

SPECIALS SERIES 2



SPECIALS SERIES #2

PRESENTS...

TO JOSEPH:

I thought you'd like your copy inscribed. Best - Burybrad

PARAPHERNALIA BY BRAD LINAWEAVER

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MERRY XMAS!
"heh, heh"

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FRONT COVER
Lin Mitchell & Weird Dave

BACK COVER
Marc Schirmeister

LOGOS
Pages 1,4,43.....Bob Ervin
Pages 13,39.....Rich Small

Publisher: Richard Small
Editor: Brad Linaweaver
Key Grippe: Bob Ervin

Special Editing Credit for
Castles to Keep goes to
Joe D Sictari

Typists: Captain Whiz-Bang
and the Doughnut
Girls

Specials Series Vol. 1, #2
is published by Richard H.
Small, 117 S. Meridian St.
#3, Tallahassee, Florida
32301. Price: \$1.00 per
copy. Print run: 200.
FIRST EDITION. Richall
Press #54. The entire
contents of this publicat-
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PUBLISHERIAL

WHO KNOWS WHAT EVIL
LURKS IN THE HEARTS
OF FANZINE PUBLISHERS?

by Richard Small

Welcome to Specials Series
#2, the second of a series
of several specials which
I am planning on putting
out. It's been a long

while since I published Specials Series #1 (on newspaper strips and my first fanzine to boot); almost three years. I never dreamed that it would take me this long before I published another issue. At the time SS #1 was printed, I was working on several other projects which one day would turn into individual issues and honestly believed I would have another issue out within a year. While I still plan to put out these issues, work on them goes slowly, so it may be some time before they see publication. My policy with regards to Specials Series has always been quality before quantity and as long as I continue to publish this fanzine that will always be my foremost concern.

This issue highlights the imaginative and vastly interesting writing of Brad Linaweaver, a Tallahassee fan Florida State University student. When Brad first approached me with the idea of doing an issue of Specials Series around him, I was quite enthusiastic. I have been exposed to Brad's writing through unterHelios, Joe Siclar's Tallahassee-based science-fiction fanzine and was impressed by the quality of what I saw. After learning that Linaweaver was a realistic English major, one who was intent on writing professionally and breaking into the science-fiction field, I was all the more impressed.

This Linaweaver sampler contains material which is about as diversified as one can get. Linaweaver runs the gamut from poetry and scholarly analysis to humorous satire and biographical fiction. What's even more amazing is that he manages to run it successfully. Specials Series is glad indeed to serve as the showcase for such an ambitious and energetic young writer.

Though having cut his fanzine teeth on unterHelios, Brad is still somewhat new to fanzines (particularly fanzine production) and wound up doing several things for the first time. There will be some minor errors (such as his confusion over the title of this publication - it is Specials Series, and not Special Series), but these are to be expected, particularly with a first fanzine and can easily be forgiven. "Paraphenalia" was an interesting project to work on with Brad and I'm glad I did it. Incidentally, Brad would be interested in hearing from all who receive this issue. His address is: Brad Linaweaver, PO BOX U-0921, Florida State University, Tallahassee, Fla. 32306.

EDITORIAL

Composing on stencil is a dubious treat. I don't understand why so many fanzine editors cherish the on-the-spot editorial above all else. It must be the thrill of seeing that last stencil filled out with type (the editorial is usually the last thing typed in a fanzine). I'm breaking tradition somewhat in this case--for one thing, I'm only half composing this stencil on-the-spot. I have enough factual matters to get out of the way that I need to type from notes, rather than trusting my memory. And this is not the last page to be typed in the issue. Richard Small's comments and the contents page will be done after this, putting me at a disadvantage in this editorial. Rich is well known in Tallahassee fandom for his wit and his tendency to do outrageous things. I would have preferred writing this after reading Rich's publisherial, but as it stands I will just have to trust Rich's discretion. Anyway, he will probably write responsible publisher's comments, making unnecessary everything I've written about his nature. At least I'm filling up the page. Rich is a good guy. He's a joy to work with. Now to business. Let's establish some rules. I've got an absolute number of items which I need to get out of the way. I will list the many goodies under separate title headings.

THE SCHOLAR'S THANKYOU DEPT.: Florida State University professors who helped me--thanks, Dr. Donald Ungurait, for agreeing to give me academic credit for Special Series #2; thanks, Dr. Gene Crook, for interesting me in Beowulf and company, and introducing me to a fine book on the topic, Beowulf and its Analogues by Garmonsway and others (Dutton paperbacks); thanks, Dr. Fowler, for agreeing to use my reading guide to The Martian Chronicles when you teach the Bradbury classic in your American Lit. class; and last and not least, thanks, Dr. Brock, for getting me in the mood to write "BloodSoda." Dr. Ungurait is with the Communications Dept., all others are with the English Dept.

MINUTIAE DEPT.: I made two errors in my footnoting of "The Screw, Turned." The quotes wherein James describes the type of ghosts that haunt "The Turn of the Screw," and explains how he cast his lot with "pure romance," are not on page 97 of The Casebook, as I indicate in footnote 3, but are on page 100. I mention this for those of you who like to keep score.

CASTLES TO CREEP DEPT.: Bob Ervin, the fearless proofreader, wants to go on record with a complaint against my including "Castles to Keep" in Paraphernalia. He thinks the tone of "Castles" is not appropriate to the rest of the material in this zine. "Castles" is written in a gosh-wow/pseudo-pulp style. It was written before anything else in SS#2, and has since required some updating. Even then, "Castles" is dated. Castle of Frankenstein #20 has been out for some time, while "Castles" still lists issue #19 as the latest CoF. Joe Siclari originally planned to use "Castles" in unterHelios #3, hence the layout, of the article, which is different from the rest of SS#2 (lots of interesting art, lots of weird typing). The reason that I give to Bob for the inclusion of "Castles" is worth passing on to the readers: VARIETY! Much of Paraphernalia is scholarly, "Castles" is not. It was written for fun. I think it provides a change of pace, and besides, now I can charge more money for the zine because "Castles" is in it, and I have a serial which I will conclude in Special Series #3.

A QUESTION: What's a more vicious view of life--Christianity's HellFire or Existentialism's mud-puddle? After writing my Beowulf/Grendel interpretations, I still wonder about it.

children of the night

An introduction to a book on the American horror film cycle of the 1930's. If the book is written it will be in collaboration with Mike Ogden.

The movies talked. 1927--The Jazz Singer vitaphoned the silents out of business. Sound came in with crashing symbols and thunder, offering new opportunities to the film medium. Lights, Camera, Action! Time America! Time for Big Adventure, Big Romance and Bigger Musicals. The public acceptance of these early audio/visual extravaganzas insured the successful wedding of sound with celluloid.

Enter the decade of the 1930's, a bleak decade in some ways, but not on the movie screens of the nation. The Hollywood vision persevered-- a bright, opulent world of film to take the public's mind off the Depression landscape outside the movie palace doors. Improvements in cinema machinery made the medium all the more alluring to the public, ever more able to provide customers with the product they desired--ESCAPIST ENTERTAINMENT. The American movie industry ground the stuff out as quickly as possible.

But the form of that entertainment was not restricted to only raising up images of what people would like the world to be. There was diversity in the movies. Consider a melancholy type of entertainment which provided occasional "relief" from the light/bright diversions--the horror film. This type of picture reflected the fears of the period, fears indemic to people of any period. Fear of the unknown. Fear of insanity. Fear of others. But most of all, fear of death; the inescapable mortality. It was to the province of the horror story that these fears had been delivered. And film makers re-made the old Morality Play for the audiences of their day, but this time with new masks, those of a Frankenstein monster and a Count Dracula (these famous characters from novels would become more famous through film).

The directors of horror films well understood the dramatic principle learned so long ago (incorporated in the finest tragedies, from the Greek classics to Shakespeare), the principle of catharsis. Audiences still played the ancient game, now purging their inner demons as the death's-head figure went through his paces in a movie. They could enjoy fabricated pathos of the "You think you've got troubles" method of story telling. They could experience a temporary victory over death as the symbols of horror fable worked magic on the movie screen. Depression problems were severe, but how they paled beside the difficulty of a man infected with lycanthropy (The Werewolf of London) or a woman haunted and hunted by a three-thousand year old, re-animated corpse (The Mummy). If a movie goer really wanted something different than the mainstream film, he soon found it in these rather grim "adult fairy tales."

Producers knew they had a money making machine in horror films. The artists behind the camera--and those in front--were by-in-large excited by the challenge of a Grand Guignol show, and were consequently creative. Together they did a good job, and their films have not been forgotten. Because of the success of the Thirties' horror cycle, the genre was established in as dependable a form as the Western, the proverbial goldmine (there had been horror film endeavors during the silent period, most notably the German fantasies and the characterizations of Lon Chaney, but not until the advent of the sound melodrama did the monster/terror thriller become a regular--sound enabled denizens of Transylvania to describe with eloquence, style and conviction, the sensationalistic details of their mythos). It was a case of, "Get thee behind me, Satan, but come back if you'll bring some home movies." With a bankbook of profits as their testament, the cinema goblins were here to stay. Eventually they would become part of folklore, their durability symbolized by the defiant posture of King Kong atop the Empire State Building, an image not to be forgotten.

*

Four decades later one can see how and why the horror film market has been glutted. Imitation may be the sincerest form of flattery, but nine times out of ten it's just the shortest route to an unearned buck. For every good horror film there seems to be fifty horrible films attempting a ride to glory on the reputation of the worthy effort. The price of success--what was perversely original in the Thirties' flicks has been imitated so many times since that it has entered the realm of the Cliche. No amount of second-hand copying can lessen the charm of the classics, however (if the field can be characterized with as tranquil a term as "charm"). Classics, as everybody knows, age like fine wine. The best films of the period, 1931-1936, qualify for this special distinction. Their influence on the history of cinema continues.

If movieland's proud old ghouls have been unfairly denigrated by "moralists" and over-worried parents, there is a balancing of the scales--the cineaste develops all types of psycho-epistemological theories about the movies he likes to watch, perhaps even being so presumptuous as to write an in-depth critical history of one cycle of one genre. The case is strong enough to merit an entire book devoted to this handful of films--a chapter for each film. Is not a book on this important period of DreamCinema long overdue? Herewith the remedy.

*

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INSERT BOOK HERE



THE INITIAL HORROR CYCLE OF THE 1930's
 (presented in chronological order of release)

1931	DRACULA FRANKENSTEIN		MURDERS IN THE ZOO SUPERNATURAL THE INVISIBLE MAN SON OF KONG
1932	DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE MURDERS IN THE RUE MORGUE FREAKS DR. X WHITE ZOMBIE CHANDU THE MAGICIAN THE MOST DANGEROUS GAME (THE HOUNDS OF ZAROFF) THE OLD DARK HOUSE THE MASK OF FU-MANCHU THE MUMMY ISLAND OF LOST SOULS	1934	THE BLACK CAT
		1935	MARK OF THE VAMPIRE BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN THE WEREWOLF OF LONDON THE RAVEN MAD LOVE SHE THE BLACK ROOM
1933	THE VAMPIRE BAT MYSTERY OF THE WAX MUSEUM KING KONG	1936	THE INVISIBLE RAY THE WALKING DEAD DRACULA'S DAUGHTER THE DEVIL DOLL

THE SCREW, TURNED

When is a ghost story not a ghost story? The answer to that question would seem rather obvious--when there are no ghosts present. But in the case of Henry James's much discussed "The Turn of the Screw," the answer would be: when a school of critics resent that such a fine story as James's should have supernatural elements. The mentality exclusively dedicated to the naturalistic in fiction, assuming all ghost stories are bad by virtue of their fantasy, faces a dilemma when presented with an intelligent tale of ghosts, goblins and things that go bump in the night (or things that go bump in the daytime, for that matter). Once committed to an anti-fantasy doctrine that judges aesthetic worth solely on how near the artist's work approximates REAL LIFE--and by how typical a feeling of REAL LIFE is evoked through art, the aesthetic exclusivist responds to a beautiful example of supernatural literature with a flat denial of its nature! He is limited to an Either /Or proposition: if it's supernatural it can't deserve serious attention, but if it is really worthwhile then any supernatural elements must be a trick to mislead the gullible.* Responding to art's naturalistic and realistic potential for revealing psychological states, the exclusivist does not perceive the range fantasy also has for depicting introspective journeys. To fully appreciate the psychological insight of "The Turn of the Screw," one must keep in mind that it can be a ghost story and still have depth. The fact is that a serious appreciation of modern literature (19th/20th century) does not have to follow the contention of contemporary anti-fantasists that literature must be a realistic depiction of things that can happen, if it's to be any good. Why would anyone desire to so restrict the range of fiction, and indirectly denigrate the fanciful literary excursions of the past, from Homer's to Shakespeare's (why must we always face the here-and-now when artistic illusion can take us elsewhere via suspension of disbelief)? Perhaps because some critics can't admit to themselves that they can be startled by a story whose impetus is nothing more than dressing up in a sheet (vague though that sheet may be) and shouting, "BOO!" If ninety-nine out of one-hundred horror fantasies fail to impress a sophisticated audience, it doesn't follow that the hundredth attempt in the genre must also fail. Especially if that one-hundredth attempt is by a skilled craftsman the likes of Henry James.

Now, of course, one can appreciate the genre of fantasy and real ghost tales and still think that "The Turn of the Screw" does not qualify, at least in the strict sense (it takes a bit of work to come up with a conclusion like that, however). But my purpose is to indicate how "Turn" works as a real ghost story, as well as a fine horror piece.

* There is a parallel here with the way certain film critics accepted Kubrick's 2001: A Space Odyssey (1968). Because these critics had always thought science fiction movies were bad by definition, 2001's quality did not inspire them to rescind their over-generalizations. They seemed to say, "2001 is too good to be science fiction because if we like it, it can't be in a genre we know we dislike!"

Consider the comprehensiveness of the horror: "The Turn of the Screw," with its preoccupied governess, haunted children (whether they are haunted by the ghosts or by the governess), superstitious servant and general atmosphere of menace presents a dramatic image which is disquieting no matter how one interprets the events. The nature of fear is what James seeks to expose to the discerning reader. We know that death is our inevitable destination. The Outer Dark is relentlessly consistent in its promise--it's going to get us! Peter Quint and Miss Jessel are projections of that darkness on the periphery of our consciousness. This is the dilemma of the human condition that Henry James understands so well and presents with such precision: in life there must be death, the absurdity of Life's End approaches inexorably, the personality/identity that is a human being must finally be terminated. So in the meantime, on the road to death, a man should work at expanding his consciousness. He should do this because what else is there to do? The theme of expanding awareness, which is the concern of so much of James' work, is particularly explicit, frighteningly presented, in what he terms his "irresponsible little fiction."¹

Terminology aside, it is this fiction which states the case for meeting the challenge of mortality, the challenge of the ambiguity in existence. It is how people comprehend mortality and cope, or fail to cope, with it that provides the raw material for a large body of fiction. In terms of the horror story the death motif is invaluable. The Dark under the bed was always threatening to our childhood, as was the blackness in the closet, obviously full of monsters and demons and just perhaps something like a Quint or Jessel (Consider the frightening aspect of the latter type of spirits, if when they emerge from the darkness they are attractive enough to children that the young, inexperienced ones submit themselves to evil, the evil which doesn't wear fangs). Terror stems from the childhood fear being essentially correct. In the end we will be claimed! James no doubt had this melancholy realization in mind as the key to writing his definitive horror story. The agents of evil are out to corrupt our childhood. We all know it. And both the forces of good and evil are aware that time is limited. The final embrace must be death, death for sweet-looking children, death for worried governesses, death for Christians and pagans and the fellow next door.

Chain rattling ghosts being too overt for someone of James' sensibilities, he used the finely delineated spectres of Quint and Jessel, quiet spectres, appearing as in life, subtle in their haunting, malevolent in purpose... he used them to the fullest effect. James said he wanted to scare the whole world with his story. He explained that the reason for the tale's ambiguity was due to his respect for the reader's imagination. He knew his audience's submerged fears could more effectively spell out horror than any particularization on his part. Sometimes the thing that terrifies an individual, a secret terror, becomes ludicrous if presented too brazenly in a story. Try too hard to make someone scream and you might make them laugh instead. The art of "The Turn of the Screw" is in the way it doesn't provide an opportunity for the reader to laugh. Because James knew how fear is a result of uncertainty (the greater the uncertainty the greater the fear), he was prepared to write a horror story that would capture popular interest on a scale ranging from the thrill seeker to the high-brow critic. He stirred a brew of psychological tension in his Victorian cauldron. The trick was to provide an atmosphere suitable to grim imaginings, to bring out the demon in everyone's dreams. By the author's careful sleight-of-hand the trick worked, and continues to work, quite nicely. No matter how sophisticated a reader may be

he was a child once, with childhood phobias (whether he was afraid there resided a goblin or a governess in his closet). He probably heard some rather gruesome fairy tales. He may have been told some frank blood-and-thunder ghost stories. And with this background, this valuable conditioning, he is more than ready to be titillated by the suggestions of Henry James in "The Turn of the Screw." Just the awareness of Gothic surroundings, as described by James, is enough to arouse a whole dimension of disquiet. The good teller of scary tales knows all about the members of his audience, you see... and how they might behave in a wind-swept graveyard at midnight, contrary to what his adult audience might admit. The "sacred terror"² which James wishes to evoke is always under the surface of the most tranquil personalities. Chains and shrieks won't do for James' readers. But a cold, cruel face at a window, there for just a moment, and a frightened realization of why the face appeared, will work wonders. "The Turn of the Screw" lets the reader go as far as his imagination will take him.

One problem can arise from the technique of indirection, however. As finely honed as "The Turn of the Screw" is, the impact of the tale of course depends on the way it is read. By leaving as much to the imagination as he did, James laid the groundwork for those who would theorize away every last vestige of supernatural terror, who would reduce the fear down to psychoanalysis, to a cause-and-effect case against the "insane" governess. Even though in the preface to The Aspern Papers James referred to "Turn" as, "a fairy-tale pure and simple--save indeed as to its springing not from an artless and measureless, but from a conscious and cultivated credulity," and he called it, "a piece of ingenuity... an amulette to catch those not easily caught (the "fun" of the capture of the merely witless being ever but small), the jaded, the disillusioned, the fastidious,"* even though James said that in writing the tale, "I cast my lot with pure romance," and in reference to the apparitions he pointed out, "...Peter Quint and Miss Jessel are not 'ghosts' at all, as we know the ghost, but goblins, elves, imps, demons as loosely constructed as those of the old trials for witchcraft..."³ (a qualification of the type of supernatural being, leaving no doubt in my mind as to James' intentions concerning the reality of the apparitions), even though James was this explicit about the nature of his mystifying novelette, still is there a school of critics who insist the evil in "The Turn of the Screw" is all in the mind of the governess, and her subsequent actions against the children. James gave his young lady "authority,"⁴ but those who think the story presents a hallucination resulting from neurotic sex-repression, argue the authority the governess has is only that which she holds over the children. Such an argument about what James meant by "authority" seems to be stretching a point, at least in the eyes of this somewhat jaded observer.** But moving on... When James discussed, in the Aspern preface, the "false friends"⁵ of Miles and Flora, one might naturally think he was talking about the ghosts (though James specifies the type

* This quotation is often used by critics of both the supernatural and anti-supernatural schools, but especially by the latter. We will return to this statement of James' later on.

** By James' tone I interpret "authority" to mean an accurate reporter's eye.

of supernatural creature I won't try to make distinctions, and will continue referring to Quint and Jessel as ghosts). The hallucination school of critics says that James meant to include both the governess and the dead servants in "false friends," but why did James refer to both in the present tense unless the ghosts are real? It would have made things so much easier on those critics if James had put only one ghost in the story and then written about the "false friend" of the children. Finally James made one more point in that useful preface which seems to leave little doubt about the supernatural nature of the story: "Good ghosts, speaking by book, make poor subjects, and it was clear that from the first my hovering prowling blighting presences, my pair of abnormal agents, would have to depart altogether from the rules."⁶ Could he possibly have meant for his evil ghosts to depart right out of the picture, to not exist at all? I think not. After all, James was not reluctant to depict real ghosts in fiction preceding his most famous endeavor in the macabre. Seven years before "The Turn of the Screw" James wrote a story, "Sir Edmund Orme," in which the ghost is seen by both Mrs. Marden and the suitor of Marden's daughter. There is no doubt at the end of the story that the ghost was real--he was a fairly benevolent spirit, at least when compared to the shade of Peter Quint. James knew that horror comes from one person seeing a ghost, an evil ghost, and remaining the lone admitted eye-witness, alone with a damnable memory, alone with doubts about one's sanity (there can be a personal horror in the governess wondering if she is sane or not, without her really being crazy). The horror increases if you have other witnesses to the ghost presences who do not admit the foul reality because they are secretly consorting with the evil--the children under the care of the governess! The governess ends up in a position of alienation, alone against the forces of evil. James wrote a tale which shows what it really means to be lonely, all by yourself in a Universe which allows malevolent spirits to roam free. A Mrs. Grose can offer a shoulder to cry on, a hand clasp, but she can't really be of much help in the final analysis.

*

Edmund Wilson wrote the most famous Freudian interpretation of "The Turn of the Screw" in an article entitled, "The Ambiguity of Henry James." In his article, Wilson went so far as to suggest that James didn't even know what he was doing when he produced the story: "One is lead to conclude that, in 'The Turn of the Screw', not merely is the governess self-deceived, but that James is self-deceived about her."⁷ A critical outcry against that observation inspired Wilson to revise his opinion. He gave back to Henry James the author's "authority," but he didn't give the governess hers. He stayed with the psychopathologic theory, with the change that he now believed James had tried to trick the undiscerning reader into thinking "Turn" was a ghost tale. There have been many Freudian interpretations since the archetypal one, but the anti-supernatural reading of the story preceded Wilson, specifically that of Harold C. Goddard's written lecture, entitled after his death as (appropriately), "A Pre-Freudian Reading of 'The Turn of the Screw'." The problem with these interpretations is in the way they reduce the story to the level of a literary ink-blot, clearing up all the mystery on the psychiatrist's couch, "solving" the story as if it were a Who-dunit. These interpretations seem not to be in rapport with a story seeking to scare the whole world, but they do have one virtue. They point out how the governess is wrong to not seek help from outside, wrong to try to fight the evil by herself (the anti-supernaturalist can use this to disprove the existence of the ghosts,

at least from his limited view--the idea that deep down the woman knows the ghosts aren't real and that's why she doesn't seek help). She is courageous but also foolish. If Bram Stoker had written the story, the governess could have called on Van Helsing to dispose of Quint and Jessel, if Van Helsing weren't busy with Count Dracula at the time. No easy outs are provided by James, no pat solutions. One can't use garlic and hammer-and-stake to dispose of an evil as vague as the one presented in this story. But the evil is there! It is true the governess feels attracted to her employer. She tends to smother her charges with affection and her own anxiety, and she hopes she'll look good in the eyes of her employer. The fact that she attempts to fight the apparitions and save the children all by herself proves the tragic flaw in her character. But that's the essential horror and the underlying reality of the tale! In the real world one can't turn to a Van Helsing for help. Everybody knows that the supernatural doesn't exist (the Freudians would even point this out to a ghost). What can the governess do? In the end she is embracing a dead boy who has been dispossessed, while the boy's sister is in a delirium, raving about the awful governess. Who will believe the narrator of the tale? Certainly not Edmund Wilson, who will have her committed. To borrow from Conrad, "The horror, the horror!"

Of course, horror is purely a subjective matter. And I readily admit it is personal taste which makes me prefer the fantasy to the non-fantasy. Consider what is more terrifying: Evil spirits exist to whom the boundaries of time and space mean nothing; the pit of Hell sends forth its agents and one never knows if he is safe from them or not (I escaped from the living Quint but will I escape from the dead one?)... or, an insane governess so upsets the children that they both become ill, and one finally dies through the power of suggestion. If someone chooses the latter as more terrifying it is only because the latter is more likely to happen than the former. But a good ghost story makes you wonder about the nature of reality. If you were a child again, would you rather have a kooky governess or would you rather submit yourself to demoniac forces? If Henry James wanted to scare the whole world with his story would he present little Miles as an innocent, driven to death by the words and harsh grasp of an emotionally frustrated teacher/nurse, or would he present Miles as only innocent looking, but inwardly corrupted by an Evil outside of the human sphere? Take the latter interpretation and the governess saves the boy's soul. It also becomes a more frightening tale.

In Edna Kenton's article, "Henry James to the Ruminant Reader: The Turn of the Screw," she presented one of the more famous of the "hoax" theories for James' famous story. She began her analysis with the well known quote by James explaining how his story is meant to catch "...the jaded, the disillusioned, the fastidious."⁸ That statement by James is important, and it is misinterpreted by Kenton and many others (their idea being that smart folks don't fall for ghost tales). James sought to create a tale conducive to suspension of disbelief. Perhaps he didn't expect the "disillusioned" to go to such great lengths not to suspend disbelief in the quest for the "sacred terror." Or perhaps his trap was to create a maze so complex that the fastidious would get tangled up in it, unable to extricate themselves with the simple assertion, "Well, it's only a ghost story!" Perhaps James had a joke on everyone! One thing remains evident, however. The screw turns tightest when the ghosts are real and the psychological tension the result of that horrid reality.

FOOTNOTES

¹Gerald Willen, The Turn of the Screw, Thomas Y. Crowell Company, New York, 1960 p. 95

²Ibid., p. 96

³Ibid., p. 97

⁴Ibid., p. 99

⁵Ibid., p. 101

⁶Ibid., p. 99

⁷Ibid., p. 147

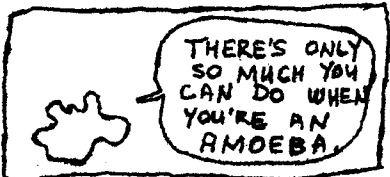
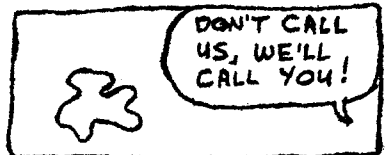
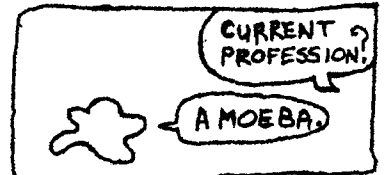
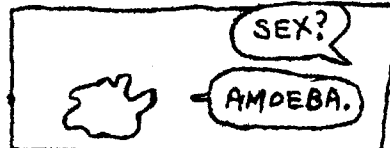
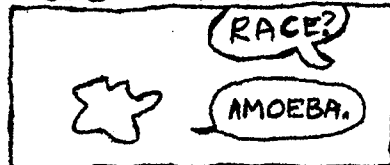
⁸Ibid., p. 102

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JOB INTERVIEW



IMPRUDENCE!

-ALSO KNOWN AS, "TRANSCEDENTAL MUCK:

or a Hindu decides to fall down in the American West."

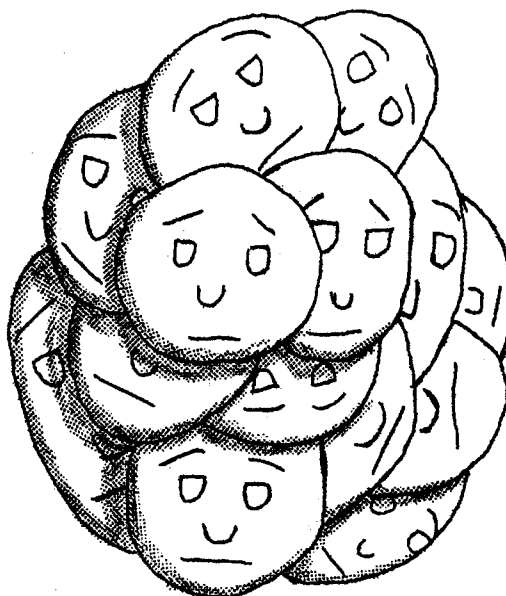
The rash young fakir in the West,
To put his talents to the test
Said, "Shoot, go ahead!"
'Twas easily said.
Boot Hill now accords final rest.

A SICK SPACE FILLER

-collaborator: Michael Ogden

There was an old poet named MILTON,
Whose verses were much less than liltin'.
He was blind as a bat,
Yes, that's where he was at;
At Orphic pinball always tiltin'.

OUR
CULD
RUNNETH
OVER~



You have probably seen, as have I, the propoganda button asserting, "CAPITALISM FOULS THINGS UP!" A photograph of a smoke-stack belching out the oh-so-terrible fumes of industry is the crux of the button's argument, a picture calculated to bring out the avenging ecologist in all but the most unaware. But the realization that the photo could have been taken of an industrial plant in a communist or socialist country, as readily as in a "capitalist" country, indicates the foolishness of perceiving industry as exclusively the province of one economic theory. The pollution/industry issue can be a problem under any economic system if there is a high level technology at work (the ecology of any region is not affected by whether the paper-clip mill is owned by one tycoon or fifty bureaucrats). The button should read, "INDUSTRY FOULS THINGS UP," if it is to express any inner-consistency of logic. So we have the real premise behind the button...

Is the logic yet satisfactory? Though the negative attitude against industry might seem reasonable at first glance, from an ecological point of view, closer examination reveals a position as superficial as the one expressed by the "capitalism" statement. Industrial production is merely man's use of natural elements (and what isn't natural?) to create things which are physical extensions of his self. The results of industry increase man's comfort and increase his chances of survival. Is this evolutionary imperative (man must shape his personal environment for survival) to be condemned out of hand? Especially when warnings about environmental deterioration are primarily made out of concern for man's survival/welfare? Obviously the ecological issue is too complex to be pigeon-holed by so simplistic an overview as expressed by either of the "fouls things up" generalizations. Man is the machine making animal. He will not give up that which makes him Man.

By now you may have surmized that my interest is not so much with analysis of pre-fabricated wisdom buttons as with the debate over Ecology. But what I wish to discredit from the start is the "button mentality" approach to the problem, an approach which makes for the eco-fanatic, he who would scrap civilization in order to save it. The stereotype of the eco-fanatic can include a person who preaches on the subject of deteriorating environment for hours on end without once mentioning the underlying cause of the problem--the population explosion. A case of mental pollution, he is satisfied to mouth the same tired cliches against the work/produce ethic which keeps him clothed and fed and perhaps healthy. He likes buttons. But he wants to scrap the technology that makes his buttons. His inability to grasp the complexity of "ecology" makes him worse than the complacent and unreceptive crowd he wishes to stir to action.

A thesis then! A thesis to elucidate on the underlying cause of environmental decay. A thesis to cry out an answer:

- A.) The current pollution problems are a forewarning of a possible ecological change (inadvertently brought about by man) which could be ultimately disastrous for man's survival.
- B.) The reason for this situation is the population explosion. There are too many people in too little territory. The result of extreme overcrowding is not just pollution but also starvation, unhealthy conditions and increased violence between members of the same species. All together it's a possible road to extinction.
- C.) The Solution--birth control technology needs to correlate with consumer technology. Whether man will survive to eventually spread out to the stars, or die aborning in his planetary crib, depends on his ability to recognize and resolve this problem.

A little wordy for a catch-phrase perhaps (awkward to fit on a button) but adequately reflecting my position. The detail of corroboration remains. Bear with me, gentle reader. Having already given my conclusions I should now begin at the beginning with some proof.

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In the bucolic past, before the consequences of the industrial revolution, there was a social requirement for large family units. Daily sustenance was considerably more of a challenge to our forefathers than it is for us today. Agriculture required plenty of offspring to keep the produce at an adequate level for survival. The infant mortality rate was high and the more births in the family the better a chance for human perpetuation. The average life span was much shorter in a world where medical technology was in the beginning stages (cruder than today's beginning stage). Lots of sons and daughters provided Maw and Paw with a cheap source of labor, as well as social security for when they were too old and grey to keep at the plow. The same principle applied to earlier hunting and gathering societies, where granpaw was too old to run down the long-leggity beast, and granmaw was too old to care. Of course this reason for large families was primarily the economic one. There was also the cogent factor that copulation is fun.

TIME MARCHES ON! Enter the Industrial Revolution. The repercussions of technological progress become the dominant motif of societies increasingly mechanized. The momentum of progress insures that progress continues, unless a disaster should intervene. Humanity (in the civilized/industrialized parts of the world--soon to be the world entire) experiences improved quality of life. Folks live better than their ancestors. It's because of a basic principle. One machine can do the work of many human laborers. Productivity increases spectacularly with the implementation of robot devices. And while the production aspect of applied science functions dramatically (including everything from growing better beans to developing new wonder fabrics) the school of medical technology makes correlatively great strides. The individual's life span is increased by decades from what it used to be in the "good old days." Each year brings more medical improvements and a still increasing life span. To quote life expectancy figures for the U.S.A. from the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company, "1900 A.D. - 47.3 years

1920 " " - 53 years
1940 " " - 60 years
1968 " " - 70.2 years."¹

It is easy to see that the momentum of medical progress insures longer and longer life spans for members of *mankind* as the years go by. But despite all these changes and innovations of Science, one basic pasttime of people remains the same. Copulation is still fun!

We may now reconsider the family unit, put it in context to today's situation. Maw and Paw manage to stay alive much longer than Great Granmaw and Great Granpaw. And Maw and Paw's kids keep healthy and kicking longer than Maw and Paw because the doctors keep improving their medical methods. So if Maw and Paw have ten kids, most likely all ten will live to have their families of ten, whereas in the old days some of those kids wouldn't have made it to the copulation stage. The doctors keep improving their craft. And mechanical comforts keep on improving. Maw and Paw and family keep on working so they can buy the new devices. But the mechanical devices need energy to function and the more people requiring them, the more energy is used up. And when energy is consumed it leaves by-products.

Agriculture keeps producing its goodies. Maw and Paw and family use the goodies. But the larger the family the more goodies are needed. And more families, occupying more area, dictate that scientists figure out ways of extracting more produce from less area. The number of families double and triple and quadruple. But the territory of planet earth does not increase. More unused area has to be used--scientists make plans to farm the oceans and utilize deserts and so forth. But no matter how dilligently the food producer works, he keeps falling behind the rate of population increase. As for the supply of meat, it shouldn't have to be pointed out how this luxury's availability is dependent on plant availability. The agricultural scientist keeps sophisticating and improving his means of perpetuating man's existence, but it's quite a race between production and the number of Maws and Paws. As Dr. Isaac Asimov describes the situation, demographically, "At the time of Julius Caesar, when earth's human population is estimated to have been 150 million, that population was increasing at a rate such that it would double in 1,000 years if that rate remained steady. Today, with earth's population estimated at 3,680 million (25 times what it was in Caesar's time) it is increasing at a rate which, if steady, will cause it to double in 35 years."²

The technological/industrial complex attempts to keep up with the breeding challenge. But to keep up means to use more energy, and since energy cannot be created or destroyed, only changed in form, this leaves by-products in the environment. And one day Maw and Paw and their kids look around and see industrial by-products in the air and the water. They see this awful pollution and wonder why it's there.

Perhaps Maw and Paw decide pollution is just one of those things which can't be helped, a minor inconvenience that must be endured if the horn of plenty is to keep providing. Or perhaps they decide that it's a temporary nuisance to be cleared up as soon as scientists figure out a solution, a solution going no further than the cleaning up of a smoke-stack's smoke of course.

Perhaps Maw and Paw's kids decide industry is evil and awful to pollute the pretty landscape and must be destroyed if N*A*T*U*R*E is to be victorious. Perhaps the kids don't see man and his paraphernalia as part of nature, even though man is the earth's superior animal and his creations are the result of Nature dictating he manipulate his environment. Perhaps the kids wear a plastic button which condemns the creator of that button.

Perhaps neither Maw, Paw or kid see pollution as the result of too many Maws, Paws and kids for a technological society. Perhaps they don't understand some basic facts of life, laws of nature if you will. First: all animals leave a certain amount and type of waste matter in the environment. Man is no different from any other animal in this respect...he is the expert in this department.

Second: each type of waste matter produced by some living creature can be used by another creature. The dung of a horse is used by flies and worms and other gourmets of the animal kingdom. Third: when a species begins to outnumber its optimum number for the environment which evolved it, a problem develops. There are not enough of the organisms which use the species' effluents, and the waste is not depleted rapidly enough. When waste material remains unabsorbed it has the tendency to alter the environment. Fourth: mankind leaves his own special type of waste material. In addition to feces and urine, which the other animals introduce into the eco-system with equivalent talent, man provides his own special technological brand of "crap." The same organisms which break down non-technological waste matter also break down man's civilization brand...eventually. They are highly indiscriminate organisms. The difficulty is TIME! Plastic trash takes a long period of time to be assimilated by the garbage disposal unit of the ecology. With the density of today's human population, with the great amount of "natural" and "unnatural" waste matter being poured into limited space, the planet's garbage disposal unit is being overworked. And no organism can live in a stew of its own by-products (the sewage plants have become so overburdened with work, they are failing to purify feces/urine waste before it is released into the rivers and streams and lakes and the ocean. Our major bodies of water are being polluted by non-industrial waste as much as they are by factory left overs). Fifth: all this is a warning sign that mankind is becoming too overcrowded! Right?

If Maw and Paw can be made to understand these facts perhaps they can also perceive the options open to humanity, including the best option--birth control. Perhaps they can see through the haze of immediate pollution to the deeper problem and realize the solution has been around all along. The same technology which has made life so good for Maw and Paw has provided them means of birth control. Birth control pills, sterilization operations (the vasectomy), and mechanical contraceptives are available to Maw and Paw and the kids. And there is the controversial operation of abortion (if you see abortion as negation of potential human life, then it is a valid means of population control. If you see it as murder you might be hesitant to use it). There is also the means of sexual abstinence but that isn't one of the technological options, and besides that, it isn't any fun. The point is that copulation can be just as worthwhile when done in a way which precludes the possibility of any offspring, as when it's done to make babies. But a problem of implementation occurs. There are Maws and Paws who wish to lengthen their life spans and use all the conveniences of modern technology without using the methods of birth control provided by that same technology. It's a case of wanting to have your cake and eat it too. The tradition of large families dies hard.

Of course there would be no need for population control if territory increased to accommodate an increasing population. But it doesn't. Planet Earth is pretty well occupied. Its frontier days are over. Admittedly the frontiers of outer space will one day offer infinite possibilities for colonization...one day! But, excluding our home planet, the territories in our solar system would require very advanced life-support systems to maintain just small handfuls of human life, and the whole operation would be extremely expensive. That's not even mentioning the problem of getting people out there. Our space technology is in the infancy stage, a time for explorers and experts, not for families searching for new living area. The problem of over-population is increasing at such speed that the outer space option can't possibly help (planets habitable for human life are no doubt to be found in other solar systems, but we might not develop a technology sufficient for the needs of inter-stellar travel for centuries).

The fact is that the human species may not survive for centuries unless we take action to decrease the birth rate now. Because if we do not take voluntary action to decrease the birth rate correlatively with the decreasing death rate, Dear Old Mother Nature will increase the death rate correlatively with the increasing birth

rate. Then everything will balance out. And the ways the death rate will be increased include a variety of fun-things, like FAMINE (the decade diet plan), and of course INCREASING POLLUTION (poison is unhealthy), and PESTILENCE (to keep our busy doctors busier). But most of all, man's death rate can be increased spectacularly by a favorite hobby of his--WAR! With his current collection of nuclear armaments, the Big War would be quite damaging to the planet's eco-system, and it would certainly decrease the size of a species which has grown too large for its current environment. If man does not choose birth control as a means of limiting the population boom, he may find himself getting claustrophobia from lack of room; he may become frustrated in general; he may become more angry and violent than usual, and the human species may go up in nuclear smoke, which is pollution overtly worse than smoke-stack smoke. Of course the joy of street violence in the jam-packed cities will keep increasing, perhaps in anticipation of Apocalypse Time. One may logically assume men will not become more peaceful toward one another as living conditions degenerate. The spirit of our killer ape ancestors is dominant enough without insuring conditions to inflame its fury. That spirit just might get itself a field day if the Big Boom comes, instead of Big Birth Control. One can ponder the relative merits of suicide.

The most important decision concerning population won't be made by the experts. It will be made by all the prospective Maws and Paws. They should bear in mind the adage of Dr. Asimov, "For every additional pound of human flesh on earth, a pound of some other form of flesh must disappear."³ Which is O.K. if the number of children is within reason. What number is reasonable then? Dr. Paul Ehrlich, the founder of the organization, Zero Population Growth, has a suggestion. He thinks we should stop at two. Have one child to replace the father, one to replace the mother, and then it's birth control time. If everyone in the copulation game decided to do this, if magic was afoot, the population might level off at a size about 10% larger than what constituted the population when the Z.P.G. program was initiated. That's assuming people will keep dying, of course. Industry could handle this population size without polluting the environment too intolerably (with or without population control, industrial guidelines are required,* pollution control devices are needed...oh yes, and litterbugs should be shot on sight). We could continue enjoying the benefits of human-kind's greatest invention, technology, as we decrease the possibility for any catastrophe which could destroy that technology. We will not return to a pre-industrial revolution stage where the killer smog may not get us, but the creeping plague will. We won't return to that type of world unless it is a consequence of an eco-disaster which forces us into the situation. And then we'd but start the climb up again.

What will the Maws and Paws decide? That's what's so important, and interesting. Will they realize they can master the activities of sex without violating any valid morals? Does it have to be shouted from the rooftops that man and woman can completely separate their sexual athletics from the reproductive function? Will they realize it's in their best interests to stop at two? Is it not more economic to have a small family--isn't it easier on the parents, leaving them more money for recreation? And all they have to do is engineer a small conquest of "nature"--use birth control, and prove that good relations can be maintained between the environment and Technological Man. What will be the decision of humanity? Take a good look around you and realize that on a cosmic scale the question reads as: who cares? The answer is: We'd better, because no one else will.

Obviously the situation demands preaching by intelligent advocates of population control. The young people who will be at the breeding stage in a few years, as well as those who are just starting, need most to be reached. But many of these persons now suffer from the dedication of eco-fanatics, the button brigade which

*preferably capitalistic ones, instead of socialistic strangle-holds.

invades any school in sight. The illogicality of the "LIVING FOULS THINGS UP!" ravings can turn reasonable minds off to considerations of the problem entirely, while these same harangues convince others to give up reason! This the world cannot afford (that is, the human race can't afford it). Communication is the crucial step at this point. It must be sung out that quality of life is superior to quantity of life! Otherwise things get more fouled up, and more fouled up, and more fouled up. And propoganda pieces, like this one, will continue being written until Doomsday.

FOOTNOTES

¹This information was used by Ayn Rand in a passionate defense of technology--The New Left: The Anti-Industrial Revolution, The New American Library, Inc. New York, 1971 p. 138

²Isaac Asimov, "The Case Against Man," Orlando Sentinel newspaper, Florida magazine section, July 1970 p. 5-F

³Ibid.

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SPACE TURKEY:

the exploits of Flash RimRod, the jut-jawed, big donged hero of OUTER SPACE

When Flash RimRod arrived at Green World he received an emergency briefing from his old friend, General Sar Kawff. "Flash," announced the general, "the mutants have gotten out of hand." In double-quick time Flash learned that the asexual mutant hordes were intent on wiping out all sexed life on the planet. The godless creatures had already managed to reduce human population by a half! The initial problem was to break a code used by the sexless creatures in organizing their strikes. The officials were looking for a code in a poem which was intercepted en route to the pitiless creatures, but not the best of the experts had discovered the secret. Kawff explained that his people had concentrated on word derivations, line length, syllabics, rhyme, possible cross-coding, ink, paper and lots of other stuff--all to no effect. "If all the scum sucking mutants do with their time is write gibberish and kill sexy folks, well, how can anyone figure 'em out?" asked the general. RimRod found the answer in ten minutes flat. It was accentual. He simply scanned the stress marks and non-stress marks of the poem and discovered a variation on Morse code. Of course it checked out. The friendless mutants were crushed. General Sar Kawff adopted a daughter so Flash could marry her. In fact the general was so thrilled with the way things turned out that he saluted RimRod and said, "Flash, do you realize what you alone have accomplished? You have conquered the eunuch verse!"

Flash shut his eyes in rapture and said, in a tone appropriately modulated, "Hot Damn!" (never to be continued)

from
the
front
row

-A REVIEW-

I must confess my not-so-secret passion. Films! I am obsessed by commercial feature films. Once upon a time my parents thought I spent too much time at the moving picture shows. When I went to college my folks were convinced that I'd be too busy to maintain my film viewing at the level to which I'd become accustomed. Hah! I got a job--oh, such a job. I'm a college senior who has been working at the Florida State University film series since my freshman year. I've ushered and sold tickets and now I'm box office manager. I've seen more movies than ever since I've been at the university. And I still go to town (Tonto and I) when a good flick comes by. Movies, movies, movies! Why, I've even taken academic courses in cinema (yes, there is real scholastic credit in watching films; the right films under the right circumstances). I read film books. I buy film magazines (from Famous Monsters of Filmland to Take One). I even thumb through film catalogues--which is getting in pretty deep. I'm surrounded by fellow film freaks, science fiction fans one and all. So what does everyone expect me to do in this magazine, my first fanzine? If I write a review, surely I'm expected to write a FILM REVIEW, preferably of a science fiction picture.

Double-Hah! I'll show 'em. I'll show fan-friends and folks alike. I'll prove that I'm not in a rut. Not only will I resist reviewing an SFilm, I won't even review a film. I'll review LIVE THEATRE instead! (Gasp, Choke!) And what's so beautiful about that type of review is that I can play the Omnipotent Critic ... in an untouchable position. Nobody can check out what I say if they didn't see the initial performance that I saw. An evening at live theatre is a "happening" that is once-and-only. It is here and gone. Mr. Reader: you will just have to trust me if you didn't see the F.S.U. Studio production of two one-act plays which so inspired me that I decided to review the show, because of an aesthetic impetus ... and because I had to do it for my theatre class. Naturally there is no truth to the rumor that I would have put a film review in this spot if I'd been taking a film course the quarter this fanzine was published. (Chuckle, Chuckle!) I do not let extraneous concerns affect my fanzine judgement. (Gibber, Gibber!) Of course no-one may care to read the following review (or this inordinately long introduction for that matter), considering its somewhat limited appeal. But this is a real, live fanzine, gang. And it says right on the label that you can do watcha-wanna in a fanzine. Here we go...

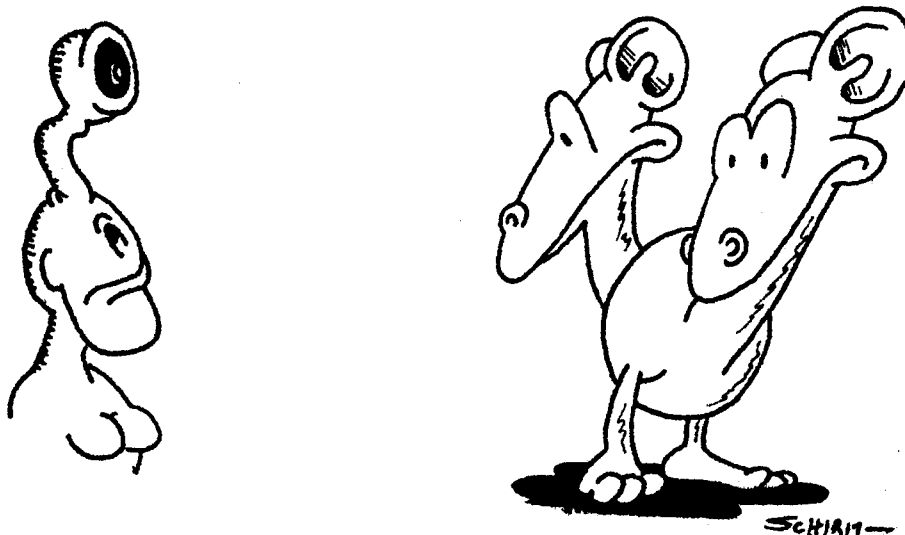
Studio One--F.S.U. student theatre's first production of the Fall quarter. I sit in the front row, watching the perspiration bead on the faces of Chimp Chalmers, Danny Lliteras and Paul Prece. There's a lot of shouting and running around. There are occasional bursts of dancing/singing frenzy, followed by quiet introspection, followed by shouts, followed by the throwing of an accordion against a seedy looking wall (John Urquhart made a directorial blunder when he had his actors throw stuff against the wobbling stage flats--the audience is more than aware that it's watching a play, without the visual remin-

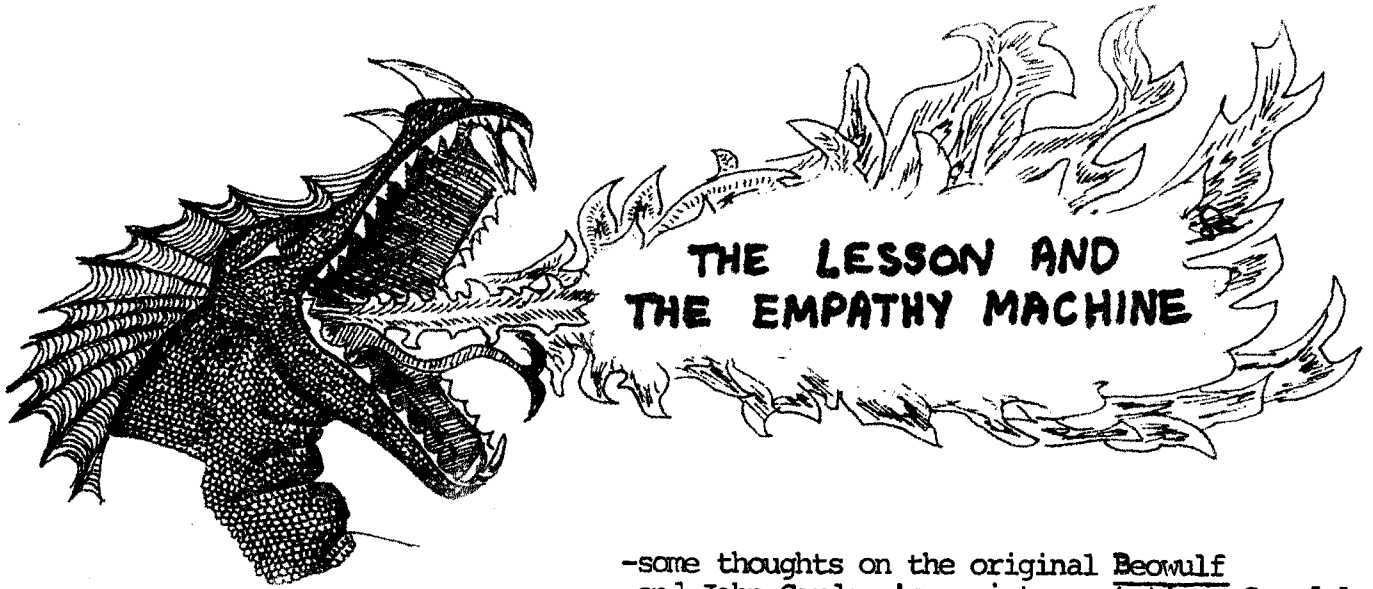
der of a set on the verge of falling down). "But we were asked to a party!" says a character, distraught. Another character asks, "Do you call this a party?" Finally the character played by Paul Prece makes the wise decision to hang himself, pronouncing emphatically, "I can't go on without a party!" From the front row I ponder: was I asked to a play; who can call this a play; can I go on without a play? I continue to watch the play... Somehow I know that I can't leave. "Why do you think we came here, you clown?" is a question that strikes me as apt, even though an actor screams it out for no apparent reason. I am the clown. I decide not to applaud when the one-act play called The Party, written by Slawomir Mrozek (gee, what a funny name), is over, complete, finished. In the meantime, while I wait for the curtain to rescue me, I play my part in this Theatre Experience--I am the critic, a blase observer writing notes on my program, planning to pan hell out of The Party that never happened. But a voice in the back of my head, speaking softly so as not to disturb the people around me, asks: why don't you give the play a chance--aren't you intellectual enough to appreciate the message of this play? The message to which the voice refers I know not. I decide to analyze the acting. For the first half of the play I am convinced the acting is mediocre. Chalmers, Lliteras and Prece seem unsure of themselves. They don't project believability. But as the play progresses I begin to sympathize with the actors. I start piecing together the script of the play from what I see and hear. The more I think about it (having time for heavy contemplation during Mrozek's ART) the more convinced I become that the world's finest actors could look bad in The Party. I am watching a poor man's Waiting for Godot--Waiting for Party--a play that doesn't have the depth or meaning of Godot (Translation: Waiting for Godot is next to zero, The Party is zero). I reach a conclusion. Studio One made a poor choice in selecting Mrozek's folly to lead off their festival of one-act plays. It doesn't have much audience appeal (nor does it deserve popularity) and young, fairly inexperienced actors never look more inexperienced than when putting on a production of this kind. The play drags on. I begin to decline the last name of Danny Lliteras (I have a Latin test the next day and the practice helps). Suddenly the play is over. Prece didn't get hanged. Paranoia lives. The biggest guy on stage (Son of Jock) throws the gimmick of the play at the audience, by asking the theatre goers "where the play is." I'm ashamed of myself. I actually do some light applause when the actors take their bow. There must be a flaw in my upbringing. Being polite is a relative virtue. I applaud the stage-hands when they get a tangled curtain untangled.

Before Sean O'Casey's Bedtime Story begins, there is a "preview" of part of that play. The stage curtains move, a shape extrudes! A rug crawls out from under the curtains (not the whole rug of course, just a corner). I stare at the corner of the rug before the curtain goes up. I am seeing part of the set for Bedtime Story before the play begins. I wonder if this is an ill omen. Will the second play be as poor as the first? I am worried as I observe that hairy rug lie there, so complacent. Then it happens: the play begins. And it is good, fun, enjoyable, nothing like The Party. It's a good old fashioned Situation Comedy (and I don't mean I Love Lucy banality). O'Casey pokes fun at religion and sex and propriety and all those other silly things that so obsess us. There are Catholic jokes and catholic jokes, there are word gags and sight gags, there's an adequate set and nice enough Irish accents on the part of the cast. Director Faraone knows how to handle visual comedy of the Max Sennett school--the scene where Schneeman and Ellington revolve around each other, menacingly, Schneeman

with wine bottle upraised, Ellington with broom-handle, both looking foolish and mechanical. The acting is appropriately overdone--Ham everywhere the eye can see. Patricia Oetken is an excellent actress (Translation: she's sexy). There isn't a male in the audience who wouldn't consider her a desirable bed partner, hence the humor of John Jo Mulligan's (Schneeman) ultra-Catholic, ultra-paranoid regret for his activities of the evening. Glen Ellington is a fabulous comedy drunk. I've never seen anyone look less formidable when holding a club. The best comedy the play offers is the tension between Ellington and Schneeman at that bizarre climax of implied violence, when frightened John Jo Mulligan gets the upper hand and his voice changes from being passive to being aggressive as a tiger's. With a hearty, "I've got you now!" John Jo Mulligan, the loveable dummy, leaps over the couch and into the hearts of, roughly, a hundred theatre goers. (Studio One didn't do all that fantastic a job with Bedtime Story, but after The Party it was the ultimate in theatre. Even by itself, Studio's production of Bedtime Story would have been worth going out of the way to see. No-one argued with the price--free admission.) When the O'Casey play ends I applaud loudly.

Standing up, leaving the front row of the Conradi theatre, glancing over some notes. I plan to write a scholarly paper, to analyze the differences between the existentialist first play, and the conventional second play. But I get sidetracked. I forget when the assignment is due. On the fateful day, I have nothing to turn in. With my teacher I try subterfuge, but I bungle it. He is merciful none the less. He gives me a delay on my project. I sit in front of a typewriter--an IBM selectric. Oh, such a paper I will write! Then I think about all the balderdash I intend to pour out, throwing around terms like "existentialism" and "naturalism" and the like. I decide to do a sensory/perception thing instead. Yeah, that's what theatre is all about. I disliked the first play enough to take notes during it. The second play was much too entertaining to write one word during its execution (besides, only cretins jot down thoughts during a play, as we all know: one should concentrate with his entire being on the stage). I will sit in the front row again for Studio Two. If only they'd do Bradbury's The Pedestrian, but they won't.





-some thoughts on the original Beowulf
and John Gardner's re-interpretation, Grendel

The monster. Traditional image of fear and primordial lusts. The pagan's dread manifest in the foreground of his life, the Christian's knowledge of the dark background of his universe, any man's nightmare of approaching death, of the inescapable finis. It is this encompassing concept given flesh and claws and a thirst for blood that stalks in the womb-dark night. It is a brooding knowledge given the bulk-form of a monster's body that must hunt, just as the sun must rise and set, for it can do no other. It is the thing that touches the nerve of dread in all the little heads of collective mankind (with the notable exception of the Hero). Its shadow hangs over fearful humans; it is a broad shade correlative to its conceit and awareness of power. Beware the perpetual hunger that walks--Grendel!

From the materials of Anglo-Saxon folklore, the early eighth century Anglian poet of Beowulf draws his inspiration for a masterpiece in poetic Epic form. He is an eclectic artist, a Christian poet using the myths and legends of raw paganism for a dual purpose--to tell a compelling narrative, and to imply something more profound than just the surface of the story. Not content merely to provide a metrical rendition of dynamic events from Danish/Geatish folklore, this poet knows the value of artistic pragmatism and acts accordingly. He grasps his opportunity to communicate moral principles by implication, to show the essential loneliness and hopelessness of the pagan lifestyle. He is sophisticated enough to know that understatement can be more effective than trumpeting his message (no Billy Graham, he). And he is imaginative enough to know the dramatic potential of his fabrications, his cast of monsters. As he desires to promote the systematized Christian faith over the uncertainty of paganism, he does so by depicting the fundamental wrongness of pagan ways. He presents the drawbacks of what he opposes rather than preaching the benefits of his own position.

The rich background of pre-Christian sagas with their melancholy atmosphere is appropriate to the poet's needs. The resolutions to the conflicts are generally defeatist in nature. Even the pantheon

of Norse deities is doomed to eventual destruction at the day of Ragnarok. The ~~cruel kill-or-be-killed~~ world perceived by the pagan of the cold northlands is of course reflected in pagan(ish) art. Prior to his clash with Grendel, Beowulf makes a statement about fate deciding the outcome of the battle between man and monster. In effect he says there is nothing man can do against the machinery of predestination, that fate decides regardless of the abilities of the fighters. Of course the pagan can't exercise free will to accept Christianity (the poet's cure) when he is ignorant of this means to salvation. The Christian poet can consider Beowulf to be a hero, but only a lost hero.

Understanding the pagan attitude toward imminent doom, the poet of Beowulf uses his talents to carry this state of affairs to the despairing limit. By doing this for a non-pagan audience he is able to work the uncivilized subject matter into a moral lesson for the "saved" reader. He shows the folly of those practices which his religion condemns as sin, and does so in an intriguing manner by the exclusion of any overt theology (the fundamentalist Christian can't complain because this is, after all, dealing with people oblivious to the TRUE WAY, while the modern reader, more skeptical about the Beowulf poet's now orthodox beliefs, is seduced into reading the poem through curiosity in the pagan tragedy. All in all there is genuine foresight evident in this poet's work). The poem's structure not only demonstrates a good sense of story telling but a subtlety of technique effective enough to make the poem last as an object lesson to future generations, future cultures.

The poet of Beowulf seeks to present as balanced a picture of his characters as he can within the limits of his moral purpose. In detail he shows the nobility of the pagan hero pitted against the forces of evil (the monsters), even though Beowulf's virtues aren't enough for salvation from misery; worldly, earth-bound virtues that they are. And we see Hrothgar as a good king doing the best he can with his worldly knowledge, despite his ignorance of greater things. The king's position, pagan as it is, demands enough respect for an aura of protection to surround his throne against Grendel, that blackest of monsters, that most manlike of monsters.

The monsters are characterized to dramatize the least appealing aspect of life, the harbingers of devastation, the ones who Wait and Want. They provide the most complete reason for pessimism over the Old Ways. The monsters, by virtue of their deformity, provide an opportunity for the artist to most clearly symbolize the depravity inherent in the nature of paganism (Grendel is war and bloodlust and hate, while the dragon is purest greed). As to the question which can be raised: why do the monsters feed on the fear and lives of pagan men, when the fiends are also pagan (a case of eating one's own)? --the answer is in the total lack of mercy allowed by the pagan scheme of things. The poet well understands the provision for human frailty made by the spirit of Christianity. He knows there is no such tolerance in the pagan universe. So he uses the monsters as exclamation points to his revelation.

When defeated by Beowulf's strong grip, Grendel is described by the poet as a slave of hell who screams over his wrenched-out arm. Grendel is an unforgettable image of the heathen and the damned. But Beowulf and company do not fare that much better in the final analysis. In one of the few unsubtle passages of the poem (from the

standpoint of communicating the moral lesson) the men are described as totally ignorant of Providence and consequently their prayers are doomed affairs--pleading for aid at Hell's gates. The men are doomed in as complete a sense as the more obviously damned Grendel. Yet this spiritual equivocation does not destroy the clear distinctions made by the poet, like the difference between the heroic Beowulf and the grisly Grendel. Monster and man are both immersed in the pagan darkness, but Grendel is so much deeper in the gloom (Grendel's physical appearance reflects his inner state). The Grendel creature clearly symbolizes everything the poet condemns in pagan society, with its uncontrolled lusts and its non-solution to the question of death, just as the men know no moral restraints and have no idea where their souls go after this Earth. Witness the spectacle of paganism feeding on itself the way a stomach dissolves its inner wall for lack of food.

Continuing with the monster/pagan parallels: there is the heathen hoard of gold which the dragon protects . . . connecting the serpent image with the image of forbidden wealth. The dragon, evil personified, symbolizes the final dead-end of worldly greed. Consider this pit of greed in which falls one barrel-chested hero despite his other virtues. How believable it is that Beowulf, who could stand against Grendel, who could preserve his purity of goodness against such a monster, is corrupted by his relationship to other human beings (even well-meaning ones) so that he is not pure enough to survive his eventual meeting with the dragon, once he is contaminated. Despite the evil of the dragon, there is something more disturbing than all the serpent's flame when Beowulf's men desert him during the Hero's confrontation with scaled evil. But there is also horror in the casual description of Beowulf crushing the life out of a Christian Frank with the same hand that killed a monster--where is discrimination?

Beowulf is a rough no-holds-barred adventure. Imagination and style are the elements which make it work. It succeeds on a level more universal than even pagan or Christian. Because Beowulf defeats the monster by the strength of his good arm and the strength of his character, we can rejoice over the temporary setback to the forces of death that one day claim all men. It is a victory no matter which monster falls, be it Grendel, Grendel's mother, or the dragon. There is universal value in Beowulf's demonstration of the limits to the hedonist way of life--it is a handbook on "How Not to Live."

By the use of analogies, foreshadowing devices, alliterations and a complexity of images, the poet is able to transcend the otherwise dreary literary level of his time. And when observing the differences between Beowulf and other poems of the 7th/8th century composed in the same neighborhood, the contrast is easily noticed. For instance, the Beowulf poet has the monstrous Grendel swimming down to his hidden lair, a habitation that can easily be used to symbolize Hell. If the same scene were handled by a lesser poet/contemporary, it would either be presented as, "Look now, he's gone to Hell!" or there would be no hint of symbolism--it could be nothing more than a lair. The poet in question, the artist, need not be so blunt or simplistic. He makes his point with some finesse. He can drop hints as to his religious temperament with references to One God, and then tie it all in with a memorable description of life as a ship going from one shore to another. He doesn't have to shout. That's the essence of

real poetry. The Beowulf poet uses history non-chronologically for artistic effect and has a plot structure that suspensefully builds on itself. He escapes the temptation to be merely redundant. The Beowulf poet's masterpiece is immortal even though his name is not. It has lasted over a thousand years and seems to gain popularity.

*

Beowulf has become such valued literary currency that a modern novelist uses it for background the way the poet of the original epic harked back to works like The Elder Edda. John Gardner writes Grendel (Ballantine Books, New York, 1971), an audacious experiment utilizing techniques from the stream of consciousness school of literature. He retells the story from the monster's point of view. The subjective, vivid, first person approach makes Grendel a sympathetic character, this time around. Though this version somewhat limits the number of events retold from the original (once the narrator is killed it becomes somewhat awkward to continue) Gardner makes up for any narrative lack by filling in the background of Grendel's feud with Hrothgar and company--he gives us the monster's motives. It is not until very late in the book that Beowulf makes his entrance and by then the fundamental premises of the work have been realized. Beowulf's strong grip again provides the ending, though Beowulf is really incidental to Gardner's theme.

Rather than coming off as a truncated version with only a gimmick to recommend it, Grendel is uniquely its own vision, a philosophically different work from its inspiration (despite some thematic similarities). Whereas Beowulf allows us to keep a psychological distance from the characters and concerns us primarily with the ideas it presents through moral implications, Grendel forces us to empathize with the monster trapped in the vicious circle of his battle with mankind. We feel the stings the monster feels. We understand his outrage at a world that doesn't make sense, where there are no alternatives to the anxiety of his life, where the options are nil. Therein lies the real difference between the works, of course. They both present a treadmill frustration throughout, with Beowulf inexorably on the way from virtue to his fall and Grendel totally damned from the start, but in the confusion of moral greys which is the pagan universe, the Beowulf poet implies the existence of the greater sphere without--the poet's Christian experience! No matter how grim the events, the poet hints at the Christian security on the periphery of the pagan chaos. Sanity can be reached. The values of black and white, definite good and evil, are implicitly understood in Beowulf, even though the pagan hero's defeat of Grendel is to be understood as grey conquering black. One can make moral judgment concerning the events and be correct in so doing. But such is not the case in Grendel. There we have the universe of perpetual greys, where ugliness and beauty melt into the same form, where values are meaningless because on the periphery of chaos . . . is more chaos. Welcome to existentialism. Even the illusion of worth is distorted by Gardner for how else is his MONSTER to see the world? Worldly concerns are all that Grendel can know because any spiritual solace would be anathema to his state. That he cannot escape his state is made obvious over and over in the book, and his depression correlative affects his view of men. Grendel is a nasty monster, with or without your sympathy.

Hrothgar and company are a perpetual source of interest to Grendel. He is attracted to, yet at the same time repelled by, human beings. He senses the kinship he has to men and in his loneliness seeks their companionship. In both poem and novel the men are aware of the manlike nature of the monster, but this serves only to terrify them the more by what they consider to be a travesty of humanity. Grendel learns that he can play on their xenophobia. In the poem, Grendel's hideous form reflects the nature of the pagan soul. In Gardner's work, Grendel becomes a distorted reflection of mankind entire, lost and misunderstood . . . yet dangerous to itself and to other living things. Gardner's dragon, that grand old archetype, points out that Grendel is symbolic of the condition of man; he is important to humans because he scares them into a kind of glory! One cannot have a hero without adversity. But the question is left open by Gardner if such a thing as a real hero can exist at all. There is no doubt about Grendel being the more pessimistic of the works in question.

Grendel tirades against man's progress and man's feeble attempts to barricade himself away from the monster's hunger. Grendel hates the mead hall even as he is drawn to it. He resents the men's ability to mold their environment, to shape chaos into seeming order, and in his antagonism he becomes the agent of destruction. His mere touch bursts open the door of the hall (this scene becomes a smooth running motif throughout Grendel). But the monster hominid feels the temporary elation of Controlling His Environment when he breaks the architecture of man. Once more is felt the kinship between monster and man, both of them conscious of their surroundings, and both wishing control over their own destiny whether they believe Order is possible to achieve or not.

Consider the debate on the spirit-of-free-will versus the-monster-of-predestination. Is free will authentic or a hoax? In Beowulf we see the trap which consumes the pagan. Without Christ, Beowulf cannot escape his fate of separation from the godhead. His choices can be said to be so limited that he actually has none worth mentioning. In Grendel the monster has no hope for salvation, but in his cynicism he judges all men as being lost as he. He listens to the "Shaper"--the monster's appropriate designation for the old singer who tells stories to the playing of a harp in an attempt to give present order to past disorder. Listening to these tales of man's value and the reasons for living, Grendel appreciates the beauty of the musical/narrative art, even though he doesn't believe in the words that are magically interwoven. He doesn't kill the story teller because there is an attempt at immortality in the songs that strike even a monster's deepest desires. Grendel is sure that "meaning" is an illusion, but he wants it to be otherwise. He has no clearly defined goals for his life other than the enjoyment he derives from harassing King Hrothgar.

We can look back at Beowulf's moral journey and see that he believes in the value of his pragmatic goals, even if those objectives are essentially hollow and ultimately worthless. They may be based on principle falsehoods but they do give Beowulf something to hold on to (though gold and flesh are eventually worth no more than their basic constituents--dust). Beowulf's concern is that his fellow Geats already accept him, and he wants to be accepted by the Danes as well.

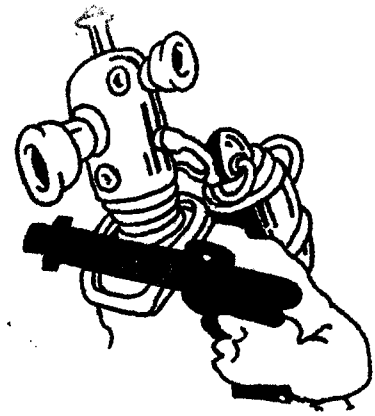
By contrast to Beowulf, Grendel is the loneliest of figures. Beowulf always belongs to the community of man. His great deeds of valor do not go unsung. But to whom can Grendel boast when he does something courageous--his mindless mother (mindless as Gardner presents her)? No wonder it is easier to empathize with Gardner's treatment of Grendel than with either version's picture of Beowulf. What kind of social communion can Grendel know? He can eat the body and drink the blood of some hapless human he catches in the mead hall. He hunts down men, as men hunt down men, and he devours men, as men destroy men, and he does so because what else is there to do? Grendel and Beowulf and Hrothgar and company have one great thing in common . . . no hope for a benevolent universe. Anyway, Grendel doesn't believe in a simple spiritual solution to the world once he has reality spelled out for him by the symbol of wisdom in its most worldly sense--Gardner's supremely confident, and supremely cynical, dragon. Grendel is given a picture of man/monster alone in the wilderness, with no option available but death's oblivion. Beowulf is pessimistic but it does not rule out hope for the reader as long as there is the message--the Christian Way. Over a thousand years later Gardner reduces the reader's hope in a world where religious faith is fast losing ground (or is already dead). Behold loneliness epitomized in Gardner's version.

That "lack of soul" is why Gardner's Grendel suffers psychological distress that straight-forward Beowulf could never know. Grendel lives in a state of constant frustration because he can sense greater truth than Beowulf can. It's the old rule of "the more you learn the more aware you become of what you don't know." The more ignorant of the two characters is the happier (true horror). The Devil is cognizant of complexities that the Hero can't grasp, no matter how strong his arm. Gardner's picture of Grendel is very much a Satanic image, as is the brute of the original. But because the passing years have given us an idea of a sophisticated Devil, instead of mindless evil, this is paralleled by Gardner. His Grendel gives the reader a refined discourse on his plight, speaking in a most educated fashion, no matter how brutal the scene preceding or following his speech. Grendel becomes the star of Gardner's Paradise Lost . . . minus the paradise that never was.

The Beowulf poet shows how easy it is to be trapped in the closing vise of the pagan's moral code which is based on revenge, while John Gardner warns us that it is easier to hate than to love. Both authors use the shock value of the monster symbol to make us see with greater precision. Both are universal in their treatment of the human condition, though of course differing in specifics. Both works can tell us more about the spirit of their times (and the anti-world souls of their authors) than can the most concrete of histories. And there is the one unifying thread of morality which unites the poem and novel, black and white with grey--FIGHT FOR DIGNITY, WIN OR LOSE. A very reserved optimism at best, but something to hold on to, a rule against mildly accepting enslavement; a rule which always has value, and is always applicable.

When studying the two fictions it is necessary to keep in mind the different techniques used to communicate the plight of man (how different are the demands on audience between the third-person Lesson and the gut-direct first-person Empathy Machine!). It would be interesting to see how this material could be treated a thousand years hence. Perhaps by then it will be time to tell the tale from the dragon's point of view.

READING GUIDE TO RAY BRADBURY'S THE MARTIAN CHRONICLES



This reading guide is aimed at undergraduate students taking an English course that concentrates on American literature. It should spark an interest in the whole of Bradbury's work by analyzing his most famous book. Each story of The Martian Chronicles is considered on its own merits, as well as in context. The edition used for this guide is the Bantam paperback, published by arrangement with Doubleday and Company, Inc. BANTAM-H3243. Page numbers of the book will be used for student reference.

Taking the elements of basic science fiction (from telepathy to very advanced robotics) Ray Bradbury works them into a highly personalized imaginative literature. The Martian Chronicles, the key example of Bradbury's approach to science fiction, is considered by many critics to be his finest work, his most influential work. The fantasy-like picture of Mars presented, with no attempt to reflect the actual Mars understood by scientific research, provides the reader with a medium through which Bradbury expresses his views on the human condition. The entertainment value of the book is not subservient to the message, however. Bradbury's belief that a good author never sacrifices pleasure for meaning is nowhere more evident than in the Chronicles.

Bradbury had written a number of Mars stories prior to putting together this collection. Appropriately, the stories were first published in those garish covered pulps which inspired his imagination as a boy . . . provided him with the raw material of SF. With Mars and space travel as the unifying factors of the stories chronicled, Bradbury's book has a wide range (from the horror story, "The Third Expedition," to the comic piece, "The Silent Towns," to the social statement of "Way in the Middle of the Air"). Because the stories are presented chronologically, from January 1999 to October 2026, one should not think Bradbury is attempting prophetic fiction in the fashion of his more practical minded SF colleagues. Admittedly, the author warns us to beware of totalitarian censorship ("Usher II") and atomic war ("The Off Season" and "The Watchers") that may await us in the future. But the impetus behind these stories is not scientific calculation/prediction. Bradbury is in the business of fantasy, of dream-illusion. He needed a planet that could support life as we know it and also allow the author the freedom of The Wizard of Oz. As you read this book, observe the many different uses to which Bradbury puts his planet.

Because of the convenient chronology provided by the author, this reading guide will observe each story in order of its appearance. Perhaps the major theme of The Martian Chronicles is manifest in the quotation Bradbury uses to initiate us: "It is good to renew one's wonder," said the philosopher. "Space travel has again made children of us all."

January 1999: ROCKET SUMMER

In a majority of Bradbury's fiction the transition from one season to the next is a source of beauty and satisfaction--the renewal of life. (The children of Something Wicked This Way Comes and Dandelion Wine are particularly cognizant of the seasons. They can almost hear the subtle shifting of the weather in these Bradbury novels.) The initial mood of the Chronicles is established by this short prose-poem which describes a Mars space program, in Ohio, temporarily bringing summertime to a town during winter. The heat of the rocket, compared to an open oven, changes the climate for a few minutes by melting the snow--an image of Man's works reflecting Nature, rather than being irreconcilable with the "natural." Bradbury wants us to feel Rocket Summer.

Ohio will keep recurring as a launch site for Mars expeditions. Ray Bradbury grew up in the middle west. The site is probably wishful thinking. From the start Bradbury gives us his personal trip to Mars, the Mars of the mind.

February 1999: YLLA

Empathy. Bradbury is especially adept at the art of evoking sympathy. In "Ylla" he creates a very Martian, but at the same time very human, married couple. The environment, the actions, are beautifully alien, but the emotions are all too human. If there is any weakness in the depiction of the couple, it would be in the predictability of their feelings. But any such criticism would of course miss the point of the story, just as condemning the Bradbury Mars for its human-supporting ecology overlooks the purpose in writing about such a Mars. In "Ylla" we are presented with a lesson about human weakness, even though we call it Martian.

Notice how Bradbury takes an image familiar to us, the closing of a flower's petals, and transposes it to a context which is truly alien and at the same time understandable to the general reader. To quote from page 5, "The house was closing itself in, like a giant flower, with the passing of the light." The Bradbury technique of finding the recognizable in the strange, and conversely the strange in the ordinary (the boy's imaginings in Dandelion Wine) is given a tour de force in this story.

The Martian wife dreams of an Earthman coming to Mars. She thinks him an attractive vision. Notice the Earthlike, jealous response of her husband. The fact that amidst all the beauty there is the potential for violence, is implied but none-the-less effective for the understatement. Bradbury seems to be saying that no matter where we go in the universe our passions go with us (see "And the Moon Be Still as Bright"--page 48). Human foibles are evident in a Martian couple, when Martians as closely approximate humankind as do Yll and Ylla. Notice how the story convinces you an Earthman has landed and Yll has killed him, just by the sound of the bee-rifle in the distance and the forced manner of the conversation between husband and wife when Yll returns. Later in the Chronicles we learn the first expedition from Earth failed . . . and we remember "Ylla."

August 1999: THE SUMMER NIGHT

This mood piece further develops the technique of telepathic foreshadowing so important to the previous story. Martians pick up Earth songs before any other sort of telepathic communication. It seems that the essence of a culture is in its music.

August 1999: THE EARTH MEN

This story was published previous to its appearance in The Martian Chronicles. The humor of the first part of the story is obviously satiric, absurdist. The total disinterest of Martians in the arrival of aliens from outer space is darkly funny. Mrs. Ttt is more concerned with her crystal buns in the oven than she is with visiting Earthmen. Even in the midst of a miracle (one world intruding on another) the mundane goes on, unfazed. The perfectly logical resolution to the satire (the Earthmen were thought to be psychotic Martians using their telepathic powers to create the image of a space ship and non-Martian attire) is what makes the story fit so well in the overall structure of the Chronicles.

The pompous, self-righteous psychologist, Mr. Xxx, kills the Earth people and expects the illusion of the rocket to go away. When nothing happens, it takes him some minutes to realize his mistake, that he hasn't killed psychotic Martians, but has probably eliminated real visitors from space. His behavioristic mind cannot comprehend this, so he does what we expect--he shoots himself. How else can he make the illusions go away? Ironically the letter "X" stands for the unknown factor in physics, yet Mr. Xxx doesn't even try to understand anything out of the ordinary. Bradbury foreshadows the irrationality of the psychologists in "Usher II."

The story ends with, "That night it rained all night. The next day was fair and warm." (page 30) The seasons persist, regardless of the stupidity of Earthmen or Martians.

March 2000: THE TAXPAYER

A short piece, right to the point. The taxpayer wants to go to Mars. Who wants to stay behind on Earth where there's censorship and non-subscription and the threat of WW III? The taxpayer sees the rocket take off as he's driven away in a policewagon. He is lifted by the sight, yet physically left on Earth. This type of scene is becoming a regular in contemporary fiction. Consider the men in the bar who watch the Apollo moon-shot in Updike's Rabbit Redux. Despite the great vision they are left in their routine world. So what else is new?

April 2000: THE THIRD EXPEDITION

One of the most famous of the stories from the book, often adapted for radio drama--it is a horror story. The running motif of familiarity in the strange, and vice versa, reaches a peak at the climax of this story. Bradbury's talent for imparting the sinister to a seemingly secure environment is put to particularly good use here (see

his horror fiction in The October Country).

Earthmen land on Mars and discover their deceased relatives apparently alive again (for future story collections Bradbury gave the tale the ironic title of "Mars is Heaven"). Notice how the author puts suspicion in your mind from the start. You know the situation is as potentially dangerous as the captain perceives it, that underneath those friendly exteriors of grandma and grandpa might lurk something malevolent from your point of view, from the invader's point of view. You even have the advantage of knowing what whizzes the Martians are with telepathy, that is if you've been paying attention. But the question Bradbury seems to pose is: "Would you have done differently than the members of the third expedition in a similar situation; would you have let your fear of Bug-eyed Monsters keep you from being with family and friends you never thought you'd see again?" Think how any human would react in such a comprehensive psychological bombardment. It's not easy to tell from your armchair. Bradbury makes you wonder about yourself.

Consider how each expedition from Earth lands in a different region of Mars because the earlier expeditions met with disaster where they landed . . . and because Ray Bradbury can keep telling different stories as the geography changes.

June 2001: --AND THE MOON BE STILL AS BRIGHT

It's time for the fourth expedition and perhaps the most philosophical story chronicled. The idea of most Martians dying from chicken-pox is of course influenced by the germ endings of H. G. Wells' War of the Worlds and First Men in the Moon. It is time for the old story to be told again, that the old makes way for the new.

Bradbury plays the different types of humanity against each other. Biggs and Parkhill and many of the other crew members are "Ugly American" invaders who would as soon destroy the remnants of the beautiful Martian culture as look at it (remember the beauty in "Ylla"). Spender resents his ethnocentric peers to a point where he decides to murder them rather than allow the dirtying of the Martian artifacts. Between these two poles of opinion is the captain (symbolic of what a good leader should be), reasonable, capable of understanding Spender's motivations, but taking sides against the killer of his men. Observe how the captain makes sure that Spender has a "clean death" after their conversation. Spender and the captain understand each other. In the end we see the captain as a morally conscious counterpart of Spender. To quote from page 72, "The next afternoon Parkhill did some target practice in one of the dead cities, shooting out the crystal windows and blowing the tops off the fragile towers. The captain caught Parkhill and knocked his teeth out."

Note also how Bradbury stresses the need for reconciling science and religion. In a Mars story written after The Martian Chronicles, "The Fire Balloons," he elaborates on this idea. Note also how Bradbury keeps reminding the reader where he travels, ". . . the light of the racing twin moons. Their shadows, under them, were double shadows." (page 56) "--And the Moon Be Still as Bright" was written before the book.

August 2001: THE SETTLERS

This is Bradbury's 2001. To paraphrase the opening paragraph of "The Settlers," as does the advertising blurb for the book: "The people of Earth came to Mars. They came because they were afraid or unafraid, happy or unhappy. There was a reason for each man. They were coming to leave something or find something or get something, or to dig up something or bury something. They were coming with small dreams or big dreams or none at all."

December 2001: THE GREEN MORNING

The Johnny Appleseed legend retold! But on Mars the tree planter must have broader interests than just in appletrees. He plants every kind of tree to make more oxygen in the thin Martian atmosphere. When he wakes up one morning to discover plant growth right out of "Jack and the Beanstalk" we are not overly surprised. Bradbury's foreshadowing is one reason. "...rank soil from which might sprout gigantic beanstalks from which, with bone-shaking concussion, might drop screaming giants." (page 76)

February 2002: THE LOCUSTS

Here we have the other end of "Rocket Summer"--what happens to the rockets when they leave the Earth. They come to Mars like locusts, bringing men to reshape the planet. It's Spender's unwanted vision come true ("--And the Moon Be Still as Bright"). And in Bradbury's tone there is mixed feeling, joy as to man's new exodus, sorrow that he must change the alien to fit his desires, even when he is the alien! The Martian Chronicles is the American experiment all over again. Joy and sorrow are flown across space.

August 2002: NIGHT MEETING

Thomas, the main character, thinks about time (the poetic feeling that one can almost touch time) before the time period he lives in intersects with an ancient Martian period, intersects at a lonely place overlooking a Martian town. The juxtaposition of Martian past and Earthman present is delicately handled. Man and Martian see and hear each other, without being able to touch one another. Bradbury plays with consciousness and perception. The Martian sees a new city, while the man sees ancient ruins. The author is telling us that what really matters in life is the NOW. Enjoy life while you may . . .

Note the insect-like vehicle of the Martian, reminiscent of the spider toys of Martian children in "The Earth Men"--page 21. Insects are both alien and familiar.

October 2002: THE SHORE

A brief piece. The planet Mars is of course the other shore. Notice how all the settlers tend to be American. There is another hint of the Big War to come.

February 2003: INTERIM

"It was as if, in many ways, a great earthquake had shaken loose the roots and cellars of an Iowa town, and then, in an instant, a whirlwind twister of Oz-like proportions had carried the entire town off to Mars to set it down without a bump." (page 88) Bradbury claims that Frank Baum's OZ books had a great influence on his writing career. He provides some direct evidence. Bradbury is very much in the American tradition.

April 2003: THE MUSICIANS

An example of the uniquely personal vision of the author. Children play with the skeletal remains of the Martians, strumming the white rib cages as though they were harp strings. Children revel in the macabre. Bradbury points this out without cynicism or satire.

June 2003: WAY IN THE MIDDLE OF THE AIR

The race problem in the American South is approached from the standpoint of the white bigot's dependence on the Negroes. The Negroes one day all go to Mars. They just up and leave (the rockets have been built in Africa for the purpose of the great migration). The whole point of the story is: without the niggers what do the white bigots have left? There is (if you will forgive the pun) black humor in the picture of Klansmen sitting around, late at night, with absolutely nothing to do! Bradbury's optimistic tone shows through even here. Many of the old whites accept the migration. It is the middle-aged bigot, Samuel Teece, who becomes angry at the thought that "they" will be getting away. It is amusing to observe how Bradbury presents the Teece character as so fundamentally immature. Teece has got to win, somehow, against the niggers, right up to the very end. And when all his ranting and raving has amounted to nothing, he still attempts to have the last word, as it were. He points out how his boy (his young employee) called him "Mister" to the last moment. The boy had been taunting Mr. Teece, at the end, with questions concerning Teece's future plans for night-time entertainment, now that the dark race would be absent. Teece didn't really have anything to say in reply. Teece is the only character that tries to use force to get his way.

Some readers might be disturbed that Bradbury would expect the race situation to still be as grim as that depicted in his story supposedly taking place in the year 2003. A migration, voluntary segregation, is not what most social observers (including Bradbury) would consider a viable solution. But the point of the story is to show what could happen to those white racists who so hate the black man, while they use the black man. Obviously Bradbury is speaking to social conditions of 1950, the year he wrote this story.

2004-05: THE NAMING OF NAMES

Another Spender prediction comes true. The Martian names for places are thrown out in favor of new Earth-derived names. So it goes. "The Naming of Names" serves one other purpose in the Chronicles. It

sets the stage for the most important story in the book. It describes how after the hardy pioneers have made Mars safe, the soft, oh-so-civilized people follow. And some of these people are moralists, Statists. Some of these people are censors who, having cleaned up Earth, will now do the same service for Mars (read about the firemen who burn books in Bradbury's novel, Fahrenheit 451). Much of Bradbury's fiction has been building up to the following story.

April 2005: USHER II

Bradbury wrote this story for several reasons. In the early Fifties an extreme form of behaviorist psychology was becoming a threat to the type of literature Bradbury cherished. Science fiction, fantasy and horror were being condemned by a number of powerful voices, among them some senators and a psychologist named Dr. Frederic Wertham. The storm clouds were building up. They who feared art's potential to honestly recreate reality, to imaginatively create new realities, to make the unreal real, and to initiate catharsis (they who wanted art to be a sterile form, reassuring their sterile minds) grasped the opportunity to preach the dubious virtues of censorship. A line of magazines which had been re-interpreting Bradbury fiction would be driven out of business in the ensuing atmosphere of fear (E. C. comics). The House on Un-American Activities would over-extend itself, making judgments on entertainment media. Bradbury saw all these signs early, and he wrote a story.

More than any other work in The Martian Chronicles, "Usher II" speaks for itself. It is a revenge tale, pure and simple. If Bradbury projects himself into any of his characters, surely it is the author himself who addresses us through the persona of Mr. Stendahl. As you read this story, think about how you would react to having your library burned, to seeing what might be the last books of Poe consigned to oblivion. (pages 110 and 117) Bradbury does a job emotionally satisfying enough, that the reader wonders if he (the reader) might not condone Stendahl's murders, the murders of the smug censors who burn books for "your own good." If Stendahl's revenge seems harsh, remember what drove him to it. The censors have been the aggressors in Stendahl's life, hounding him for years and years.

Poe is avenged at the climax of the story, as are so many other authors. The censors who told people to face the here-and-now are disposed of by a man who built The House of Usher in the here-and-now of 2005. Irony is prevalent throughout the Chronicles. Of course this story didn't have to be on Mars. The dismantlers would have been on their way to destroy the Usher house whether it stood on Earth or Mars, but Bradbury shows how convenient Mars is for "Usher's" purpose. Consider: Is there poetic justice at the end of "Usher II" in as total a form as it could be imagined? (This is one of the stories written prior to the Chronicles.) Fantasy has the last word.

August 2005: THE OLD ONES

The shortest piece in the book. After the young have come to Mars the way is clear for the old people. Note the Bradbury metaphors, ". . . crackling people . . . the dried apricot people." (page 118)

September 2005: THE MARTIAN

Telepathic illusion is such an established factor of The Martian Chronicles by this stage, that we all know the boy apparently risen from the dead is a Martian. Even the characters in the story are pretty sure. But unlike the illusions born out of malevolence in "The Third Expedition," here we have a lonely Martian who desires love. Bradbury once more concerns himself with empathy. The tragic conclusion shows how anything can be taken to extremes, even love. Just as the hyper-sensitive Martian is finally caught up in all the humans' desires, emotionally pulled this way and that--everybody wanting him to assume the aspect of their dear departed ones--so can one empathize too much! The Martian dies in the torrent of emotion, a scene very appropriate for Ray Bradbury to write, considering he writes the most emotional science fiction in the business. This story is also about the importance of illusion, how we can use illusions to preserve our sanity in bad situations. The value of illusion is further demonstrated in "The Long Years." (page 155)

November 2005: THE LUGGAGE STORE

The idea behind this short piece is the least convincing one in the Chronicles, at least to me. When the big war is impending back on terra, people pack up their belongings and return to the planet of their birth. The concept that, "It's still home there" (page 132) seems not a satisfactory reason to want to die with the relatives, but this is, after all, the Mars of the mind . . . and it's Bradbury's Mars. "The Luggage Store" provides an introduction to the Last-Few-People-in-the-World type stories which follow, Last Man/Last Woman stories being a staple in SF, allowing Bradbury to rework that old raw material into a new form.

November 2005: THE OFF SEASON

The lead character is Sam Parkhill, the same Parkhill who got his teeth knocked out in the earlier story, "--And the Moon Be Still as Bright." Like the "Moon" story, "The Off Season" was written before Bradbury undertook the Chronicles project. This story provides a unifying thread to the book, as does "The Long Years," because it uses a character from one of the earlier stories, a character now getting on in years. The potential for further characterizing the "professional fool" Parkhill is realized. His cowardly reactions to the last Martians, despite their peaceful intentions, are revealed in a manner that is both tragic and humorous. Parkhill shoots down an entire fragile city in a moment of rage. This carries on the powerful scene at the conclusion of "--And the Moon . . ." Obviously Parkhill did not learn his lesson from the captain.

His foolishness persists. The author shows the limitations of Parkhill's imagination by providing him with land deeds to half of Mars, and because Parkhill has a Martian hot dog stand his big idea is: WOW, WITH THE LAND DEEDS I CAN HAVE A MONOPOLY ON HOT DOG STANDS . . . AND I'LL CLEAN UP!

As the story progresses, we see the dilemma of Parkhill's wife. She is resigned to Parkhill. She has a high tolerance level. By the end of the tale she has more than enough reasons to hate her husband, yet

she stays with him, the idea being: where else can she go? So grotesque is Parkhill by the conclusion of the story that the wife can almost find some satisfaction in the nuclear destruction of the earth, because the crowd of new settlers won't be arriving, and Parkhill's hot dog stands will have one hell of an off season. Macabre humor and World War III go well together. (page 143)

November 2005: THE WATCHERS

This piece is summed up in one sentence, "Come home!" (page 145)
Refer back to "The Luggage Store."

December 2005: THE SILENT TOWNS

It's intermission time! Before we get on with The Fall of Man, Ray Bradbury presents a funny story. It serves a valid purpose at this point, prior to the concluding tales which end the book on a down-beat. "Towns" is a variation on the last man on Earth theme. The man first lives the life of Riley in an empty city (frozen dinners, anyone?), but finally grows lonely and desires companionship, preferably female. He becomes desperate. A phone rings! A female voice on the other end . . . Our man wastes no time finding her. But Bradbury creates a curious situation. What if the last woman around is the most obnoxious, obese, greasy, unappetizing, brash female in town? In fact her only virtue is a sexy voice, especially misleading over the telephone.

The conclusion to this tale is certainly original. Our man escapes to a town thousands of miles removed from her, and when occasionally the phone rings, why, our man who was once desperate for company, our isolated man, does not pick up the receiver. He eats frozen dinners and is content. Having given the reader this comedy interlude, Bradbury follows "The Silent Towns" with a serious treatment of loneliness.

April 2026: THE LONG YEARS

A sentimental look at an inspired builder of humanoid automatons. Mr. Hathaway, another character from "--And the Moon Be Still as Bright," is helpless to save his wife, his two daughters and his son from death. But he is a mechanical genius who can build robot likenesses of his loved ones that talk to him and serve him tea and keep him sane over the long years, while he waits for rescue, for real people. The importance of illusion in appropriate circumstances is the theme of this story. The author, the fantasist, demonstrates the importance of suspending disbelief through art. He does so with a picture of a sensitive man who needs companionship, and having but one option, builds friendship out of metal and plastic.

"The Long Years" also deals with the classic SF issue of when a robot is advanced enough to be considered "intelligent" and deserving of "life." The conclusion shows us how moral judgments made in the womb of abstraction can be less clear-cut when applied to the personal realm. It's interesting that the most sentimental Martian chronicle is the one concerned with the use of robots. And it prepares us for

the apocalyptic vision of the following story, where technology is separated from the humanity that created it. Final scene: The robots still converse with each other, still smile after Mr. Hathaway's death. He programmed them to be happy. (page 163)

August 2026: THERE WILL COME SOFT RAINS

This is possibly the most famous story in the book (and written before the book). Interestingly enough, it has nothing to do with the red planet, though of course it is related to the other stories. It describes a scene on Earth, post WW III. Bradbury's interests reside close to home. The war admonitions culminate in this story. "There Will Come Soft Rains" has often been adapted for radio and records. As you read the story, it will become apparent why it adapts so well to the audio medium.

Imagine a totally automated house of the future, continuing to function after its inhabitants have been killed by the atomic war, continuing to function when the entire surrounding city is rubble; a house standing in a dead world, surviving by chance. Imagine a house self-sufficient for many days, continuing the standard procedures for people who no longer care--making breakfast, disposing uneaten breakfast, maintaining the routine. Imagine one lone dog, somehow still alive, but who fails to be at the right place at the right time for food, and consequently dies of starvation, while breakfast is being prepared a few inches away. Imagine technology divorced from the technologist, getting out of hand and with a bomb, killing the technologist, but continuing to clean house for him after he's gone. Imagine . . .

The theme is clear, the conclusion inescapable. Ray Bradbury wants men to be the masters of technology, rather than technology the master of men. He wants the priorities straight! Some critics of this warning story have misunderstood it as an anti-technology piece. Bradbury is pleading for wisdom in the machine maker and the machine user.

Bradbury's skill at anthropomorphic description has never been more memorable than it is in this story. To quote from the climax, when fire is invading the house and the defense devices prove inadequate: "But the fire was clever. It sent flames outside the house, up through the attic to the pumps there. An explosion! The attic brain which directed the pump was shattered into bronze shrapnel on the beams. The fire rushed back into every closet and felt of the clothes hung there." (page 170)

October 2026: THE MILLION-YEAR PICNIC

The book begins with mood, sustains mood, ends with mood. One family chose not to die on Earth. Instead, for them a picnic like no other picnic ever experienced. With the characters limited to Dad, Mom, Timothy, Michael and Bob, Ray Bradbury does not overly concern the story with ideas of populating the Martian globe. Maybe this is the end of homo sapiens with this family, maybe not. (There may be some other families that survived. Perhaps Edwards and wife--page 178--got through with their daughters, with hope for the future. Dad hopes

he will have great-grandchildren, but he knows at this stage it's only a hope. It's odd that the families concerned didn't split up the boys and girls in case only one ship made it to the "new world.") That's not the issue. Each individual is his own personal universe. Ultimately the great space odyssey is within.

The end of the book emphasizes a final idea. Dad has been promising to show Michael a Martian. To quote:

They reached the canal. It was long and straight and cool and wet and reflective in the night.

"I've always wanted to see a Martian," said Michael . . .

"There they are," said Dad, and he shifted Michael on his shoulder and pointed straight down. The Martians were there. Timothy began to shiver.

The Martians were there--in the canal--reflected in the water. Timothy and Michael and Robert and Mom and Dad. The Martians stared back up at them for a long, long silent time from the rippling water . . . (page 181)

When we finally travel to Mars, colonize and mine Mars, the Martians we meet will be ourselves.

Final note: my edition of The Martian Chronicles has the preface written by Clifton Fadiman. You should read his opening comments. There is one grave error on Mr. Fadiman's part. He implies that Bradbury is subtly writing against space exploration. Ray Bradbury has recently written magazine articles (one in particular for Playboy) militantly defending Mankind's progress into space. Fadiman misinterprets Bradbury's warnings about the weaknesses in human nature. Because Bradbury criticizes people's tendency to foul things up, it doesn't follow that he wants the human race to retreat from the promise of the future, to play ostrich. He wants us to grow up so we will be capable of handling our technological toys. Too often Bradbury has been done a disservice by well meaning critics of the "humanist" stripe, who do not comprehend how pro-science he really is.

The rest of Fadiman's preface is quite on the mark. Fadiman identifies the essential worth of the author of The Martian Chronicles with his comment that, "Nobody writes like Ray Bradbury!" (page vii)



A FAN IS A LOW FORM OF AIR CONDITIONER

-WARNING::YOU ARE ABOUT TO READ AN ARTICLE CONCERNING
SCIENCE
FICTION
FANDOM!

runforyourliferunforyourliferunforyourliferunforyourliferunforyourliferunforyourliferunforyourlife

Did you know that on this planet there is a curious animal—an irreplaceable wonder not given enough thought or consideration for the role it plays in the ecological balancing act?¹ It is a unique being,² a beauty to behold; it is something which

1. Welcome to the first footnote of this article. Nice to meet you. All other footnotes you'll be seeing in "A FAN IS A LOW FORM OF AIR CONDITIONER" will follow this spur-of-the-moment fashion. Pretty sneaky, aint it? There's no easier way of doing footnotes--don't you agree? The credit for this startling innovation is not mine. Mike (Lazy Log) Ogden originated the idea. He is a swinging bachelor who is looking for a knife-mate. Thanks, and a tip of the hat, to Mr. Og and his singing sneakers, at 768 Arkansas St., Tallahassee, Florida.

2. ... also a eunuch being.

for determination and stubbornness must be seen to be believed. But so much for the blood-worm. The concern of this erudite essay is not so much with worms as it is with a sub-sub-sub-section of genus homo sapiens, a kind of human thing: The Science Fiction Fan!³

3. As this is a work of comparison and contrast (it is, in case you didn't know), I will compare and contrast the SFan and the blood-worm just for fun. They both need blood to live--this is a similiarity, or a like comparison. They have differences too. The SFan knows all about the abbreviation: bnf. The blood-worm is ignorant of what "bnf" stands for. Ask any worm. We are now ready to compare and contrast different types of fans.

The science fiction fan can be broken down (and usually is, with relish) into two basic groups, members of this cross-sectioning being sub-sub-sub-sub-species of mankind, and even womankind. One group is composed of the general fan.⁴ The other is

4. He is given to reading wholesome, military-type fascist SF

composed of the fannish fan, or faan. Both are science fiction fans, or fen.⁵ Are

5. A rather obvious point, perhaps, but one that was overlooked in the classic study of the question by Dr. Ervin Urp and his wife, Mrs. Dr. Urp.

you with me so far? All fans have similiarities and differences, such as the similiarity of being different from each other. Any janitor can tell you that.

To expectorate: the general science fiction fan is a person hooked on the genre of hypothetical literature (I know what I'm saying) termed ... science fiction! He is also usually interested in fantasy and horror fiction (there will be no attempt to illustrate the differences between these sub-genres,⁶ as such a sidetracking could

6. *Examples of sub-genres include Run Silent, Run Deep and I was a Teenage U-boat.*

confuse the otherwise straight forward nature of this paradigm. Suffice to designate this entire imaginative fiction field as speculative fiction, SF, or trash, an appropriately restrained description). Monster-thrill, gosh-wow Outer Space operas are the fan's meat!!! He reads the stuff, collects the stuff, eats the stuff, makes love to it, recycles it, and so forth. In other respects he can be quite normal, taking up as steady a profession as plumber, or what-have-you.⁷

7. *From the Lower Morgravian word, vutav-yew.*

Enter the faan, the fan of fandom's fannishness, the fan fan. This deranged creature probably started off as a general fan but then degenerated to being a fan not of science fiction, but of fandom! His original interest in the fiction was gradually lost in the haze of FANAC! The faan has something to read, collect, eat, make love to and recycle, as does the general SFan, but it is no longer speculative fiction . . . it is the science fiction fanzine! An amateur publication by members of fandom, written in a special code (remember BNF?), perpetuating an SF inner-club atmosphere,⁸ is his meat!⁹ So far gone is the fan of fandom that

8. *Not all fanzines are super-faanish, however. Some are for the general fan, providing an overview. Some are even like this one--good.*

9. *To elaborate would be obscene.*

he refuses to consider anyone outside of his clique to be a fan. No matter if a newcomer has memorized all written SF, owns the world's rarest SF item, and is planning a major contribution to the professional field. Unless he fits the narrow requirements of the faan, the faan will consider him to be something other than a fan, such as a mere buff¹⁰ or a merer collector.¹¹ But despite all this,

10. *An inexcusably rear-guard action.*

11. *This proves that the witch in SNOW WHITE was but a fannish buff when she said, "Merer, merer, on the wall . . ."*

the faan can be normal enough to have a steady profession, as does the general fan. The faan's most frequent occupation is axe murderer.

The general fan fits Webster's definition of fan to a tee--"a person enthusiastic about a specified sport, pastime, or performer--a devotee." The fannish fan doesn't try to fit that definition to a tee, but haphazardly hammers it to a wall!

The general fan doesn't have too much nonsense to say and sets up but a low air flow when he speaks. The fannish fan blusters.¹²

12. *AC-DC.*

The general fan is a discriminating reader, but not a bigot.¹³ The faan is a

13. *Translation--he doesn't care very much how you use the word, fan.*

bigot but not a discriminating typist.¹⁴

14. Translation--he wants a monopoly on the word, fan, even if he can't spell.

If the general fan is lucky enough to attend a Science Fiction Convention (a meeting of the tribes), he will go there for the express purpose of meeting and talking to professionals in the field, celebrities like Ray Bradbury and Isaac Asimov and Mr. Trekkie.¹⁵ He will be interested in autographs and the film show

15. Trekkie is the most famous pro, because of his many children that worship him at all cons. Sometimes known as Trekkies, the children have been known to spend their life's savings (Aurora models and all) to purchase a public hair of Leonard Nimoy.

and getting bargains on pro items in the huckster rooms. He will laugh at Robert Bloch jokes.

The faan regularly attends conventions. To him they are blase. He goes for the express purpose of not getting autographs, not seeing the film show and not wasting time at the huckster's room. His time is better spent at a fannish party. It is a matter of faan prestige to pass up chances to talk with pros (and if he does talk to one it must never be about the pro market). The faan can be provoked into calling a professional by his first name, however, as in, "Hey, Ike, come have some ditto-fluid rum with us." The faan thinks the general fan is silly in his "gosh wow" attitude toward pros.¹⁶ The faan goes to conventions to be sophistica-

16. The general fan has little thought about the faan--he's too busy with all the other things available.

ted. That's why he's over in the corner hobknobbing with Irving Glik, publisher of ERKWHON, the magazine which asks, "Is there life after fandom?"

The general fan doesn't need to belong to an IN-GROUP to appreciate SF. He has an individualist approach to the genre, whereas the faan is basically a collectivist.

When the general fan writes LOCs,¹⁷ they are usually directed to a prozine. When

17. A LOC is a letter of comment . . . or something to keep the burglars out . . . or something to eat with a bagel.

the fannish fan writes LOCs, they are always sent to a fanzine like Glik-Zik, UnterYog and Amazing.

The general fan reads primarily for enjoyment. The faan is a literary ideologue who reads the stuff just so he can expound on the merits of the New Wave style over the Old Wave style.¹⁸

18. The Great Debate boils down to, "Is it low tide or high tide?"

The general fan, on the other hand,¹⁹ is not that concerned with the trivia of

19. A manipulative appendage possessed by even non-fans.

terminology. He doesn't try to learn fanglish. For example, he wouldn't even know what the abbreviation "bnf" means.²⁰

20. Which of course proves that the general fan is a blood-worm, a curious animal, an irreplaceable wonder . . .

"Everything is relative," as Uncle Einstein used to say.

AN EXISTENTIALIST PLAY THAT'S NOT TOO LONG.....
 AN EXISTENTIALIST PLAY THAT'S NOT TOO LONG.....
 AN EXISTENTIALIST PLAY THAT'S NOT TOO LONG.....

ME (sitting in an almost empty theatre, watching a play)

HIM (enters, stage anywhere; and speaks to ME)- What are you doing?

ME- Watching Beckett's Waiting for Godot.

HIM- Is it any good?

ME- I don't know. Nothing has happened to interest me yet.

HIM- Why do you stay and watch it?

ME- I'm waiting.

HIM- Waiting for what?

ME- I'm waiting for Waiting for Godot to do something. I'm waiting for Goodplay.

HIM- Maybe the play's message is that waiting for something is really waiting for nothing, but waiting is a goal in itself; "waiting" being a metaphor for life.

ME- Maybe.

HIM- Are you religious?

ME- No. But I have faith that this play must interest me before it ends. (ME looks to his left, and calls out)- Hey, boy!

(An USHER enters from stage anywhere)

ME (addressing the boy)- Where is Goodplay? When does this play do something?

USHER- Be patient, sir. Goodplay will come later ... in the next act.

ME- But you said that during the act before this one!

USHER- Goodplay will come later. (Exits, stage anywhere)

(A VOICE off-stage calls out)- Is God an otter? Is God Death? Is God's full name, God Om Tinkerer? Is God nothing more than "The End?"

ME- Oh, God Damn!

HIM- What is it?

ME- I just realized something. This is the last act. Look, it's over. Nothing happened. (ME continues to sit still)

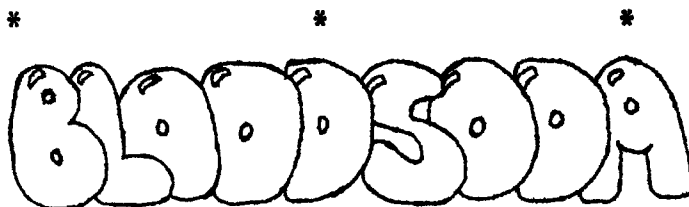
HIM- Why don't you leave?

ME- I'm waiting.

(cont.)

HIM- Waiting for what?

ME- Waiting for the next show. Maybe this time they'll slip up, and something will happen.



1

Sitting in the porcelain white ice cream parlor,
Cool oasis against the desert-heat summer world outside;
Sitting there,
Watching white capped waiters
Serve over seventy-five different flavors
To wide-eyed, wide-mouthed children.

2

Sitting there,
As the Devil enters from the heat,
And with his Fahrenheit 451 finger,
Closes up the mouths
And puts out the eyes
And melts all the flavors
And roasts sundry waiters
And stops the show.

3

Sitting still,
As the Devil smiles at me
To show his polished teeth--white bone smile
(Vanilla teeth in a very broad face),
And approaches me to say:
"You must hurry for your time is almost up;
You don't have time to finish
For the meter's running out."

4

In the crimson parlor sitting,
Clutching a red nickel in one hand,
Wishing my ice cream cone would stop dripping,
Wishing I didn't have to get up
And leave the white oasis.
I walk out into the blackness that is not night.

* * *

SPECIAL SERIES #3 IS COMING...
IT'S AN ALL ANDRE NORTON ISSUE!
NORTON TALKS ABOUT HER CAREER.
A BIOGRAPHY AND CRITIQUES ARE
ALSO FEATURED. FOR FURTHER INFO.
WRITE BOXU-0921, TallahasseeFLA.

brad linaweaver once interviewed
norton for his wfsu-fm radio show:
dimensions beyond. since the death
of the show, linaweaver has been
looking for a zine in which to
print the hour long interview.

CASTLES TO KEEP.....

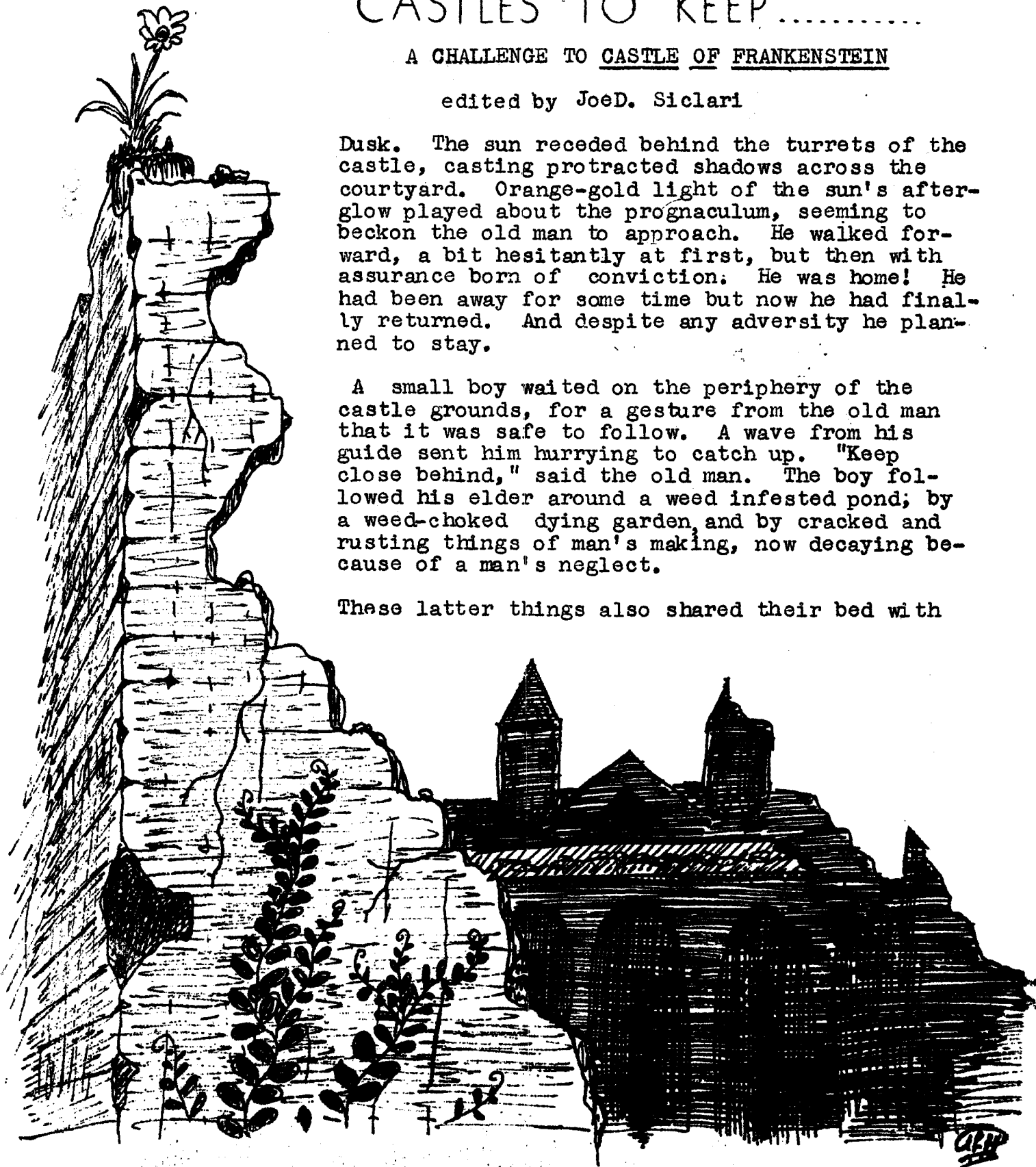
A CHALLENGE TO CASTLE OF FRANKENSTEIN

edited by JoeD. Siclari

Dusk. The sun receded behind the turrets of the castle, casting protracted shadows across the courtyard. Orange-gold light of the sun's after-glow played about the prognaculum, seeming to beckon the old man to approach. He walked forward, a bit hesitantly at first, but then with assurance born of conviction. He was home! He had been away for some time but now he had finally returned. And despite any adversity he planned to stay.

A small boy waited on the periphery of the castle grounds, for a gesture from the old man that it was safe to follow. A wave from his guide sent him hurrying to catch up. "Keep close behind," said the old man. The boy followed his elder around a weed infested pond; by a weed-choked dying garden, and by cracked and rusting things of man's making, now decaying because of a man's neglect.

These latter things also shared their bed with



weeds. The old man looked at them with sadness and wished he had time to fix them. In his prime there was no one better at repairing than he. So he told the boy, who believed him; believed that the man could mend or make anything. But the old man had a most important item to fix and time was running out. He hoped he was not too late. So he walked on and the boy kept close behind.

Removing a key from his pocket, the man inserted it in the lock of the front door and listened to the tired groan of seldom-used metal announce their entrance to the castle. The door swung open, with creaking hinges of course, and they entered.

"Wait here," said the man, having led the boy to the library. "I must see if Baron Beck is in residence. You should be safe here and I'll return shortly." Out the door he went. The boy was still in awe at actually being inside such a famous castle. In the castle's library there was more than enough to keep an intelligent child occupied.

What immediately arrested his attention was in a display case, appropriately placed in the center of the room. Chronologically arranged, there were twenty film magazines, concerned with science fiction, fantasy and horror subjects, arranged in rows of five, with a paperback book placed at the end of the last row as if an exclamation mark. And what interesting items they were, how deserving of exclamation. Illustrations and photographs, in colors from garish to somber, depicted monsters and demons and fiends, spacemen and aliens and wonders, superheroes and supervillains, mad doctors, madmen and badmen, and still more monsters -- in short, the essence of movie thrills, ^{the} celluloid attraction of a world of imagination, the fears and dreams of all our childhoods, given form on a flickering screen.

The boy had to get to the magazines, to thumb through them, to read them. But the case was locked. Then he noticed at the top of the display, crowning the whole, a photograph from one of his favorite films, the 1935 production of THE BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN. It was the shot of Colin Clive poised at the lever, gazing up at the shrouded form of the bride -- an offering to the lightning, who waited patiently for the spark of life which would be nurtured by the scientists below.

But there was an addition to the photograph, an element not part of the film. Someone had added a word balloon over the head of Clive/Frankenstein. A word balloon which read:

"You think, my dear friend, that I have created a monster! But you are wrong; for whether my creation be beautiful or ugly... A success or failure, I have put into man's domain an attempt of the 'impossible'; a pursuit of man's wildest dreams. Whether I be hailed as a scientist or devil, I would only that the name of Frankenstein go down in history synonymous with those things regarded as among the heights of man's imagination!"

"He's not here." It was the old man's voice. The boy turned to face him standing in the doorway. "Beck appears to be out for the moment but I'm sure he won't mind an old partner showing up again.

"I see you've discovered his publications; he's publisher and editor. In a baker's dozen of years he's put out eighteen issues of Castle of Frankenstein magazine, one annual and one paperback, all after his initial experiment in the medium, Journal of Frankenstein.* He's put out CoF #19, too, but I've not seen that number. I see he's not yet added it to the display." The old man smiled. "You know, ever since Beck started publishing, in late 1959, he's been printing that his offices, Gothic Publishing Company, are in New York, when all the time he's done the work right here in the castle."

"I want to look at the magazines," said the boy. "But I can't get to them."

"Fear not, I've a key for every occasion." Soon the boy was leafing through the pages. "Fine sentiment," said the man, pointing to the word balloon over Clive's head. "Look inside that copy of CoF #1 you're holding. See, it's the inside front cover of the 'collector's edition' where Beck expounded that philosophy... 'the height of man's imagination'. Yes, Beck set high goals. And I believed he'd live up to those standards. It's why I made the deal with him in the first place. I believed he'd keep improving the magazine until it was the best of its type, and keep it the best, renowned for a respectful/ critical approach to the fantastic cinema."

"Did he live up to it...er...to the standards?" asked the boy, looking up for a moment from a photo of a special effects dinosaur.

"Yes. Until recently. He didn't get the filmzine out very often, but he made up for the lack of quantity with quality. He cared about the subject matter. He thought the field should have a consistently capable, intelligent voice. There was no denying the worth of his values or his success,"

"Then why have you come back to...punish him?" For a moment the boy was surprised at his own boldness, but there was so much he didn't understand. The man was such an imposing figure, driven by some dread purpose.

"Because of Beck's betrayal." The tone of finality was unmistakable. "Because things changed and I have need of revenge. You saw how he's let the grounds of the estate decay, how it's fallen into a state of disrepair. That's only part of it; unexpected sloppiness also afflicting certain, recent issues of CoF. I never would have returned just because of what seems to be temporary

*The Journal cost 50¢ and was replaced by a 35¢ Castle -- who wouldn't be willing to pay less to own a second-hand castle than pay more for a second-hand journal?

apathy. No, his treason is in a moral inversion! Something he did against me and against the SFantasy field. Something contrary to the very principles he once expounded. Something for which he will pay!" The man walked over to the bookshelf and ran his fingers over the binding of Conrad's Heart of Darkness. "I put my faith in Calvin and, for a while, I had no doubt as to his good intentions. I never would have come back if he hadn't changed."

The man faced the boy. "I've been meaning to tell you the whole story and too long have I postponed the inevitable. You want to know the history and the reason for my return?"

The boy's expression left no doubt to what was but a rhetorical question anyway. "Yes, I want to know," he answered ritually.

The old man began his tale....

In the beginning there was the editor -- Forrest J Ackerman!

There was also the publisher, James Warren. But mainly there was the editor. FJA or 4e, as he is known from Here to There, is the world's number one professional science fiction fan, with the world's number one SFantasy film-materials collection. He is also the world's number one worst punster, or as he would put it: Here we are in mystic Karloffornia and I'm sure it won't Boris!

Of what was Ackerman the editor and Warren the publisher? From the mists of time, circa early 1958, was born the world's first filmonster magazine:



The world was never quite the same!

When the creative duo spent a hectic week working together in the wilds of Southern California, working on FM #1, neither of them really expected their experiment to prove more than a quick novelty, a one-shot. But FM was a success. Warren was so impressed by the profits that he asked Forry if a second issue could be squeezed out. The Ackermanster readily complied. FM is still being "squeezed" out in the 70's and issue 100 is past history now. FM is still making money.

Realizing what a good thing he had going with the Halloween magazine, Warren decided to invest in a wider variety of cinema l'fantastique publications. Thus was born Spacemen, Screen Thrills Illustrated, and eventually Monster World. New approaches were in the first two, as Famous Monsters itself had been a new approach. The last was in effect just an FM supplement. Unfortunately, these three later efforts did not make the grade at the market place.

Ackerman's interest in the entire gamut of fantastic cinema was given a fairly adequate outlet by his joint editing of both FM and Spacemen (SM covered SF flicks in general, but with the expected space emphasis).

Ackerman's pet project was Spacemen and he hated to see it fold, but Warren could not afford to keep the magazine going after the eighth issue and one annual.

To understand the reasons for FM's success and SM's failure one must comprehend the nature of the beasts and the character of their audiences. It will also facilitate an understanding of the arena in which Calvin Beck would find himself a competitor going against the prevailing trend, the "kiddie trade", and why Beck was to be the eventual winner quality-wise.

Famous Monsters did not deal only with cinema monsters, though they were the dominant theme. FM concerned itself with the entire field of the horror-and-bizarre thriller, creating a cult status around key actors in the macabre field as well as giving due credit to outstanding directors, special effects men, screen writers, producers, make-up men, etc., who were driving forces in what Ackerman termed the Imagi-Nation. Special Effects geniuses Willis O'Brien and his protege, Ray Harryhausen, and make-up artist Jack Pierce were



especially given cult deification. About all FM did for directors was to give credit, however. There was a lack of analysis and inadequate reporting where the director was concerned. FM was hardly an ally of the auteur school of film criticism. Science fiction and fantasy, whenever concerned with terror or strange creatures, were also covered in FM. This was the procedure of the number one film-monster mag and in varying degrees the pattern was adopted by FM's competitors.

The sales power of the monsterzine is easy to understand. It has the sensational/atavistic element helping to sell it. "More gore in store" would be an appropriate maxim to express the motivations of an audience whose bulk is composed of little monsters! If Ackerman's monster was to show a profit, the juvenile element of the clientele had to be attracted. It was a constant battle between aesthetics and economics. When FM was good it was of worth to film scholars (issues 21-27, for example). One of the best things of the good FM was the filmbook treatment. This was a detailed recounting of classic films, with behind the scenes info and background material. Filmbooks have been done on KING KONG, DRACULA,



THE HUNCHBACK OF NOTRE DAME, THE WEREWOLF OF LONDON, FRANKENSTEIN, THE BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN, ISLAND OF LOST SOULS, DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE (March version), MAD LOVE, MURDERS IN THE RUE MORGUE, THE OLD DARK HOUSE, and others.

Having been given the scrapbooks and collections of both the late Bela Lugosi and Willis O'Brien, Ackerman was uniquely prepared to undertake the DRACULA and KING KONG projects. He was particularly proud of the treatment done on Kong, which was covered in three issues, all after a previously satisfactory job in an early issue of FM.

Another kind of feature indicative of the magazine at prime was the critical article by someone of note in the SFantasy field. FM ran articles by Robert Bloch and Wendayne Warham (who was to become the Bride of Ackerman), and Spacemen ran an article by Ray Bradbury. Also, the letters section was a glory to behold. FM #26, complete with OUTER LIMITS cover, had no limit to the LoCs which included opinions expressed by innocent Bobby Bloch (fightingly fannish and fumingly furious) and FJA concluding an answer to a letter in a previous issue. He was fighting a criticism by Calvin Beck in Castle of Frankenstein #3. Suffice to say that there were times in FM's career when it was worth the price it asked -- a pint and a half.

BUT don't think FJA could get away with quality and be successful too! He could only experiment with decent material for so long before Warren would let him know sales were dropping and the serious fan did not have the buying power of the masses of six-year olds, and when FM was bad it was very, very bad! Despite Forry's attempts to keep Famous Monsters a quality product, fate had decreed that the magazine would become junk (one guess as to who fate is),

From the depths of juvenile spook-spoofing cum bubble-gum card punning cum shallow overviews of the field cum reprints cum asinine alliterations cum reprints, with a re-





duced number of pages, more ads percentage-wise, and an increased price for the "improvements", it was not hard to see why the publication was sinking to a depth where there was no critical depth. The few articles that had been on a critical level--intelligent and probing, from "Danforth's Inferno" to the Bloch material--would be reprinted, but in issues that otherwise offered no hope of new articles with equivalent substance. Forry could write GAWD-AWFUL bad when he wanted to. "Hallo-weenies, it's Thanksgiving time!"

There was an excuse for some of the junk in the earliest issues, when FM was new born and tottering on its legs, but once it had a personality, had a measure of integrity, then

there was no justifiable reason for FM to give up the hard-earned ground and revert to issues almost totally on a level with the mad lab articles (one of the darker sides of the formative years).

On the quality scale it was not an immediate cop-out, but the signs of insincerity began to show after the death of Spacemen and as time went on things got worse. The slow slide downhill correlated with a letters section that grew less and less interesting as there was less to talk about.

By the time the recent big SFantasy cycle started (1968 turned out to be one of the greatest fantasy film years in history), when there was more to review, preview and critique than in decades, Famous Monsters became infamous to the serious fan for its lack of relevant coverage.

At the same time, Calvin Beck was in high gear with Castle of Frankenstein, putting out some of the finest SFantasy film periodicals ever, and putting FM to shame. The reigning Warrenzine continued to plod along with 90% reprints. Fm had very little to say about the new cycle but there was no hesitation in running the same old articles about movie making in the FABULOUS FIFTIES! The only SF service FM could be said to provide at this time was the initiation of the very young into the field and the presentation of material from earlier issues to those who had never seen it. There was also a news section which continued to report the titles of any SFantasy film in the planning or production stages, with a quick description of topic. And, unless they were classics like BRIDE OF THE ATOMIC

TURTLE or BETWEEN THE VALLEY OF THE VAMPIRE DOLLS, the great majority of these reported films never got any more coverage. The "classics" would get a photo story, but nothing one could designate a filmbook. Only a very careful spread would be done on the DOLLS so as not to corrupt youth with obscenity.

The glamour story of the world's first film monster magazine was not over. A tragedy which had been expected, yet dreaded, for some years was the death of the greatest horror actor in history, Boris Karloff. Forry pulled out all the stops and did a memorial issue of Famous Monsters (#56) which was a forerunner of the Ace book, The Frankenscience Monster. Celebrities, from Vincent Price to Christopher Lee, wrote their impressions and praise and last respects for the King of Horror. A complete filmography was printed and Forry presented the first serious filmbook in some time, the FRANKENSTEIN filmbook (in four parts) and the reprints were all excellent and appropriate. The sincerity of the project showed.

When it became the Ace book, The Frankenscience Monster, it was probably the best single film monster production in Ackerman's career. The book was a culmination of everything Ackerman had hoped to communicate about the value of Karloff's career. Animated by purpose, Forry came through with the goods.

Famous Monsters since then has continued to have an erratic history. It is now monthly. Material of worth is still in a minority though effort seems to be there. Reprints are down but hardly out. And too often new material turns out to be sensationalist job done on the latest Gordon Hessler special. And the letters section is still down to crud level. The section is now reduced to so few pages that no letter of any length or substance can be squeezed in between the "glowing" photos of the kids. And, perhaps, why not?

Why do a fine fantasy filmzine professionally? Especially considering the number of SF fans who downgrade the monster movie by definition, ignorant of the fact that the creature feature, at its best, epitomizes the mythology of the fantastic fiction genre. It is fair to say that FM gave up the battle of winning over the snobs, to sell to a clientele that has to sneak the magazine into the house so the parents won't see it.

Spacemen, however, did not give up the battle. It kept its integrity. It died. It did not sell without the ghoul appeal.

The first issue of Spacemen was not too grand in the writing department but it contained letters from Fritz Lang, Willy Ley and Ray Bradbury, all expressing hope for the future of the publication. After that, each issue seemed to improve over the previous. Some of the articles were excellent analyses of filmed science fiction. Everything from reports on the latest spacers to filmbooks to technical articles to Forry's photos....The best thing in Spacemen had nothing to do with space! It was Ackerman's filmbook treatment on Fritz Lang's science fiction classic about a future society -- METROPOLIS. This was the continuing interest in each new issue (the first attempt to provide continuity was coverage of the FLASH GORDON story). METROPOLIS is Forry's favorite

film and he is probably one of the most knowledgeable people in the world concerning the topic. He even owns a copy of the incredibly rare Metropolis magazine. Unfortunately, the SM filmbook was prematurely terminated by the demise of Spacemen.

Spacemen's clean look of heroic covers, as opposed to the Hollywood monster, did not attract enough kids, sadly. There were attempts to advertise by more sensationalistic means but they did not work. The antiseptically clean, sunlight washed space explorer wrapped in a technological cocoon, remained the usual subject matter of the covers. SM was never imitated by competitors. They were too occupied with challenging Famous Monsters to bother with another unusual, and possibly unprofitable, magazine.

The Warren goose had laid its golden egg with FM and would not lay another until the advent of the horror comics in black-and-white magazine form (Creepy, Eerie and Vampirella). As said before, the great majority of monster magazines were an insult to the horror film. Ackerman wisely panned the opposition most of the time. But a very few of the "fly by night" editors actually tried to do a decent job rather than rip-off the fan, such as Gunther Collins (Modern Monsters and Shriek). Still it is necessary to realize that Ackerman, because of over-confidence, made statements to the effect that others shouldn't even try to enter the field, that FM would always be an untouchable number 1 and others should spare themselves the futility of trying!

FJA got his answer. Calvin Beck outdid him.* Free enterprise and the American way were re-affirmed. But later on, Beck would also suffer from being "uppity", and the wheel of fortune would turn again. FJA reigns still.

* * * * *

We must turn back the clock to 1959 for Beck's publication of the first and only issue of Journal of Frankenstein. Uncompromising in its appeal to maturity and having a constructively critical approach, the Journal was not in the slightest aimed at a childish audience. Actually, it was so deliberately above the level of its competition that there was no doubt to its being an original approach, entirely opposed to the majority of poor childish FM imitators (and FM itself at times). The Journal was the magazine answer to the serious cinema journals!

At the beginning Beck wanted to prove an adult SFantasy film magazine could succeed. He gave the market an example of urbanity and slickness. He had something worthwhile to say (his first editorial included a well reasoned argument against the evils of censorship). However, still realizing the commercial appeal of the ghouls, he made certain the familiar monsters beckoned from the front and back covers; but made sure they beckoned with class. Near zero distribution and limited appeal insured that the Journal was a one-shot.

To fully appreciate Beck's first creation it is necessary to examine the Journal's contents, section by section. You will see...."

"He will see nothing!" interrupted an entirely unholier voice.

aesthetically, not financially.

The old man hated to be interrupted, especially when he was telling his tale. "You've already told him too much. Go no further."

"Is that you, Beck?" asked the old man. "Why don't you show yourself?"

"No, I'm not the good baron, baron," answered the voice with a pro's gloating.

"and why should I sacrifice my advantage of anonymity by showing myself to criminal trespassers?"

"If you are not Beck, how do we know you're not a trespasser?"

"You don't because it's none of your business. But I'll inform you that I am in Beck's employ."

The boy started to speak but was silenced by his guardian. "You know who I am." The old man spoke slowly and methodically. "And I suspect who you are."

"Then you know why I cannot permit you telling your little story. You might not know when to stop. Talk of the Journal of Frankenstein would lead to considering the history of Castle of Frankenstein which would naturally bring us to the present situation. Now be honest. You wouldn't want to stop there. You would like to conjecture about Beck's future plans. And I cannot permit discussion of that!"

The old man smiled -- it was a classic grim smile. "Would I be interfering with Beck's plans or your plans.....possessor!"

"Possessor? Does that mean I have a Ph.D.?"

"The boy will hear me out!"

"Boy? You call it a boy! And I thought we were going to be honest with each other, do away with subterfuge..."

"You won't stop us now!"

"The idea is to stop you from stopping me! And I've made my plans carefully. You and the thing you brought along are finished. And no one will suspect what is really happening to a little known magazine called Castle of Frankenstein until it is much too late. It will be appropriate that you got no further in explaining things to your econ-



omy-sized avenger, than telling him about dear old Forry...

"As for Beck's so terrible sin, old man, it's just the beginning. He is now on the path to embracing the logic of a censor! He's contradicted his anti-censorship statements of the past, using behaviorist 'reasoning' to condemn the influence a particular art-form has on sweet, innocent children. There is no more blasphemous reversal for a proponent of the horror film to make, in reference to any entertainment genre!

"My goal will not be realized for years yet, when I finally shape Baron Beck into a successful enemy of the very field he sought to glorify!"

"What's happening, sir? I'm confused," cried the boy.

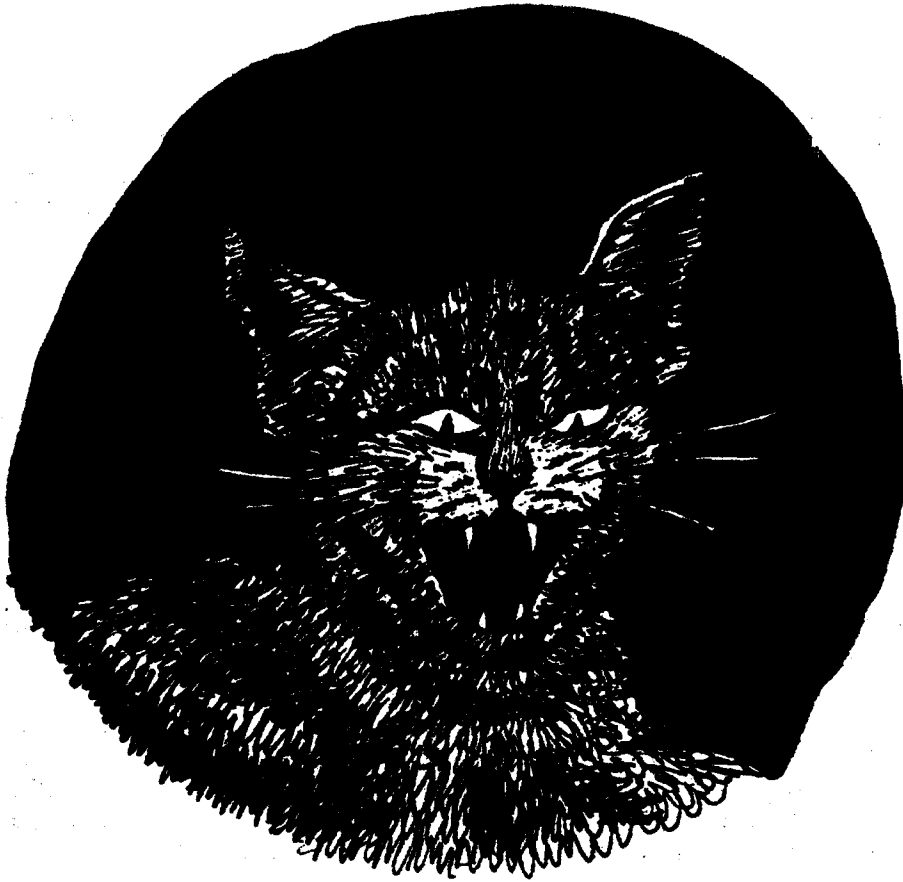
"You're not the only one," replied the old man.

"Nothing's happened yet," taunted the damNasty voice, "but just wait a few seconds." A few seconds passed on cue.

There was a sharp sound of splintering wood. Eyes both old and young riveted to what had been a closed door at the end of the room. Something had just entered through the door... without bothering to open it. And that something was a very powerful and very angry Frankenstein's monster. The voice said one word. "KILL!"

(to be continued next issue when this bastardization of story and article should solidify into a challenge to Castle of Frankenstein magazine, hopefully, and the mysteries will be cleared up, maybe, provided we can figure out what happened in part one.)





The Cat
 Knows a lot more
 Than we will give it credit for.

Unlike the dog
 It will not take
 A leap of faith.

Selfish
 Is the Cat's state,
 To land upon the feet, its trait.

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A STORY OF A WISE MAN: The country parson used to preach for hours on end about the best methods for saving souls. He constantly pointed out the moral dynamics of Christianity--good has to be an active force against evil, never letting up for a moment. "Against evil, the best defense is a good offense," he would say, then add wisely, "and as we all know, Christianity is offensive in nature."

SOME DEFINITIONS: Capitalism--a philosophy teaching that people are good enough to own things.

Socialism--a philosophy teaching that people aren't good enough to own things, but that everyone is low enough to be owned by everyone else!

