in the world, George A. Miller, the grand old man of American cognitive psychology, looked down at me out of his gaunt Lincolnesque face. He grinned, handed back the MS, and remarked that I had probably got the equivalent of two years of psychoanalysis by writing "Fritz Leiber and Eyes" (N. Smith, ed., *Philosophers Look at Science Fiction* (Chicago: Norton, 1982)). I am not sure that George is right about that; though the experience may have been a liberating one, it did leave a scar. More amusing, in retrospect, is what I missed in that examination of my father's life and writing.

Most sons, especially only sons, have trouble growing in the light cast by a brilliant and successful father. My problem was made additionally acute in two further ways. One, Fritz was strikingly handsome and tall (you can see him as a young man, standing next to Robert Taylor, in one scene in the Greta Garbo *Camille*--Fritz so much taller that they had Taylor stand on a box, concealed by the wedding table they stood behind). Two, even my school compatriots in their early teens read and greatly admired my father's stories. It is perhaps natural that I did not for one moment, as a boy or young man, consider writing s-f or fantasy, though at age nineteen I did embark on one abortive and pretentious "mainstream" novel in which four characters took ninety pages merely to show up at a party. Instead, I did a BA and PhD in philosophy at the University of Chicago, and later a B. Phil. in the same subject at Oxford; and I have taught and published philosophy since the early 1960s, now from the University of Houston. Mostly I've written about language and mind, and the nature and strength of the claims scientists make about such topics (my most recent book is *An Invitation to Cognitive Science* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1991)).

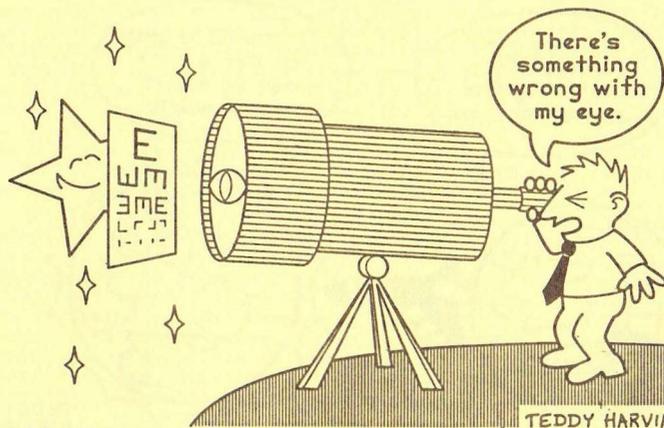
The financial crisis of City University of New York in 1975 jolted me out of what had seemed a secure position. Noam Chomsky got me a Visiting Scientist position at MIT (where I got to know George Miller), but with the state of the academic job market, my future seemed uncertain. Indeed, it took a year and a half for me to find a permanent position. In the meantime, at Cambridge, I perforce had time to think and write.

Without at all realizing what I might be about, I accepted an invitation to write several short scientific/philosophical articles for *Galileo Magazine*, and later, in April 1978, I wrote "Fritz Leiber and Eyes." The short articles about cloning and about the mind as the brain's software provided the conceptual background for the s-f novel begun that summer, *Beyond Rejection* (New York: Ballantine, 1980).



But I suspect that the much longer piece about Fritz provided much more of the intellectual and emotional realignment that enabled me to sit down and write, with no revision, an s-f novel, the first piece of fiction I'd tried to write since my teens. There's in fact a spooky background to the transition, just the sort of spookiness that I want to discuss in Fritz's own writings.

The principal metaphor of my piece about Fritz employed telescopes and eyes--or rather one particular telescope, a large portable refractor that I'd given Fritz, and one particular eye, Fritz's left one. Fritz had told me that the telescope helped him detect a macular degeneration in his left eye. In everyday life, using both eyes, he noticed nothing. But looking through the telescope with his left eye alone, he noticed something astronomically odd, and worked back to the conclusion that something was amiss with his eye. Now this seemed to me to be a good metaphor for the activity of the artist. To the degree that his art is clear and precise, he may be able to retrace himself, in the strange worlds he creates (moreover, his art is also a process of turning himself into the created worlds, like Jorge Borges in his "Borges and I").



At the end of "Fritz Leiber and Eyes" I issued a kind of incantation, asking that his still-to-be-written stories grab hold of his fingers and set them once more on the typewriter keys, particularly since this was his salvation from misery and alcoholism. I wrote much of the last half of this article in a state of great excitement, much as we are told a wizard might undertake an incantation--in one stretch staying at my typewriter from 4 PM until 8:30 AM. Indeed it is the one period of my life when I enjoyed easy access to cocaine. A few days after finishing the article, I noticed that if I closed my right eye and looked at a regular pattern, such as a brick wall, there was a distortion, for a small blood vessel in my left eye had ruptured.

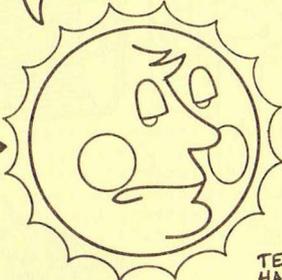
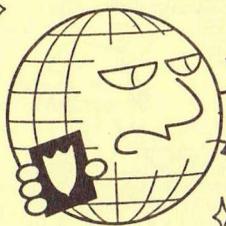
Of course, as a naive scientific realist and sceptic, I don't believe there's any plausible evidence of extra-sensory perception, let alone for incantations, sendings, astrology, numerology, ghosts, gods, and the like. And yet, some things did happen. My father called me to say that he had begun writing fiction again after a dry spell of some months. And I certainly went on to begin Beyond Rejection.

In fact, my naive scientific realism and philosophical scepticism are in some respects at war. For the naive scientific realist believes that, at least at anything above the sub-atomic level, the universe is a physical and deterministic affair; it runs by physical laws, whether we speak of human, ant, or billiard-ball behavior, and we know some of these laws, and in Laplacian principle, may eventually know all of them, in their eternal definiteness. There is simply no place for the supernatural, for magic or super-physical creatures. And yet, philosophical scepticism can make one very uneasy about the whole option of scientific law and about any pretensions that one does or can know what these laws actually are.

Descended from David Hume's scepticism about causality, the dominant school in the philosophy of science for much of this century has been logical positivism. In its view there simply aren't any laws of nature in the naive scientist's sense. The "laws" of Mathematics and logic are simply the upshot of our linguistic conventions: they hold only so long as we play the language game the way we do. And the "laws" of physics, chemistry, etc. represent merely some long run coincidences that we've noticed in our environment: there is no logical guarantee whatsoever that any of these regularities will continue in the next hour. As my Oxford tutor, Sir Alfred Ayer, put it in a recent book on probability, my belief that the sun will rise tomorrow because of the "laws" of motion is ultimately no better based than the savage's conviction it will rise because he's prayed.

You're under arrest for violating the laws of motion.

If you're trying to get a rise out of me, it won't work.



TEDDY
HARVIA

Still more recent philosophical views make scientific laws logically respectable but only at extraordinary cost. It is currently fashionable to say that a scientific law (a statement of physical or mathematical necessity) purports to state what happens to be true in this particular universe but also in every one of an infinite number of universes that are suitably like this one. Since we can't look at other possible universes through telescopes, this seems to rescue scientific law and determinism at the cost of making it irreducibly uncertain what these law are.

The reader may well ask, So what about Fritz's s-f? What did you miss in your article about him? And why are you blathering on about naive scientism and philosophical scepticism?

While I had much to say in "Fritz Leiber and Eyes" about Fritz's works, and the relationship between his works and his life, I failed, for what might seem psychiatric reasons, to see the most distinctive general feature of his s-f, what sets him off from other writers in the field. Most s-f writers write as, and very likely are, naive scientific realists; they have very little in the way of philosophical scepticism and lack a general concern with the logical character of scientific explanation. But Fritz is a naive scientific realist with only a part of his mind; he is very much taken up with philosophical scepticism about the logical character of scientific explanation -- and since he is a superb writer of fiction, these concerns are dramatized. Quite simply, he is the most distinctively philosophical of all s-f writers. I mean philosophical in the modern, academic, and sceptical sense indicated above, not in the anti-scientific manner of religious writers, mystics, existentialists, etc.

In view of his academic education, this is not surprising. Exceptionally, particularly for writers of his generation, Fritz did a first class degree, with honours, in philosophy at the University of Chicago, with a year of graduate work in philosophy and psychology. While more recent writers have been university educated, very few have done philosophy. (Indeed, in 1960 from the podium of a University of Chicago classroom, the antequely gracious Professor Charner Perry remarked that he had been impressed by comments by my father in that same classroom thirty years before.)

Sigmund Freud once remarked that paranoia is a caricature of philosophy. There is no better illustration of this than Fritz's short novel, You're All Alone (1950, expanded for book publication into The Sinful Ones, Fritz dissenting from the retitling and some other changes). Here we find dramatized solipsism and Leibnizian pre-established harmony. As the protagonist finds out, the other people of the world are not really alive. They do not actually see or touch or hear other people but move about as if they do, all in a ballet that seems to but does not actually involve interaction of mind and body. The protagonist is able to break out into real existence, only to find himself threatened by a small band who have also broken out, and intend to exploit the situation.

I take it that Freud's remark about paranoia and philosophical scepticism meant that even when Hume (or Descartes) argues that he has no conclusive evidence of the existence of other minds, he puts this as a cool, general intellectual point, and doesn't think the world might actually be conspiring against him. But Descartes does, of course, write of a possible malignant demon, bent on confusing him. And Hume remarks toward the end of his Treatise that he becomes so enfevered by his solipsistic speculations that he requires some beer and backgammon before calming down.

Indeed, one line of recent criticism of Cartesian scepticism is that Descartes' doubt is unreal because he doesn't act like someone who is seriously committed to such a doubt, someone who presumably would be very frightened. Fritz is a dramatizer of philosophy, and his protagonist and through him, his reader, becomes frightened indeed. (Fritz has required a lot stronger comfort than beer, though lately has been content with backgammon -- and of course, chess, that favourite of philosophers and cognitive scientists.)

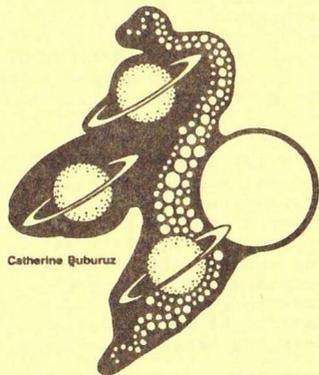
Fritz's first novel, *Conjure Wife* (1943), is infused with the issue of scepticism and scientific explanation when concerned with witchcraft. The young anthropologist, Norman Saylor, rumages in his wife's dresser and finds magical paraphernalia. Frightened that Tansy is going insane, he convinces her to give up her superstitious devices. His previous "good luck" suddenly seems to go very bad. He receives one piece after another of less and less ambiguous evidence that faculty wives are all using magic to advance and protect their husbands. Tansy sacrifices herself in a desperate last attempt to save Norman, and he uses symbolic logic to find an Ur-spell to revive her. The novel is a dramatization of the philosophical issue: what evidence should incline a sceptical scientist to accept the existence of magic and how is this consistent with an enlarged view of science?

From the scientific philosophical viewpoint, the great problem about magic is the lack of replicability. Historically, there have been a great number of event sequences that suggest magical, supernatural, and ESP causality. The sceptic replies that these are statistically-explicable coincidences (and deliberate fakery), and challenges whether any such sequences can be produced, again and again, in clear-cut laboratory conditions. It is patent that such replications have failed.

Fritz produces what is perhaps the most general straightforward explanation of this failure. Namely, magical causality is time-sensitive in a way that ordinary physical causality is not, so replication requires a much more complicated methodology. Thus it may be (as it is for some code-entry systems) that you have to add a new twist each time you try to repeat a magical incantation. Fritz pays magic much more respect than the ordinary fantasist accords it: if magic is indeed real, a re-evaluation that squares it with familiar scientific knowledge must be produced. Fritz caters to the very unwilling and philosophic suspension of disbelief, the one with serious philosophical and scientific requirements.

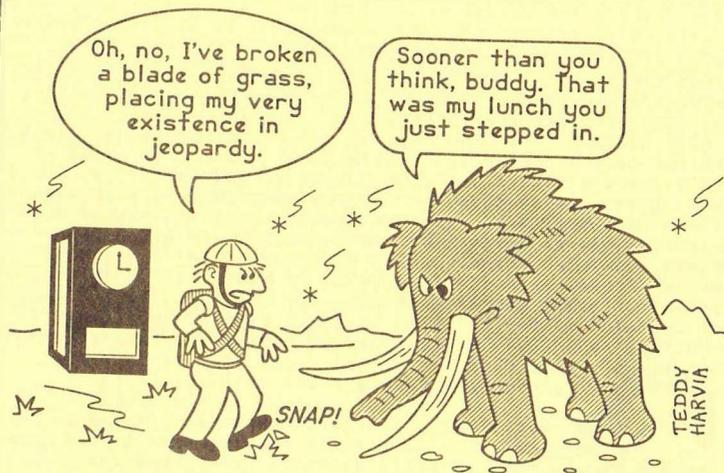
The Big Time (1958) is widely regarded as Fritz's masterpiece of philosophical dramatization. A slim volume with all the classical unities of space and time, it reads like a playscript and has been performed by amateur and professional companies. Indeed, Fritz read it to me the day he finished it; one golden afternoon in the summer of 1957. At eighteen, I had finished my third year at the University of Chicago.

The setting is the Place, a recreational and staging area, outside the normal space-time continuum, to which Soldiers, who have been yanked from their normal lives before their deaths, return from and rejoin the Change War, fought through all history, ultimately a battle of the Snakes and Spiders, permanently mysterious entities with unknown motives.



Catherine Iquburuz

Science-fiction is replete with time travel stories in which the traveller breaks a blade of grass in the Stone Age and thereby produces huge changes in present-day history, including, perhaps, the non-existence of the time-traveller and his machine. What Fritz suggests is that if time travel is possible, then this means in effect that the whole space-time continuum exists in some higher simultaneity. Fritz suggests a generalization of the non-historical conservation laws into the Law of Conservation of Reality: a change at any point in time is minimally accommodated by the rest of the continuum. For example, in a Change War short story, "Try and Change the Past" (1958), a Soldier tries to reverse his death in ordinary space-time, preventing his angry wife from shooting him, but reality conserves itself minimally by having a bullet-sized meteor hit him just as his wife's bullet would have.



The Big Time is animated by a general sceptical uncertainty about reality, but two additional specific philosophical themes appear: uncertainty about personal identity and about good and evil. The narrator, Grete Forzane, remarks, "Have you ever worried about your memory, because it doesn't seem to be bringing you exactly the same picture of the past from one day to the next? Have you ever been afraid that your personality was changing because of forces beyond your control? Have you ever thought that the whole universe might be a crazy, mixed up dream?" (Though passing my comprehensive exams for the Ph.D. when I just turned twenty-one, I did not until now reflect that exposure to Fritz might just have taught me a lot about philosophy.)

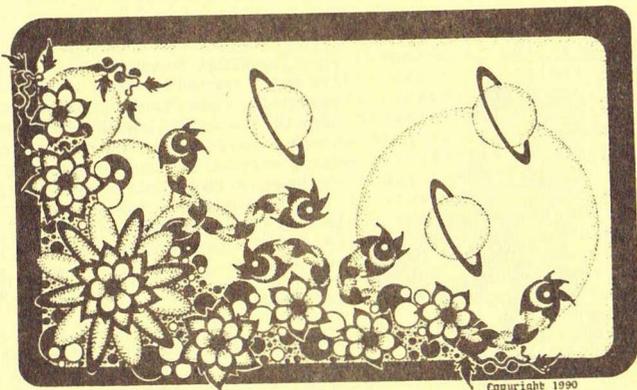
Although Descartes doubted whether he dreamed or experienced a real world, he did not take Hume's sceptical step of doubting whether his personal identity had any settled structure. Here, and in several other stories, Fritz dramatizes this particularly unsettling scepticism.

In many s-f stories, we don't learn who the good and bad guys are until the climax. But the Change War stories are unusual in that we never learn. Uncertainty about who's really doing right or wrong, about what the real results of our actions, about the real character of the forces to which we give our allegiance, is a permanent feature of Fritz's Change War universe. The irreducible moral uncertainty is a major and distinctive feature of many other of his stories.

In his most recent novel, Our Lady of Darkness, Fritz returns again to the philosophical concern with witchcraft. But there is a major additional twist. Fritz weaves together actual historical persons with possible and invented ones, real historical events with possible and invented ones, in such a way that the reader (and perhaps the writer as well) cannot at all tell where "fact" and "likelihood" leave off and "invention" begins. The protagonist, a fantasy writer, is eventually attacked by demonic forces materialized in a swirling pile of paperback horror stories.

What distinguishes all these works from naive scientific realist fiction is their philosophical dimension of doubt and irreducible uncertainty. Hegel wrote that the owl of Minerva takes wing with the shades of night. Fritz's deepest visions are dark ones, full of the ominous uncertainties of our times distilled into philosophical narratives. Of course, some of Fritz's stories have a delightful, giddy, and optimistic character. But one does have the feeling that these are time-outs from the real business, like the drunk porter in Macbeth or the gravedigger in Hamlet, or the comedies with which the Athenians tempered three days of tragedies. In "Catch that Zeppelin" Fritz tells of visiting me in Manhattan in 1971, only to have himself change into a no-war and no-pollution 1940s minor Zeppelin executive, name of Adolf Hitler, on a visit to his dutiful son. But in the (for me, certainly) hair-raising "Ghost Light" Fritz puts all of his guilt over my mother's death into a frighteningly dark partial self-portrait.

David Hume connected scepticism about the external world and personal identity with scepticism about causality and good and evil. Though some of Fritz's novels lack the first two, they nonetheless stress the third and fourth.



C. Baburus

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Science-fiction is full of novels in which the protagonist and a small band of conspirators free "the people" from an evil dictatorship. Such stories reveal and reinforce a naive scientific view that societies are run and changed by technological elites; revolution occurs when good, fresh elites take over the dumb masses from evil elites.

In A Specter is Haunting Texas Fritz satirizes this idea nearly as much as he satirizes the Lyndon Johnson presidency. He imagines a Texas that has annexed the rest of the U.S. and Canada (except for the Black republics of California and Florida), a Texas ruled by eight-foot-tall, hormone-hyped Anglos, served by "bent-back" Mexicans. His protagonist Scully, a skeletal visitor from the weightless satellite community, becomes a kind of mascot for the bent-back revolutionaries. But there is no clearly successful revolution, nor does one finally feel any assurance about what must happen, nor whether it will be for the best.

In one of his earliest works, Gather Darkness (1943), Fritz does seem to adopt the formula. A religious elite uses technology concealed as miracles to keep the population docile; the revolutionaries conceal their technology as satanic witchcraft, the only thing that can make sense to the population (Fritz clearly had in mind French historian Michelet's view of satanism in the Middle Ages). However, all the doubts about causality are there, and the doubt as to whether the new elite will in fact benefit the people.

Of course someone may object that much of s-f is decidedly philosophical, simply because the s-f writer imagines general changes in society or received science. The doyen of naive scientific realist fiction, Robert Heinlein, is clearly doing a remake of Plato's Republic in his juvenile Space Cadet. However, what is distinctively philosophical in modern philosophy (and Fritz) is epistemology, which is to say Cartesian methodological doubt. Of that, there is little trace in Heinlein, excepting his short story "They," nor in most other s-f writers.

In 1936 my mother, Jonquil, initiated the correspondence with H.P. Lovecraft that Fritz and his friend Harry Fischer continued. Fritz, a wiser, humbler person with more formal education than either Lovecraft or Fischer (I think of Fritz as playing Bertrand Russell to several carping Wittgensteins), made much more out of his mentors than they were up to. Lovecraft, who fancied himself as an eighteenth century philosophic gentleman sceptic, wrote of "metaphysical horror." The idea, as Fritz reasonably reconstructed it, was that behind the scientific, law-like character of the universe there brooded chaotic forces, rather than simply physical horrors --Cthulhu rather than simply-savage grizzly bears. What Fritz did was to give real philosophical depth to Lovecraftian horror.

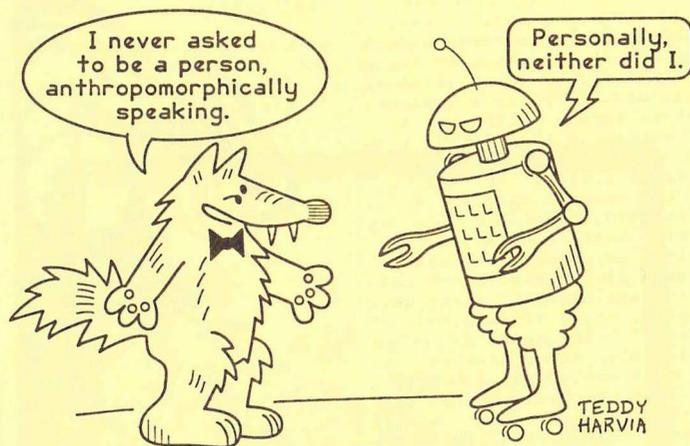


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For one may ask, "Why is chaos horrifying, since it may in its chanciness turn out well for us as commonly as ill?" Lovecraft really had no clear answer to that question. But Fritz does. It is the ultimate Roman Stoicism, the ancient philosophical comfort, to argue that if one understands the world, however bad his material luck, one can be happy. Similarly, Spinoza held that happiness is the unity of the mind with the order of nature.

But what if no reliable knowledge can be obtained? That is the horrifying spectre that Descartes bequeathed to modern philosophy. What if I can't know whether the world as I think of it is there or not, whether there are causal regularities? What if I can't tell what is part of my identity? (Jorge Borges ends his most distinctive work, "Borges and I," with the inevitable sentence, "I don't know which of us is writing this line"--as so often in writing this, I feel I do not know whether I am repeating Fritz or inventing him.)

There is, I think, little doubt that both Descartes and Hume found uncertainty horrifying (natural enough for philosophers)--not physical horror but simply the horror of not knowing what might happen or indeed what has happened. Borges and Fritz are perhaps the only modern writers who capture that peculiarly philosophical sense of amazed unease.



JERUSALEM OF MY DREAM

As far as I can see
there are olive trees,
and green rows of grapes
'til their vines meet the sky;
cucumbers and soft cheese for breakfast.

The hills at sunset turn copper
when the shade comes.
We wake with luminous skins.

I don't know how the dream will end
but, when it does, I hope
the grape arbour is heavy with fruit,
that I will see stones like the ruins
crumble in the back yard,
my neighbour's wash drying
in a sun so magnificent
I can find the Red Sea.

-- Sue Saniel Elkind --

FORCED PASSAGE

Skullbones leer
 through heaving peaks
 and blood torn silk
 skirts the gorging deep.

THE TRADER

Stealing pitch from the night
 and the hooded guards
 is a Makri trader
 for the Queen of Hearts:
 The argot wailer
 cuts the Hanged Ma'n's rope
 with a golden cross
 for the cavern's throat.

-- Malcolm Scott Mac Kenzie --

BEYOND

On this dark night in Bombay
 in this dark night without inside skin-tonic
 on this dark night you ask for poetry
 when there is none, you want a bridal bed of roses
 you want exotic two-way mirrors, you want
 more than God has given us

Related to everyone, wed to no one
 a succession of fine lives unfolds, explodes
 in the exploring of them, a peach of a woman waiting
 from undercover Atlanta, man and his bread alone
 man gone awry in a floral room
 with pink pillowcases

Dawn, empty beds, guests rising
 into tomorrow's slantback moon, the pain of the past
 the pain of the present always with us
 as we lie down among artifacts that cannot help:
 salve, wine, mythology, erotic maidens
 our navigator is walking the plank
 our navigator is from rural North America
 our navigator is from Beyond

And we move out nourished to higher ground
 I think, so rare, these walls are tissue-thin
 I think we are going to pieces in a dream
 I think these nights cannot hold our thunder
 that magic of replenishing, folded away.

-- Errol Miller --

Passion vs. Will:
Homosexuality in Orson Scott Card's Wyrms
 by
 Johnny Townsend

Because so much of Orson Scott Card's works are heavily based upon Mormonism or a system of beliefs compatible with Mormonism, it is interesting to note the occasions when Card veers from acceptable Latter-day Saint doctrine in his stories. One of those instances is in his treatment of homosexuality in the novel *Wyrms* (New York: Tor, 1987).

The First Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints stated in its booklet to Church leaders on the subject of homosexuality that "Some claim homosexually is incurable, therefore they seek to be considered a legitimate minority group protected by law. We should not be deceived by these false rationalizations."¹ "When you reach the point where you justify yourself," said the Church's twelfth president, Spencer W. Kimball, "sear over your conscience, pretend it is not sin, admit that you are licked and that you cannot overcome it -- that is the sad day."² It seems clear, then, what the LDS view is on the subject of homosexuality, but Card, while ambiguous at times on where he stands, does in the end seem to be more tolerant than the Church whose doctrine he injects into most of his writing.

In *Wyrms* there are three characters who are gay, and two characters who appear at least to be bisexual. This in itself is a major statement, as in the majority of Mormon fiction or Mormon writings in general, gays are not treated either well or poorly but are simply not mentioned at all. That Card is willing to discuss a taboo subject in the first place means he is already veering from the standard LDS path.

We are a third of the way into the book before homosexuality is first mentioned, though, a little surprising when we realize that this becomes a major sub-theme by the end of the novel. Tinker, the leader of the gang of robbers in the woods, is a man, according to Reck, who "always had his eye out for a catamite" (121). The innkeeper at the edge of the woods is a little more vague in his description. He isn't sure whether Tinker used to be a royal governor or the royal governor's son, but whichever position he had was lost (he was either kicked out of office or disowned, apparently), when he "was caught sleeping in the wrong bed" (105). He took up a new career soon enough, however, as a thief, so we are hardly meant to feel sorry for Tinker for his loss of position. In the woods, he is clearly intending to kill Patience and her group. He is not respectable or pitiful. He seems to be a corrupt man who chose to be corrupt, the idea of choice becoming increasingly more important as the story progresses. We also can't help but wonder if Card's naming the man Tinker is meant to suggest that the man was tinkering with God's or Nature's order by being gay. This first introduction to the subject of homosexuality then is quite in line with Mormon thought.

But only a few pages later, we see a question raised. Sken, a loud-mouthed human, accuses Reck, a gebling, and Will, another human, of having sexual relations. "Abomination," she says. The villagers sometimes suspect the same thing, so Reck and Will don't "enrage the villagers by flaunting" the fact that they live together (120). The relationship of a human with an almost-human has just an indirect correlation to our world, since many things could be read into it, including miscegenation, obviously, and also the idea of gays, even though Reck is female and Will is male. Certainly, buzz words here are "flaunting" and "abomination," both often associated with homosexuality. This may not be Card's only meaning by the example, but it does seem to be one of the meanings.

What is particularly interesting about this passage is that it could refer to the story of Sodom and Gomorrah. Traditionally, the story tells of how the cities were destroyed for their wickedness, homosexuality in particular. But before this interpretation became popular, another was that the sin of the Sodomites was not their wanting to have sex with male angels, but their wanting to have sex with angels in the first place. By doing so, they were seeking after "strange flesh" (Jude 7), flesh of a different order, and were therefore sinning.³

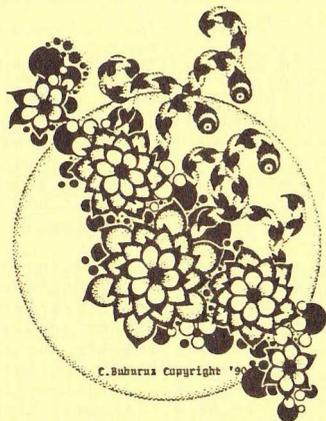
By making Reck and Will's sin this same seeking after strange flesh, perhaps Card is trying to cast doubt on the standard view of the sin of Sodom. At the very least, by his treatment of the episode, he is suggesting that Sken, for her judging nature, is the one at fault. Will and Reck, despite the accusations not only of strangers but also of Reck's brother, Ruin, continue to be friends (138). That their relationship is not sexual though perceived to be could be a statement that straight people should not shy away from friendships with gays, even if other people are whispering. This interpretation is probably not the only idea Card intended by the passage, but it does fit the situation. He clearly is not suggesting that these characters "avoid the appearance of evil," which is one of Mormonism's stronger points.

Soon after the introduction of Reck and Will, we meet the novel's second gay character. In truth, the orientation of the boat captain, River, is unclear. He has fathered a "hundred sons" (150) but when he thinks Patience is a boy, he tells her, "I buggered a few as fair as you in my time, I'll have you know, and they thanked me afterwards" (151). The depiction of River is overall very positive, though. He is a capable pilot and gives dependable advice all around. And he gets a scene later which not only lets us admire him but also feel sympathy for him. He has witnessed the beginning of the romance between Will and Patience, and he cries because, being only a head in a jar, he can no longer experience love and romance as he had when attached to a body (243). Whether or not River was gay or bisexual, he knew what it was like to love, and this ability of gays is something denied by the LDS Church (Kimball 24) and by society as well.

So now we've seen two depictions of homosexual men, that of Tinker, almost exclusively negative, and that of River, on the whole quite positive. An obvious interpretation is that it is not sexual orientation which makes a person good or bad, but his character in general.

Our introduction to the next gay character is negative. A young gaunt, yet another variation of human in addition to the gebblings, brushes against Angel's crotch and hands him a slip of paper. When Patience confronts Angel, she asks, "What was he selling? The little whore with the advertisement?" (257)

And yet the young gaunt and his lover get a full page for their sex show, in which they are not depicted as pornographic, lust-filled beings, but as displaying a caring tenderness.



The climax had been aesthetic, nor orgasmic. The audience was, quite properly disappointed. They had been cheated.

But Patience did not feel cheated. It had kindled in her, in those few moments, a longing that defied her self-control and brought tears to her eyes. It was not the sort of passion that Unwyrn put in her, not a compelling, coercive urge. It was, rather, a melancholy longing for something not physical at all...It was love that the dance had aroused in her, love as the Vigilants spoke of it: a pure need for someone else to take joy in you.

(261-62)

When Angel makes the old gaunt fall unconscious, the younger one gets another tender scene. "Kristiano gasped, and immediately felt him for a pulse; relieved that Strings was not dead, the boyok held the old gaunt against him"(268). A little later, the older gaunt "tousled the hair of the beautiful gauntling beside him," a brief scene, to be sure, and yet enough to give us yet another ounce of real tenderness between these two men. And when the young gaunt touches Strings's hand and whispers that the older man was "Never evil" but instead has a "good heart" (287), we believe him. It becomes very clear as these two become major characters for forty pages and remain important for forty pages after this, that they do feel true love and affection for each other.

But the answer to whether or not homosexuality is acceptable is not as easy as that. Midway through the book, Patience tells herself to "Beware of affection, the great deceiver" (189). Later, we get a six-page discussion of passion vs. will. None of these passages specifically refer to homosexuality, but they certainly apply to the subject, and a later discussion involving the gaunts makes it clear that the passages are intended to relate not only to Patience's feelings for Unwyrn but also to the gay characters.

Will, who chose his own name for this characteristic he values, tells Patience that Unwyrn "can only force [her] passion, not [her] will." The great disappearance of all the country's wise men came about because "they were weaker than their passion" (228) and thus followed Unwyrn without thinking, relying only on their deep feeling. Will also calls those who do things out of fear, fear of punishment or fear of losing their families or their lives, "slaves to their passion. Their fear rules them." He goes on to say:

"...those who have chosen to give their obedience to their passion, or to their memory, they freely choose to obey. The glutton freely overfills his belly, the pederast feeds on innocence, and the fearful man obeys his fear--freely." (231-232)

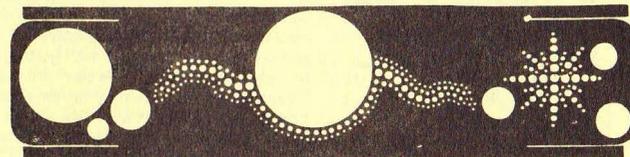
This is all, by the way, quite in line with standard LDS thought. And it is all this, which comes before the introduction of the two gaunts, that makes it difficult to understand just where Card stands on the subject of homosexuality.

The discussion goes on to point out that "our desires [are] separate from ourselves" and that it is deceit to believe otherwise. "And these slaves think that their passion is [themselves]...Their identity is in their needs"(223). Again this is perfectly in line with official Mormon doctrine, that homosexuality isn't something one is but rather it is something one does.⁴

It all comes back to choice. When Unwyrn tempts the wise, they go to him because they are being approached through "a place they had not conquered in their soul." They go, "thinking they had no choice"(229). These are arguments that can easily be used against anyone trying to defend homosexuality, as is the next argument that Will tells Patience only a few moments later.

"We both grew up under strong masters, and we both obeyed. But we learned to turn our obedience into freedom. We learned how to choose to obey, even when others thought we had no choice. So that even though we gave the appearance of having no will of our own, all our actions all our lives have been free." (229)

In her own thoughts, though, Patience disagrees with this, and it does seem to contain some twisted logic. But confusing or not, it is fully the teaching of the LDS Church on the subject of obedience (*ibid.*, 539). Despite Patience's reluctance to accept all of Will's ideas, however, later in a crisis she tells herself, "I will do what I decide to do...not what I want to do." What is important in this scene is that as her will takes over, she feels "the emotional part of herself become smaller"(297). In short, the will can be and should be in control of one's desires. So when Patience loses her will later, she is described as "an animal" (318).

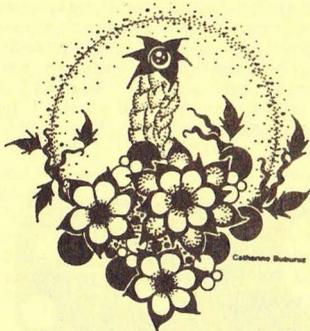


Patience's failure to stay in control is an important point, though. If Patience, who we see from the very beginning as an incredibly strong character, can not stay in control when it comes to sex, how can anyone else be expected to? She does finally resist Unwyrn, after mating with him, but she doesn't do it by herself. She is only able to do it when all the geblings in the city below call together as one mind to her mind. She is following their will, not her own. But it seems we are supposed to believe that her eventual success comes from within herself because the first word she speaks after killing Unwyrn is "Will"(322) as she calls to her friend. She does admit, however, that it wasn't her own strength that saved her, but strength loaned to her by the geblings, but even then she adds, "It gave me just enough freedom within myself to find myself" (330), so she still hints that she finally acted through her own will.

The conflict between passion and will is the main theme in the novel, and this being so, the importance of the gay characters becomes more apparent. Gaunts, as a race, are subject to one tiny quirk. Unlike humans and geblings, they have no will of their own. "I have no will, great lady," Strings tells Patience, "but I have desires, as strong as yours are, hot as fires...and perfect, yes" (267). How can he be responsible for following his desires if he has no will? Even if he did have a will, Will says that having known the pull of Unwyrn (temptation), he feels "no contempt for those who succumb to it." This leaves us up in the air a little on how to react to those who follow their passions, but Will follows this statement immediately with another idea just as thought provoking. "God has some good purpose in mind for every soul that's born"(290). Could Card be talking about gays here? He's clearly talking about those who follow their passions, which is how the LDS Church and much of society view gays.

When Strings talks of his actions, he says, "We know what we're doing. We know it, and we don't want it, but we can't choose otherwise. We're very sad creatures, actually" (281). This is a typical remark from the mouth of almost any oppressed gay person, particularly from those who want to conform to a heterosexual church or society but find themselves unable to do so. Gays don't choose to be gay and can't do anything about it. We remember what Will has said about only thinking there is no choice, but as gaunts don't have wills, we have to believe it here.

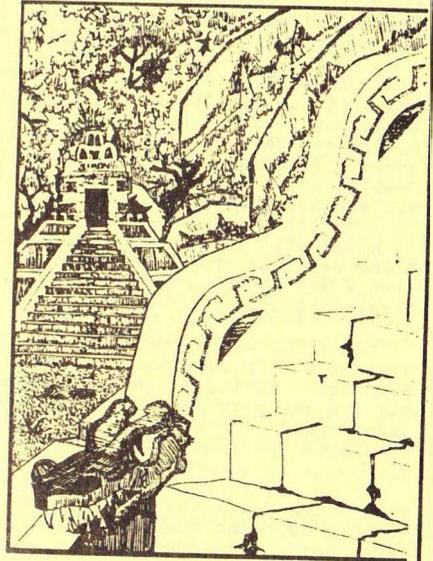
So is Card saying that gay people really don't have wills in connection with their orientation? That there really is no choice in this matter?



But wait. Gaunts do have wills, after all. "We gaunts do have a will, you know," says Strings later. "It's weak and not well-connected. It dries [sic] up like old cake and crumbles into dust whenever a human...desires something of us"(286). Not much of a will, but does the existence of any will change the question of accountability? Strings had said earlier that because he has no will, he feels no guilt, but he changes that later and admits, "We remember doing everything that we have done. We even remember wanting to do it. How can we absolve ourselves of that?"(282)

But what is it that makes these two men gay? Not all gaunts are gay, and if Strings and Kristiano are simply following the will of those around them, they still have the ability to go somewhere else. They do have that much control over themselves. If the desires they are following are their own inborn desires, that tells us something else, that gay people are born gay. The one thing we do know about these gaunts is that they absolutely did not choose to be gay, being incapable of making such a choice.

It is perhaps worth discussing here the fames of the gaunts. Let's start first with "gaunt" itself. It seems likely that Card is suggesting a tired, thin form of human, not physically, but emotionally, because of their lack of will. Gaunts are not only "different" but apparently also somewhat "less" than humans. Reck earlier has denounced the typical reaction to belittle or attack the different. "If it's strange or frightening," she says mockingly, "kill it. The human credo" (213). Her brother, Ruin, who had previously been prejudiced against humans, is later a "humanophile"(211), suggesting that we can learn both to understand and appreciate what at first is foreign to us or what may even disgust us. Clearly there is potential advice here for those who dislike gays.



Strings and Kristiano are the two gay gaunts. What can we make of Kristiano? Christ? There is certainly some debate on just how close Christ and the apostle John were, but Mormons believe that Christ was very likely married to a woman, even if the Bible neglects to say so. Perhaps the simple idea of Christian is what Card meant, that a gay person could still be a true follower of Christ. This would definitely go against LDS teaching, but it seems the most likely meaning. The Greek K in place of a C in Kristiano would also possibly be a tongue-in-cheek act on Card's part in naming the practitioner of "Greek sex," suggesting that gay sex (Greekness) could still be a "part" of being a Christian.

What of Strings? Is he Strings because he himself is a puppet, as is every other gaunt? This reading would again imply that he is not responsible for his actions (that's assuming that gay actions are wrong in the first place). Another reason for having "strings" might be because the elder gaunt is called the puppeteer and Kristiano his puppet (266), but this brings up Patience's question of how he is able to have a will strong enough to influence another gaunt, a question never fully answered. One last possibility is that his name refers to the ultimate puppeteer, God himself, but again Mormons firmly believe that God the Father is married to at least one wife in heaven (*ibid.*, 321), so this is not a likely reading. The most believable interpretation would be a gaunt's lack of responsibility for its actions, due to a genetic lack of will.

Will, however, lacks nothing in the area of will. He wants to marry Patience (and wants to have sex with her before marriage, another non-Mormon idea) and eventually does so. But this is not to say that Will is one hundred percent heterosexual. Will, one of the main characters of the novel, is the last character whose orientation we have to discuss. When he watches Kristiano caress String's forehead, "Will wondered how it would feel, to have those fingers touching him." Because his will is strong, Kristiano feels his thoughts and comes over to caress him. Will's feeling of shame causes the young gaunt to then cower in a corner (282).

So is Will actually gay and not even bisexual? Is he choosing Patience as a matter of will power or because he does feel an attraction for her as well? To like both and choose one is not the same choice as to like only one but accept the other. Is Card saying that gays should choose heterosexuality despite their orientation, saying that they are not gaunts but are human beings with a will?

After Will is injured by Patience and is lying down, "Kristiano knelt by the giant man, wiping his naked, sweating torso with a wet cloth... 'He likes this,' said Kristiano. 'But he's afraid'" (329).

Afraid of what? We never learn that homosexuality is against Will's religion. Is he afraid of giving in to his feelings? Giving in to gay feelings is to lose one's will, but one can give in to heterosexual feelings and still stay in control? The questions raised are worth answering, but Card does not answer them for us.

If we are to think that gayness is somehow less or worse than heterosexuality, though, Card instantly gives us a scene to make us doubt that answer. Patience takes over wiping off Will, but as she does so,

Patience saw herself, for a moment, as the gauntling saw her--this human woman would come and serve Will for a moment, but the gaunt would serve him hour after hour, un-failing. If love was giving the gift most desired, then only gaunts in all the world truly loved. (329)

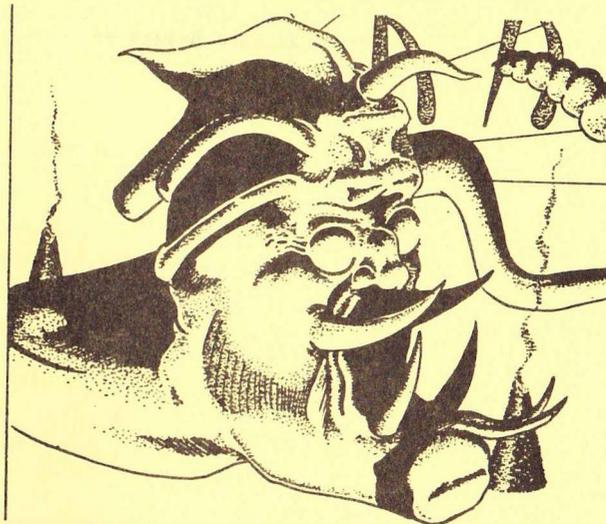
Perhaps the final word on Card's view on homosexuality becomes clear when we see what Patience's final decision is on the subject. As Heptarch and legal ruler of the world, she doesn't condemn the two gaunts. Perhaps more important, though, is that Reck, who has now become the Mother Wurm, with an incredibly strong will, capable of influencing everyone, accepts the gaunt lovers as they are. "Strings and Kristiano reported that she was always with them, and they could do nothing without her consent. Oddly, though, she wanted nothing from them." Not only are they allowed to remain lovers, but they are never again forced to obey anyone else's will (340), so they are lovers because they want to be and because they are allowed to be. And apparently because there is no reason why they shouldn't be.

Card's treatment of homosexuality in this novel is ambiguous at times, to be sure. But the tenderness, affection, and true love that the gay characters feel, and the tolerance, understanding, and acceptance displayed toward them, even with the novel's theme of will being more important than passion, suggests that here gay love is not seen as a weak indulgence. But there is still a question because despite the overall gay-positive characterizations in *Wyrms*, Card also wrote "The Hypocrites of Homosexuality," where he says that "those who flagrantly violate society's regulation of sexual behavior cannot be permitted to remain as acceptable, equal citizens within that society" and adds that we should have "complete intolerance" for the "lies" that gays use to argue their case.⁵

So Card's present stance on the issue is clear. But it is equally clear that in this novel, published three years before his article, he was much less homophobic. When he wrote *Wyrms*, Card apparently was not as set on depicting gays in a bad light as he became later, perhaps because of religious pressure or other reasons. But a book must stand on its own. Whatever Card may feel now, or whatever he may have intended while writing this book, *Wyrms* remains a fascinating s-f novel with a surprising level of tolerance and understanding. It will be interesting to follow this important writer to see what other ideas he will incorporate into his Mormon s-f in the future.

FOOTNOTES

- 1) *Homosexuality*, 2nd edition (First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve Apostles of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1981).
- 2) Spencer W. Kimball, *A Letter to a Friend* (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1978).
- 3) Derrick Sherwin Bailey, *Homosexuality and the Western Christian Tradition* (Hamden: Archon, 1975).
- 4) Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1976).
- 5) Orson Scott Card, "A Changed Man: the Hypocrites of Homosexuality," *Sunstone* (February 1990), pp. 44-45.



the ice age

welcome to
the ice age
where wisdom sits
on call waiting

and hyperactive
spectator adults
behead time
in dare games
and kiss
death's clover

try the diet
trivia times self
dream the dream
the death of silence

go ahead

-- Richard Muegge --

St. George's Eve

Under the moon
something scratches
at clutching tree roots
where the blue flames shiver;
blood-thick air
tugs at the lungs,
and an owl reels up the pass;
trees jut like filed teeth,
and barrows lean on the wind;
crucible stars
float on the sky,
and the closing mountains
howl like wolves.

When sleep threatens,
the treasure rumbles in the ground.

-- E.L. Ridsen --

SELECTED LETTERS

Box T-159 Tarleton Station
Stephenville, TX 76402

Dear Leland--

Got RQ 32 --is it the Louisiana rains that shrank the size?
But the material was still interesting.

In Ottone M. Riccio's English sonnet--"Voices that Bump in
the Night"--the handling of the off-rhymes was nicely done.

Jim Harmon's "Home on the Range" and Peter Bernhardt's
"Good Night, Frog Prince" were very much in the tradition of
the old-fashioned personal essay--anecdotal and rambling (but
not as long as the old ones, of course). I appreciated Bern-
hardt's comments on Jim Henson.

And Justin Leiber's comments on his father were valuable.
I read the last Fafhrd and Grey Mouser novel--here referred to
as "Mouser Goes Below"--and didn't think of it as very well
plotted, but this explains the personal symbolism involved.
Interesting, although it doesn't make the fiction any better
qua fiction. Come to think of it, this is the first work I've
seen by Justin Leiber in any magazine in about ten years. I
believe he contributed to a short-lived zine on s-f and philo-
sophy back then.

Sixteen footnotes to Marilyn House's "Miller's Anti-Utopian
Vision"! What she do? Throw bricks at you until you stopped
objecting? More power to her! (I'll be teaching A Canticle for
Leibowitz this spring, but with an emphasis on its presentation
of science and technology; I'm sorry--for my sake only--that
House is going in a different direction, largely.) By the way,
I noticed a couple of years ago that Miller announced he was
writing a sequel. I've been afraid of it appearing and not be-
ing nearly as good. The whole Latinate Church that he depicted
has been lost; I can't imagine how he could, today, recreate
it--but think of the drop in tone if he didn't.

I expected Karen Michalson's "Mapping the Mainstream" to be
about Magic Realism, from its subtitle, and never thought of a
comparison of Ralph Ellison and Tolkien; it's clever. I don't
think I agree that the comparison reveals much about fantasy,
however. What it shows is that works written by human beings
have common themes and common motifs. What else could art be
about except its creators (usually indirectly)? But the way
these things are said can vary greatly -- and it is here that
the historicity of realism differs from the symbolism or pseudo-
historicity of fantasy.

Best wishes,
Joe Christopher

To me, Karen's essay disclosed the inadequacy of formal dis-
tinctions between "realism" and fantasy (recall Joyce's fantasy
opening to his autobiographical Portrait of the Artist as a
Young Man) and the kind of perspectives gained by finding com-
mon patterns--"archetypes," if you like--in each (e.g., Ralph
Ellison's Dr. Bledsoe as a Merlin figure). // Footnotes often
generate a life of their own--as when a critic explains why
his own interpretation isn't quite that of the work cited or
justifies his citation of one source in preference to another.
An empirical rule: length of FN's shouldn't exceed 10% of that
of the text itself. In Marilyn's Canticle essay the ratio was
slightly less than this; in your own Future History essay,
slightly higher.

P.O. Box 569
Columbus, MS 39703

Dear Leland,

Your editorial comments on Nabokov were witty and to the
point. [To judge] from his hasty generalization of s-f litera-
ture as "cheap" and "dismally pedestrian," Nabokov evidently
restricted his reading of the genre to Flash Gordon and Superman.
To be frank, his infantile comments sound like the rantings of
an embittered eulogist watching helplessly as the age of modern-
ist fiction sinks below the literary horizon like a wounded
sun bleeding to death. Fifty years ago, no one (and certainly
no one of Nabokov's stature) would have even bothered to voice
an opinion one way or another about the legitimacy--or illegiti-
macy--of s-f literature. Of course, the difference today is
that the once disorganized and dispossessed plebs of specula-
tive fiction have become both a literary and historical force
to be reckoned with. Consequently, they can no longer be simply
ignored. A great writer he was, but [that's] hardly an excuse
for ill-conceived criticism.

I have always admired the work of Justin Leiber, and it's
curious to watch this penetrating intellect range like some
disinherited literary scion over the mythic oeuvre of his larger-
than-life father. Hopefully, "Swordsman and Philosopher" will
continue to be as much autobiographical as it is biographical.
Marilyn House's far-ranging essay on Miller made me want to go
back and immediately re-read Canticle within the interpretative
context she prescribes. By exposing its biblical and mythic
dimensions, Ms. House has virtually defined what a hermeneutic
critique of s-f literature should aspire to. [Finally] Peter
Bernhardt's moving paean to Jim Henson--a more fitting epitaph
for this too often unacknowledged master could not have been
penned. This was a most impressive issue--page to page, cover
to cover.

Rest wishes,

Charles John-Arnold

I don't think that Vladimir Nabokov would've deigned to read
the comic strips--but in any case, Flash Gordon and Ming the
Merciless lacked verbal descriptions, so you can't blame Alex
Raymond & Company. My own equally improbable explanation: the
author somehow obtained a copy of the old Clayton Astounding,
where good and bad guys fit such stereotypes.

428 Sagamore Ave
Teaneck, NJ 07666

Dear Leland,

Nabokov not only wrote what he considered an s-f story but
a play as well which is surely fantasy and, as make-believe
history, qualifies by Bleiler's definition as s-f as well. I
have it at home and, too lazy to look for it, recall its title
as Bend Sinister. Like most of this supercilious but superiative
writer's work, it is good.

Justin Leiber's reminiscences are warmly delightful. I have
seen "Guv" on film and have read of his stage craft. I believe
he is associated with one of those great stage stories (like
Walter Slezabo's operatic father looking for "the next swan"
when his skipped by in Lohengrin). I once met the great Fritz Jr.
in San Francisco, a real treat indeed.

Karen Michalson's approach to Ellison's classic is both un-
usual and interesting, although I see no validity in the analogy
to JRRT except to make it more at home in a fanzine normally
dedicated to the fantasy genre. I must admit that inasmuch as
I read Ellison in each daily newspaper, I prefer Tolkien.

Marilyn House's exhaustive study of Miller's Canticle for Leibowitz deserves study I cannot give it in my store (a pharmacy) where, on a quite rainy day, I am scribbling this note. I think [Miller's] unusual title first appealed to me, then its ironies--a shopping list (containing, I think, delicatessen-delights) [becoming] a sacred text. I see no mention of the great editor of F&SF, Anthony Boucher, who helped edit three novellettes into a classic of s-f. His importance may be seen from the failure of any of Miller's other stories to achieve any measure of acclaim. They are standard s-f, the vision and breadth, as well as the tragic implications of Leibowitz [being] quite absent.

Ben Indick

That particular question, "When does the next swan leave?" (when the tenor fails to catch the mechanical swan going across stage) has been attributed to several Wagnerian performers. The classic drama ad lib (pointed out to me by Bill Blackbeard) was delivered by John Barrymore as King Richard, when his famous plea, "A horse! A horse! my kingdom for a horse!" drew uncontrolled laughter from a member of the audience. So Barrymore continues, without breaking the metre, "And come, let's saddle yonder braying ass!" // From the lack of acclaim for Miller's fiction printed elsewhere (as opposed to Canticle's success in Boucher's F&SF) nothing can be inferred--except that these other stories were shorter and disconnected, i.e., not related to each other.

23629 Woodfield Rd.
Gaithersburg, MD 20882

Dear Leland,

Thanks for the August '91 RQ. The Shep cover is quite spiffy.

My main complaint is about the type size. I find it too small to be easily readable if it is going to be quite so light. The same thing goes doubly for the poetry where darker print would make it show up more vividly.

If columns similar to the one on Leiber are frequent in RQ, I sincerely hope you plan an anthology of the more "scholarly" works. I put that in quotes because I mean it to apply only to articles about figures and not in-depth critiques about works.

Karen Michalson's article comes much closer to the traditional definition of scholarly and my own personal taste is to applaud her work, skim it, and move on. I can appreciate the work that went into it, but it is not the type of article I'd go back to and read again. (Ditto for Marilyn House's article--I can appreciate the craftsmanship, but it is not my cup.)

Fans (s-f, that is) are really fans in many areas. The ones that come to mind first are baseball, mysteries, music (with its plethora of sub-interests), and Westerns. Before I began reading s-f, I read Westerns--and that carried over for a while. I rarely read them now or even look back over my books, but I do watch snippets of the old Western movies when they air.

The whimsy of Cathy Buburuz's piece seems to catch the tone and flavour of RQ--and I hope you can get a supply of her illos to grace the pages.

Happy New Year--

Sheryl Birkhead

I agree with your complaint and have told my printer that with respect to legibility, RQ#32 was a second-rate job. // For a combo of Western and s-f see Louis L'Amour's The Haunted Mesa, with its New Mexico Indian lore and inter-dimensional transit.

Tuskanac 22, 4100 Zagreb
Croatia, Yugoslavia

Dear Leland,

I've received the RQ together with a dozen fanzines that had been piling up during my absence. During the past year I've been serving [in] the army. Up to a couple of months ago, every man [at] the age of nineteen who is physically and psychically fit is due to go to the Federal army (Yugoslav People's Army) and serve for one year.

I don't know if you are informed about recent events in Yugoslavia, but the war that Serbia, the largest of our republics, started toward Croatia, [a] much more developed but somewhat smaller republic, was supported by the Federal Army, which is supposed to be neutral. The reason is simple: the vast majority of officers, particularly high officers, and staff is Serbian.

The conflict started when [the] Serbian minority in Croatia claimed to be terrorized, thus hoping to form [some] kind of province under Serbian government. Naturally, Croatia couldn't accept such division of its territory, so the war started. It is important to know that the Republic of Croatia undertook a whole series of democratic reforms two years ago, including the very first democratic elections. In that time Serbia remained dogmatic in its vision of socialism, i.e., communism.

However, just about the time I was finishing my service in the Federal Army, the president of Croatia, Franjo Tudjman, proclaimed FedArmy to be an enemy of the Republic, for it supports the chetnik terrorists with food supplies and weapons [and] even opens fire on Croatian cities. Four months ago [the] Croatian government decided to [form] the "National Guard," which would fight Serbian terrorists and [the] Federal Army.

So, it's obvious that my situation is quite delicate. I'm still thinking of signing for the National Guard, since I've been well trained by the Federal Army, [for] which I was unlucky [enough] to have served as squad commander. I won't do it [until] I hear an explosion in my city, which, by the way, happens to be capital of the Republic. For the time being, Zagreb lives a normal life. There are no signs of war in the city itself. We can read in the newspapers and see on TV what happens in certain regions of the Republic. And believe me--it is a real war going out there!

I'm not sure if you could grasp much of what I said, because the situation is very complex and puzzling even for me.

Referring to RQ#31, I must say that I particularly fancied Pat Hodgell's article. That's because I've never known much about [the] Gothic genre. It was a very nice introduction. And wouldn't it be very interesting to make a Freudian analysis of the genre, or some particular representative novel? Perhaps I'll give it a try, though I doubt I could do it with my knowledge of the language. Any volunteers? I was also fond of a detail in Pat's article--[where she] defines the difference between horror and terror.

Yours,

Pavel Gregoric, Jr.

Serb incursions into Croatia, on the basis of supposed mistreatment of the Serb minority, just duplicate Adolph Hitler's 1938 occupation of the Sudetenland because of alleged complaints that the German minority in Czechoslovakia was being mistreated. However, on the assumption that our correspondent is still alive by the time his letter is printed, I must ask: please, no Freudian analyses--of the Gothic or anything else!

7227 6th Ave
Regina, Sask. S4T-0P3

Dear Leland,

Forgive me for making some comments on Dave Austin's "Chip Swift Cocoons" that are more sociological than literary. In Western society there seems to be a widespread belief that mores are persistently becoming more liberal (or more decadent, depending on one's point of view). In the literature of the cyberpunk movement, which obviously influences "Chip Swift Cocoons," the near-future societies presented tend to conform to this belief.

To many people, this belief in the continual liberalization of society is even regarded as a generalized rule of history. "What is the world coming to?" people say. "Why in my day..."

In cyberpunk, this is most evident in the presentation of drugs and drug culture in the near-future. In "Chip Swift Cocoons" we have Sensamed, which is marketed, apparently legally, in order to enhance experiences such as "Cocooning." But, how likely is it that mind altering designer drugs will be available over the counter in a few years? Not very. Fifteen years ago, the legalization of marijuana may have seemed like it was around the corner; today it isn't even a remote possibility. Today we have a "war" against drugs. This may be an oversimplification, but the pendulum is swinging the other way and has been for about ten years.

From a movement as insightful as cyberpunk, I would expect more interesting and insightful extrapolation.

Finally, compliments on the issue as a whole (including "Chip Swift Cocoons"). I especially liked Peter Bernhardt's tribute to Jim Henson. Keep up the good work.

Sincerely,
Lance Robinson

The argument could be answered on the basis of the possibility that the pendulum will eventually reverse itself -- but in this context I think that sociological arguments are not to be refuted but simply rejected. For, prediction (extrapolation, if you like) isn't s-f's job, only the depiction of possibilities or (what Philip Dick did so well) states of mind induced by these possibilities.

414 Lisa St
Brampton, Ontario I6T-4B6

Dear Leland:

In many old movies I sometimes see the name Fritz Leiber in the credits, and remember that it was Fritz Sr. who played those memorable roles. In many ways, it was a shame that Fritz Jr. did not follow his father onto the stage more than he did. It would be a treat to see the creativity he placed on paper converted into action and drama in a play or movie.

Jim Harmon reminds us once again that while we always imagine ourselves to be unique in our intricate and numerous group that we call fandom, there are other interests around which circulates a similar social group. There's a small club of movie devotees in Toronto called the Secret Six. Modelers often congregate at local, regional and international gatherings. Many of us know [how] gamers and comic and gum card collectors gather regularly because of the shared interest. A glance at any issue of Factsheet Five shows that there's a fandom for just about any interest going. It's safe to say, however, that perhaps our own fandom is the most intricate and detailed. Can any of us say that we really know what's going on in fandom? Perhaps once someone could 30 or 40 years ago, but not today.

Fans do indeed look to the past as much as to the future, [which is perhaps] why many fans would like to have 100Gb of computer memory in a small cube for their voder/puter, but yet insist on using mimeos and twiltone in producing their fanzines. This may also explain why many fantasy novels have a streak of hard science in them, and visa-versa. We look forward and back because it is harder and harder to look at the present with any love or confidence. We look away and afar for more interesting times that can't possibly exist today. Even with our miraculous science, an area that should fascinate and amaze us, we still look towards times of greater science [or backwards] to times of no science at all.

Yours,
Lloyd Penny

If Fritz Jr. had devoted himself entirely to acting, we could only regret that his creative energies weren't expressed via the more permanent mode of fiction-writing. // Be assured that fandom's current Secret Master (Ed Wood) does know what's going on, just as the Shadow knows what evil lies in the hearts of men.

30 N. 19th Street
Lafayette, IN 47904

Dear Lee:

I find three really outstanding pieces in this issue--the piece on Leiber, "Mapping the Mainstream," and the study of Walter M. Miller. [Those] along with "Harmony" made for a really good issue. Though where be fanzine reviews? You don't wholly explain their absence.

Having made a fine buy on a September 1951 Fantastic, I had a chance to read Miller's "Dark Benediction," a story also not entirely without reference to religion, although its main subject was a plague of mystical and superstitious properties. [So] far as I am concerned this story is several times over in its writing to A Canticle for Leibowitz. "The Darfstellar" (Astounding; Jan. 1955) is of a midway range in my estimation of its quality, but shows a lot of Miller's leaning toward existential topics.

Of course, The Muppets is a fantasy show by its nature; [it has] been discussed in the N3F quite a bit, and its characters appeared at the Hoosiercon, but they learn a little too much toward the vulgar for me. I liked Bill Baird and Burr Tillstrom better as puppeteers with fantasy inclinations. "The Frog Prince" is a big topic here locally, the play having been successfully performed in a nearby park. Its theme is romance awakening the spirit in spite of the physical form. I wonder if you or anyone knows its exact origin.

Sincerely,
John Thiel

Unlike Muhammad Ali, Harry Warner seemed happy to retire, so I hesitate to disturb the general tranquility by asking him to continue his fanzine review column. // I've enjoyed learning that Lafayette residents have adapted Peter Bernhardt's column into a play--but I don't dig some of your references, e.g., to Walter Miller's existential writing.

4701 Taylor Blvd. #8
Louisville, KY 40215

Dear Mr. Sapiro:

Some people have said that Vladimir Nabokov's Ada is an s-f novel; not having read it myself, I cannot count myself as being among them or their opposition. The comments quoted seem like the pronouncement from On High by Edmund Wilson in which he dismissed the entire mystery field, not to mention Lovecraft and Tolkien because they did not write like James Branch Cabell.

It may come down to a case of the "Sidney Glutz" Syndrome. This had been expressed in many ways, most of which resemble this: When looking at what seems to be a particularly bad work by a major writer, consider if it would have been accepted if it had been written by Sidney Glutz, totally unknown new writer. If you think it would not have been, then the work is as bad as you think it is. But editors and publishers, even at the New Yorker, want to have Nabokov on their cover, list, resume, and so [they] publish work that [by] "Sidney Glutz" would have [been] rejected.

This attitude has many ramifications. One thinks, for example, of "Richard Bachman," born when Stephen King began entertaining doubts about whether or not the purchase of his works was being justified by editors and publishers on the basis of two words ("Stephen King," that is).

S-F is hardly free from this disease of featured names, either. Was it Amazing that had a tough-guy detective story by (or so it was headlined) Mickey Spillane in one issue? Along with an expose called "Mars Confidential" by Lait and Mortimer? These last were the producers [of] a spate of exposes in the fifties, as I recall, on the general theme of organized crime infiltration of the economy and society with titles like New York Confidential and so on. This was one of the sources for Fred Pohl's "The Day of the Boomer Dukes," which was about a fool who took New York Confidential seriously and went back in time to ask the first person he saw, "Where can I find a recruiting office for the Mafia?"

Now while I have read many stories on the theme of how seductive virtual reality is, "Chip Swift Cocoons" by Dave Austin has shown how a life can be such that retreating into virtual reality would be a desirable alternative, and the sort of person who would find dealing with his own dreams preferable to dealing with others. Perhaps virtual reality could be a cure for Yuppies.

"Fritz Leiber: Swordsman and Philosopher Part One: Heroic Artisan" by Justin Leiber makes one greatly desire Part Two. This is no mean achievement for a biographical essay.

Regarding "Harmony" by Jim Harmon--well, of course other fandoms are going to exhibit certain structural resemblances to trufandom. [See] Alvin Toffler's Future Shock, where he discusses the pattern of "local heroes" in his example of surfing groups. I am reminded of this at every visit to the local megagrocery, where the magazine rack is filled with magazines filling the desires of a vast variety of special interest groups. Or look at the article in Stet #4 about the ways and means of stamp fandom. They even have the same problems; I have read in, I believe, Dale Speirs's Opuntia that stamp shows have just about totally excluded the press and TV since they never seem to get beyond "What's the most valuable stamp here?" We can be sure that at the forthcoming Ditto/Octacon the press and TV will sedulously avoid the many fanzine fans at one of "their" cons, and concentrate on the fat teens in Starfleet uniforms who had heard that there was a con going on and did not bother learning what it was about.

Edison's Conquest of Mars seems to be Garrett P. Serviss standing Wells's theme on its head. At least all I have read on The War of the Worlds was that it was Wells looking at imperialism and saying: "Now see what it feels like when you're the Benighted Natives being uplifted by a Higher Culture." So here we have Serviss anticipating Starship Troopers and having the roughest toughest meanest leanest race in the Galaxy showing other intelligent races that one either conquers or becomes extinct. (And when discussing expansions on The War of the Worlds what about Sherlock Holmes's War of the Worlds by Manly Wade Wellman and Wade Wellman ("actually" by John H. Watson, M.D. and Sir Edward Dunn Malone), where Holmes and Professor Challenger wander about in the fringes of the Wells story, judged one of the worst Holmes pastiches ever done?)

Namarië,
Joseph T. Major

Spillane, of course, had no s-f name at all, but editor Howard Browne said he printed this story (in the Nov-Dec '52 Fantastic) to attract detective-story fans, who on reading the rest of that issue might become Fantastic fans. (See Howard Browne, "So What's a Little Blood?", Inside & S-F Advertiser No. 10, (July 1955), pp. 19-20, 23.) As editor of Amazing Browne sank still lower in the Feb '53 issue by printing a straight Western, disguised as s-f by having the wagon-train cross a Martian instead of an Arizona desert (the giveaway being that memorable line spoken by a Mars gunslinger on p. 68: "I rode [here] clear up from Texas..."). But the listed author, Guy Archette, was (necessarily) an unknown.

Box 100 Apt. D-73
Somers, CT 06071

Dear Leland,

I am fairly new to fandom, and greatly appreciate the easy to read format of RQ. More often than not, fanzines are filled with mystical language well beyond the grasp of most "neofans," and it is hard for the reader to decipher, let alone enjoy the publication.

Dave Austin's Chip Swift Cocoons--an entertaining view of the not-too-distant workplace of the future [and] our present day anxieties.

Justin Leiber's Fritz Leiber: Swordsman and Philosopher--I was intrigued with this highly personal memoir of Mr. Leiber. I am not ashamed to admit that a tear or two was shed as Justin recounted the vision of the Gray Mouser and Fafhrd.

Karen Michalson's Mapping the Mainstream--a very concise and well-put article. I would recommend this [to] be read by those who are highly critical of fantasy and s-f.

Marilyn House's commentary on A Canticule for Leibowitz--quite simply--a chef-d'oeuvre! Marilyn not only provided an adroit commentary, but took on the task of presenting us with a detailed religious interpretation/reference.

Denise Dumars' poem The Free Zone--held a chilling view of an apocalyptic nightmare, and conveyed the helplessness of the innocent (a South Islander) in such a deadly game.

I give you and your contributors five stars across the board.

Scott Forrest

After the difficulties indicated on the page following, perhaps one of those stars should be removed. Under ordinary circumstances, citation of RQ poetry makes me glad, since--Australian fans excepted--readers usually ignore this aspect of the mag.

RQ MISCELLANY (continued from page 3)

Given Faber and Faber Limited's usual attitude to anyone wanting permission to reprint any poetry that it has published, I do not understand why Sylvia Plath's poem "Edge" (which appears on page 85 of Ariel, Faber and Faber, London, 1965) is reprinted on page 249 of RQ #32, over the name of Elizabeth Ann Burton. The only change is that the line space after every two lines in Plath's version is omitted. It is true that this omission wrecks the poem -- but does it make it somebody else's?

Once again, the apparent negativeness of this response does not represent my attitude to the issue as a whole. Thank you very much for continuing to publish the RQ, and

Best wishes,
Yvonne Rousseau

Also received was a card from a compatriot:

Box 9, P.O. Hazelbrook
NSW 2779, Australia

Dear Leland,

Did you know that "Edge," the poem on p. 249 by "Elizabeth Ann Burton" is by Sylvia Plath also? [It was] one of the last poems written before Plath committed suicide, I believe.

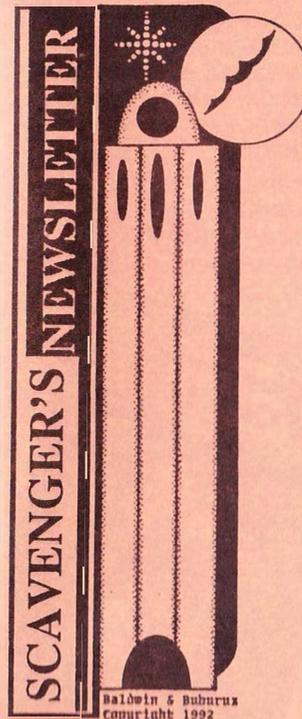
Hope this isn't too unpleasant but I thought I had better let you know.

Best wishes,
Diane Fox

Believing that RQ's copyright violation, while unintentional, might cause trouble, I consulted a Lake Charles attorney, Randy Fuerst, who instructed me to print an acknowledgment -- that Elizabeth Ann Burton's poem was a word-for-word copy of the Sylvia Plath poem quoted earlier. Randy also saw clearly the tragic implications of the situation: a poem about death, written by somebody ready to end her own life and plagiarized by a poet whose death was foreordained, once her submission was accepted. For, just as "poetry kept Sylvia Plath alive," so poetry seemed the greater part of Elizabeth Ann's life. But no future exists for a poet when it becomes public knowledge that she printed under her own name a poem written by somebody else. Elizabeth's action, then, perhaps constituted her last message to the world -- her identification with Sylvia Plath being so complete that she could have made her own death inevitable by resubmitting Plath's poem. So now we can only regret the circumstances that made "the illusion of a Greek necessity" an epitaph for either poet. To quote W.B. Yeats (in whose former residence Plath chose to end her life),

...I saw a wildness in her and I thought
A vision of terror that it must live through
Had shattered her soul...

Note: Dave Smith's remark on the importance of poetry to Sylvia Plath was quoted by Linda Wagner, "Introduction," Critical Essays on Sylvia Plath (Boston: C.K. Hall & Co., 1984), while the lines from Yeats' "A Bronze Head" are quoted by Sandra Gilbert, "In Yeats' House: the Death and Resurrection of Sylvia Plath," in the same volume.



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