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GUEST EDITORIAL:

Trash Aesthetic; or, Why It's Okay to Have Crap Taste in Just About Everything, Being Some Incoherent Notes Towards a Theory*

Artwork by Harry Bell

By Ian Williams



Ian Williams

People can be too defensive about their cultural taste, assuming the defensive position, "If I like it, then it must be good, so don't piss me off." Well, sorry, but just because you like something doesn't make it good. Just because I like something doesn't make it good either, as I shall shortly illustrate.

There is good art and there is bad art and there is a lot of art in between. There are also criteria by which any piece of art can be judged. What cannot be judged is the effect of a piece of art on an individual. A piece of art can be objectively bad but still engender a positive response in the individual exposed to it.

In other words: it's okay to like crap.

My favourite blues artist - and by favourite I mean his would be the last blues CDs I'd get rid of - my favourite blues artist is one of the worst ever recorded. He wrote his own songs, he played lead guitar on his records, he sang. His songs were mainly thinly veiled copies of those written by other people, his guitar playing was rudimentary. His vocal range was limited. The production on his records was also similarly limited. On his early recordings it would be mostly guitar, harmonica, and someone bashing out percussion. His harpists were generally the most skilled musicians - respectively, over the years, Schoolboy Cleve, the legendary Slim Harpo, and the great multi-instrumentalist Lazy Lester.

Ladies and gentlemen, may I present to you, the one and only and extremely talent-restricted, Lightnin' Slim, early star of Louisiana's swamp blues Excello Records.



There's a tendency in the Blues world to refuse to admit that any Blues artist - unless they're white - can be total shite. But that sad truth is that many were and are. Not everyone can be a Muddy Waters or Howlin' Wolf, an Albert or BB King. Blues recordings are littered with mediocre artists whom blue enthusiasts nevertheless deify. If Muddy Waters is a chandelier casting a glorious light over the whole room, then Lightnin' Slim is a candle in a darkened nook.



And yet, and yet, I just love his records. I love his grainy world-weary drawl of a voice, his crude guitar playing, the elementary percussion and the empathetic harp. I have no intention of attempting to justify my liking for Lightnin', he just strikes a chord in me whereas someone, say Lightning Hopkins, just leaves me cold. Technically mediocre on every level, nevertheless the recordings of Lightnin' Slim cause a positive response in me.

At least Slim has an identifiable "voice" and character, which is a damned sight more than can be said of many, and a substantial proportion of his numbers are memorable, funky, and sometimes genuinely funny. His take on "Boogie Children" titled "Just Made 21" is possibly my favorite - beating out JLH by a smile.

Fortunately I can no longer remember the names of the dozens of genuinely dull blues artists I have heard, but I can assure you that Slim towers head and shoulders over them all, so stop worrying about what the "authorities" say and just dance dance dance.

--Greg Pickersgill, Wegenheim, September 2003

No one ever deliberately creates bad art.

Like all generalisations, there are exceptions. Lloyd Kaufman of Troma films intentionally set out to create bad movies, though lacking the funds, or being too mean, to employ anyone (acting, photography, makeup, etc.) with any discernible talent he didn't really have much choice. But he did set out to create entertaining bad movies. Having sat through ten plus over the last two weeks, I'm reluctant to say that he succeeded but right now - with the exception of *Tromeo & Juliet* which has a certain *je ne sais quoi* - I'd be quiet happy never to see another Troma product as long as I lived. I enjoy schlock tongue in cheek horror - the horror in *Evil Dead 2* is gruesome as all hell but it is played as comedy and put together by talented moviemakers. Troma plays it for stupid inept badly timed comedy, which completely undercuts the impact. Eventually I started falling asleep.

Essentially, maybe the only way you can differentiate between trash art - and Lightnin' Slim and Troma movies are both forms of trash art in that, by objective criteria, they are mediocre - is in the aesthetic response they engender in the individual. Which is just about where I came in. Love your trash by all means - love the Kingsmen's "Louie Louie" and the Trashmen's "Surfin' Bird" - they may even be iconic, but it still doesn't mean they are any good. Enjoy your bad taste - I do, greatly - just please don't pretend it's anything else and don't be defensive about it because you have nothing to defend.

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*Revised from a Wegenheim posting dated September 2003.

I had to add, though, that I knew a single word that proved our democratic government was capable of committing obscene, gleefully rabid and racist, yahooistic murders of unarmed men, women, and children, murders wholly devoid of military common sense. I said the word. It was a foreign word. That word was Nagasaki.

--Kurt Vonnegut, Timequake, 1997

EDITORIAL: **One World**

By Earl Kemp

I had intended to write an editorial for this issue of *e/* on the subject of "One World." The context of which would be to champion the fact that humanity is one family living in one small global village.

I couldn't do it justice. My thoughts were so preoccupied with the atrocities being perpetuated by Bush, Cheney, Ashcroft, *et. al.* for the benefit of Halliburton and their other owners at the expense of us...the weak, misled, lied-to, and grossly misinformed.

My thoughts were so preoccupied with all the senseless murdering of all those completely innocent men, women, children, geriatrics, and infants in Afghanistan...in Iraq...in...? that I couldn't concentrate on what I really wanted to say.

My thoughts were covered with many generations yet to be born who will be crippled, maimed, and otherwise destroyed by the pollution BushCo is placing into the very soil of those illegally invaded and occupied nations from their weapons of mass destruction.

My thoughts were overwhelmed with their attempts to eliminate personal freedoms and legal recourse for us the shit-upon citizenry as a pretense of giving us Homeland Security.

Only I didn't want to go that way. I didn't want to think those thoughts, remember those truths, and speak against them again. I'm too old, too tired, and too ineffectual these days; the fun is all gone out of the struggle. Here, all I wanted to do was talk good things about good people doing good things....

And I can't do that when I'm even thinking about our administration because it is such a stranger to goodness as a concept.

One snip tells it all:

Of course, BushCo is hoping we're idiots, and to help keep our minds from wandering to what's going on with democracy here in The Homeland, they have us riveted on color-coded threats from afar, warning sternly that millions of the world's people hate us - indeed, as George so eloquently put it, "They hate our freedoms."

What they hate is that our government, corporations, and military storm around the world in betrayal of every democratic value that the American people hold dear. Bush poses grandly as the noble spearcarrier for democracy, yet he is (like his predecessors) a willing accomplice of brutal dictators and global corporate powers that oppress the world's people, impoverish them, and plunder their resources. Through his perpetual war agenda, his oil buddies, the World Bank, the arms dealers, his defiance of environmental and human rights treaties, and dozens of other actions, George W. (and our Congress) is an enthusiastic supporter of global-scale theft and

thuggery.

--Jim Hightower, *Thieves in High Places*

Those words need to be repeated often in hopes that they can be heard where they are most needed...wherever there are patriots in need of traitors.

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Once again...breathe deep...forget all that propaganda crap coming out of DC...remember the goodness of One World and one peoples.

The real meaning I was striving to convey in this editorial in the first place was to focus on the intense amount of cooperation going on among and between the active members of numerous science fiction Internet discussion groups. The specific case in point that I would have been leading up to would have been this issue of *e/* because, for now at least, this issue represents the very best of that one family living in that One World.

To my knowledge, never before in science fiction fandom have so many people from so many remote locations around the globe gotten together to work on one single project...this issue of *e/*.

There is no way I can possibly thank those people for all the energy, effort, and excitement they placed into the work they did to make this issue as special as it is. And I would be negligent in my duties if I didn't make a point of mentioning some of them:

There is a whole gaggle of old friends who share their memories of Sidney Coleman in "Other Voices."

There are two truly significant works of literary appreciation, and both of them are about Kurt Vonnegut; one written by John-Henri Holmberg and one by M Andre Z Eckenrode, that grace this issue. They are staggering pieces of research and appreciation and I am extremely proud to present both of them to the world.

There is a modicum of help from a bunch of Brits who really need to get out more often: people like Harry Bell, Gregory Pickersgill, Ian Williams, Etc.

All that and Howard DeVore....

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THIS ISSUE OF *e/* is dedicated to Sidney Coleman and Kurt Vonnegut. At a quick glance, I was surprised at the combination, and that I had elected them in consort. Then, the more I thought about them, borrowing "Seven Degrees From Kevin Bacon," I could easily see there was no way to handle them than as a dynamic duo.

Let us consider the degrees of separation:

1. Sidney Coleman, Kurt Vonnegut, and I, in 1960, participated in *Who Killed Science Fiction?* along with many others.
2. The three of us were published together in that Hugo Award winning first *SaFari Annual*.

3. The three of us were published together in a follow-up issue of *SaFari* discussing *WKSF*?
4. At the same time, the three of us were friends of Ted Cogswell.
5. At the same time, the three of us (along with many others) were contributing members to the Institute for Twenty-First Century Studies.
6. We appeared together in *The Proceedings of the Institute for Twenty-First Century Studies [PITFCS]*, universally known as "Pitfucks."
7. The three of us appeared together, in 1992, in the Advent [of which Sidney and I are founding partners] omnibus volume of *PITFCS*.

And, just for nothing:

8. The three of us are exceptionally fond of the writings of Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.
9. All along I had hopes that Sidney Coleman and Kurt Vonnegut would join me in this venture so, after 40 years, the three of us would appear together again. Toward that end, I invited both of them to participate in celebrating themselves in this issue of *e/*.

That's why this issue of *e/* is dedicated to the two of them jointly.

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And it is in memory of Louis Russell Chauvenet, Mike Hinge, Pamela Lynn "P.L." Carruthers-Montgomery, and Martin Smith.

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As always, everything in this issue of *e/* beneath my byline is part of my in-progress rough-draft memoirs. As such, I would appreciate any corrections, revisions, extensions, anecdotes, photographs, jpegs, or what have you sent to me at earlkemp@citlink.net and thank you in advance for all your help.

Bill Burns continues to be The Man around here. If it wasn't for him, nothing would get done. He inspires activity. He deserves some really great rewards. It is a privilege and a pleasure to have him working with me to make *e/* whatever it is. And also, Dave Locke continues as *e/* Grand Quote Master. You will find his assembled words of wisdom separating the articles throughout this issue of *e/* and you will also find his "Words of Wonderment" quotations from Kurt Vonnegut

Other than Bill Burns and Dave Locke, these are the people who made this issue of *e/* possible: Robert Bonfils, Bruce Brenner, Marty Cantor, Jim Caughran, Sidney Coleman, Andrew Darlington, Howard DeVore, M Andre Z Eckenrode, Richard E. Geis, Howard Georgi, Julian Headlong, John-Henri Holmberg, Robert Lichtman, Alexei Panshin, Gregory Pickersgill, George Price, Robert Silverberg, Robert Speray, Steve Stiles, Jon Stopa, Kurt Vonnegut, Peter Weston, Ian Williams, Dave Wood, and Len Zettel.

PLUS for this issue we had some very special help from the Harvard University Physics Department, from Dayle _____, Rob Meyer, and especially Howard Georgi.

ARTWORK: I should point out that there are two exceptional pieces of original art done for this issue of *e/*

by Alan White. They are the cover pages for both the Sidney Coleman and Kurt Vonnegut sections elsewhere in this issue of *e/*.

And, in addition to Alan White's two covers, this issue of *e/* features artwork by Harry Bell, Dave Hicks, Eddie Jones, Ray Nelson, William Rotsler, and Steve Stiles.

I try to keep deep love out of my stories because, once that particular subject comes up, it is almost impossible to talk about anything else. Readers don't want to hear about anything else. They go gaga about love. If a lover in a story wins his true love, that's the end of the tale, even if World War III is about to begin, and the sky is black with flying saucers.

--Kurt Vonnegut, Palm Sunday

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The Official *e/* Letters to the Editor Column

Artwork recycled William Rotsler

By Earl Kemp

We get letters. Some parts of some of them are printable. Your letter of comment is most wanted via email to earlkemp@citlink.net or by snail mail to P.O. Box 6642, Kingman, AZ 86402-6642 and thank you.

Just to prove it, this is the official Letter Column of *e/*, and following are a few quotes from a few of those letters concerning the last issue of *e/*. All this in an effort to get you to write letters of comment to *e/* so you can look for them when they appear here.

Friday August 1, 2003

Excellent ish. I'm proud to be in it. It might improve lettercol response to have your e-address in the lettercol.

When years went by between Ralph Ginzburg's porn conviction (which helped make Arlen Specter a star) and sentencing, Paul Krassner called it a "travesty of injustice."

I notice you mention William Rehnquist. As well as being in the Nixon Gang, he spent some time on the bench so stoned from a prescription drug that he wasn't making any sense. When he came back from rehab, one of his first cases was upholding a 30-year sentence for selling weed. I did not make this up. Anyway, both Gore Vidal and Robert Anton Wilson wrote novels in which they substituted smut-stompers' names for the words you can't say on TV. The only name that meant the same in both lists was "rehnquist," for the male organ, which may tell you something. When he participated in the impeachment with those appropriately silly stripes on his sleeve, I thought, "The new, improved Rehnquist, now with golden ribs for your added pleasure."

--Arthur D. Hlavaty

Just wanted to chime in that I really enjoyed *e/*. For instance, old-fashioned paperback cover art, also the lurid sort, has been one of my small hobbies. I'm generally also interested in history, and found the accounts of the porn publishing industry fascinating.

Spent part of the afternoon reading e/ at efanzines.com, rather than the con flier I was supposed to make...

--Per Chr. Jorgensen

Just immersed myself in eI9. Thanks for your effort in putting it out there. It gives me some kind of hope when I read what you have to say. And it takes me for fabulous trips down memory lane, remembering who I was on the far, far peripheral of Kemp World.

--Jan Hastings

My comments from the last time apply here as well.

My life, by comparison with yours, has been a sea of tranquility, for which I am very grateful. You obviously have enjoyed yours and still are, via recollection, the exhilaration of composition, and the accolades of like-minded people.

--Rob Roy McGregor

You can learn much, much more about Earl by checking into his website. Also today came the ninth chapter in his autobiography, to be found at eFanzines.com/ED/eI9/index.htm. It's long, as all of his chapters are, and by scrolling down to a piece by him titled, "Leer of the Sensualist," you can look in on your old employer at the acme of Greenleaf's years. Earl, it was great seeing Bea's picture, also others I'd forgotten about, like Mike Tomasulo. Look further, and you'll learn about Earl's crime and punishment, very important events in the rise and fall of the porn era, but too depressing to dwell on for long...it's about all the fun it was.

--Jerry Murray

Saturday August 2, 2003

Thank you for this, Earl. I now understand why the Internet was invented, so you could disseminate your story out into the world. This is award-winning stuff, my friend, and bless you for it.

--Lynn Munroe

Sunday August 3, 2003

Finally found some time to print out about 30 pps. No time to do more than skim a few pps. so far. Fascinating stuff! I had no idea of the magnitude of your longtime involvement.

I will try to find time to read whole thing soon, and perhaps get back with my take on pertinent reflections.

Yeah, like you need MY impressions.

Anyway, wonderful insights about the period, AND about Earl Kemp.

Thanks for alerting me to this.

--Thomas P. Ramirez ("Tony Calvano")

I've been enjoying the journey through your ezine and the memoirs contained therein. I knew only the barest outline of the history of Hamling's career and empire and have found what I've read fascinating. Keep up the good work. What you are producing strikes me as being the best kind of personalzine: informative, opinionated, educational, and amusing.

Which leads me to your next question concerning Rogue. This subject especially fascinates me because I

have a small collection of the magazine and have been very curious about the backstory of it all. I mean, a monthly men's magazine with Lenny Bruce, Bob Bloch, Alfie Bester, Frank Robinson, Mac Reynolds, and good ol' Harlan all appearing regularly AND it has nothing to do with science fiction. Bunny Yeager, Nat Hentoff, Trina, and my ol' buddy Ted White.... To me this is a fascinating story and I want to know more about it.

--Dan Steffan

Monday August 4, 2003

Enjoyed (am enjoying) the latest zine

It does occur to me in looking back over what both of us have written that we both somewhat missed the one truly fundamental point to it all. It doesn't really matter how underhanded and dishonest the opposition was - if they had done everything right, they still would have been wrong. I think that's the real point, Earl - we were right all along, and they were wrong.

That makes me feel better.

--Victor Banis

Tuesday August 5, 2003

Really glad you're still out there giving them, hell. Too bad you're not in California any more. You might run for Governor.

--Larry Townsend

Monday August 11, 2003

I have to confess that it is I that is checking in to your e-zine. I find all of your postings illuminating to say the least.

Of course, my main interest is in the historical and bibliographic aspects of Greenleaf's publications of which there is a plethora of information contained in yours and your collaborators essays.

Keep up the good work.

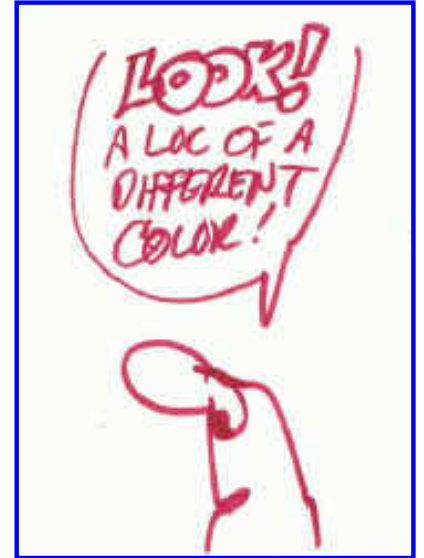
--Victor Berch

Sunday August 17, 2003

Earl, your message arrived as I was doing penance re-reading e*1 from the beginning (I thought I left Catholicism behind decades ago). Actually, I'm past re-reading and onto e/8 and then to 9. The fact that Hamling's name is mentioned a good 500 times only confirms the feeling that all my e-mail should be quarantined for a 24-hour moron detection period. Its one thing to frequently lapse into brain freeze, it's another to insist on sharing that state of affairs with the world. But yeah, Earl... I'll keep hanging around especially because I gotta read something a bit more uplifting than the Knoles piece before I sign off. What a downer...

--Ryan Richardson

Tuesday September 9, 2003



Arthur Hlavaty's article on Liberia begs some questions...how many Vietnams does America want? How many does it need? Why does it need them? Why does it feel obligated to flex some military muscle from time to time, especially in some place where it's not wanted?

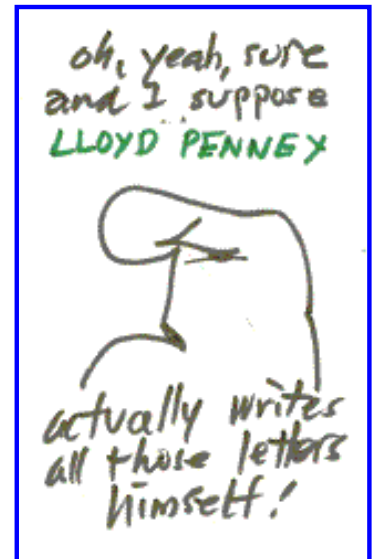
Victor Banis' article about changing morals is especially modern given recent news that *Penthouse Magazine* is on the edge of bankruptcy. The August issue hasn't been seen yet, and court proceedings for Chapter 11 protection may show up soon. Have, you heard anything more about this, Earl, or is this old news by now?

The quotation from Thomas Jefferson on pg. 36...not only does the American people fear its own government, but the rest of the world fears it. I don't think the Democrats realize they could deliver the whole world from the Republican tyranny.

In many countries, pornography is just another commodity. Puritan America says you can't have alcohol, drugs, sex, pornography and more, and the more you can't have them, the more you want them, crave them. In other societies, when these items aren't denied, they become a regular part of life, and not the forbidden fruit America makes them.

Every issue of *e/* is a strenuous read, and that's very much a good thing. Thanks again, looking forward to *e/10*.

--Lloyd Penney.



"It's hard work," he said. "It's not pleasant--just in solitude, writing. You can't have anybody around. It's a very lonesome business, and we're social animals."

--Phone interview with Kurt Vonnegut, Knoxville News-Sentinel, 4/01

Collibosher*

By Gregory Pickersgill

Long ago and far away I used to be a fanzine reviewer. It seems incredible now, but it's what I used to be famous for in fandom. Now of course I am famous for having once been famous in fandom-strange world isn't it? Anyway, this was all back in the 1970s, when things were different, and fanzines had funny names like *Fouler*, *Ritblat*, and *Stop Breaking Down*.

Of course I didn't invent fanzine reviewing wholesale; people had been at it for decades, although I didn't encounter most of the best - almost universally US fans - until well after I'd actually stopped writing reviews myself! My personal model was Jim Linwood, who was perhaps the most truly serious - as in considered, critical, and witty - fanzine reviewer in British fanzines during the 1960s.

Having grown up fannishly on happily acquired back issues of *Hyphen*, I knew for a fact that fanwriting and fanzines could be a great deal more than hastily knocked-out rubbish, so I felt that it was my duty - hah!--to add my voice to Jim's in the pursuit of a rather higher standard of fanac. (Years later this resulted in the hideous manifestations of Alan Dorey, Joseph Nicholas, Don West, KTF reviewing, and the

Standards War, but by that time, it seems in retrospect, we'd lost the plot more than somewhat.)



Original artwork by Eddie Jones for TED circa 1962, with addition of Gregory Pickersgill's head by Dave Hicks, in about February 2002. Courtesy Peter Weston collection.

So anyway, there I was unwittingly following on in a great tradition, one that is in fact very important to the health of fanzine fandom; it virtually embodies the concept of fanzines "talking to/about each other," which creates the sense of interlocked community which engenders the most pleasure and benefit from fandom, and which is, in so many ways, sadly lacking from the fanzines of the 21st century. Fanzines today seem to be viewed as discrete entities, produced almost as if in isolation from any others, and there seems to be a depressing dearth of the cross-talk that supplied that sense of community that was so strongly felt by me as a baby fan way back in 1967. I'm almost tempted to go further and say that today many fanzines are produced by people with no interest in fanzines, only in their own self-published product.



Stop Breaking Down, August 1981; cover by Harry Bell

Over the years people have occasionally asked whether I'd be interested in reviewing again. Well, in essence I am, and as I said above, I think fanzine reviewing is important for the health of fandom, and some good, regular, seriously intended reviews might do us all the world of good.

And how I wish I could write them myself! Unfortunately I can't - well, probably not anyway. It's a few years now since I last tried, and that was for British newszine *Critical Wave* towards the end of its career, and although I produced a couple of thousand words it just didn't seem good enough so it was dumped. As I recall the main thrust of it was trying to demonstrate that *Attitude* wasn't a fanzine - completely pointless as secretly the whole point of *Attitude* was that it WASN'T a fanzine, it was a well-meaning but futile attempt to engage the interest of people who really had no interest in fanwriting. Or fandom as we know it, come to that.



(l to r) Tony Berry, Glen Warminger, and Gregory Pickersgill pictured at British Eastercon at the Adelphi Liverpool 1988. It was the year Greg was FGOH and was taken on the last day, and to quote Greg: "I was feeling really depressed because it had all been so awful." Photo by and courtesy of Dave Wood.

And of course my own attitude towards fanzines is different now. Back then it was easier, there were fewer fanzines for a start. I also had narrower horizons, and thus greater opportunity to be certain. Back then I was getting about four or five fanzines a month - I'd read them time after time and become very likely more familiar with the contents than the individual who'd done all the stenciling. I KNEW - believed I knew anyway - exactly what people

were trying to do, and could gauge how well they were doing it.



Hyphen, October 1958;
cover by Atom.



Badinage, March 1968;
cover by Tony Walsh.



Maya 1970;
cover by Jim Marshall.



Photo taken at Paragon, 2001 Eastercon at Hinckley Hanover International Hotel in the bookroom by Paul Oldroyd (onetime Chair of the 1987 Worldcon, Conspiracy '87, now head of programming for Interaction the 2005 Worldcon where Gregory is a GOH).
Courtesy Julian Headlong collection.

We also need to take into account the size of the pond I lived in - and I mean both the smallness of British fandom in those days and the extent of ocean that separated us from US fandom, which I was later to discover had been operating at a very high level for many years, and justifiably looked askance at such cutting edge British efforts as *Badinage*. Okay, we - I - had the shining lighthouse beacon of '-' [*Hyphen*] as an example of what could be done, and excellently, but that was somehow safely in the past. There was a sort of race-memory of some Golden Age that might be revived, but we most certainly weren't there yet and it was simpler to judge our efforts against each other rather than against an apparently unattainable ideal.

In those days too the fanzines I saw were very much all of a piece; with the exception of *Speculation* they were all actually achievable, possible to emulate, and thus easy to see the flaws in. (You must remember here that for a variety of reasons we in the UK were seeing very few of the remarkably good US fanzines of that or any slightly earlier era.) As an aside, fanzines then seemed much more varied in terms of contents - many of today's fanzines with their neat little lifestyle essays by all the usual suspects sometimes just seem so bland, and predictable. There may have been a large percentage of crappy artistic aspiration or sheer nonsensical drivel in those Seventies fanzines, but they had a weird kind of vitality that I miss today.

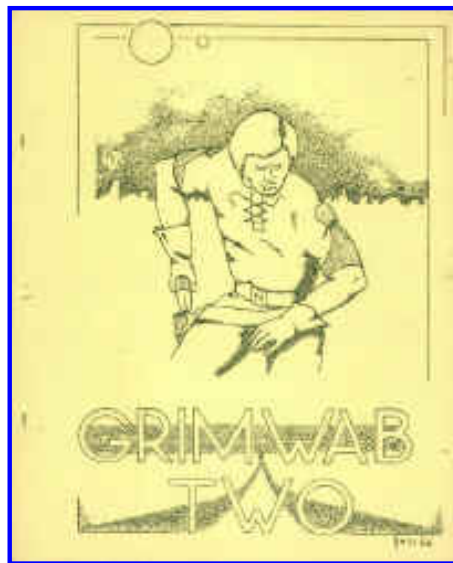
Today things seem - on this afternoon's immediate world-review anyway - to split into three. There's a strata of little fanzines - essentially personalzines - by people I know little about and care less, and which I am unlikely to read rather than scan (they exist, it seems, as extensions of the producer's social activities in science fiction circles), then there's the larger multi-handed fanzines which I scan thoroughly for any interesting stuff by people whose writing I like, and then there's the rest, which are so good in every sense that they do not

engage any reviewing response at all - you merely take them as they are, maybe seeing lesser or greater lights within each issue, but always expecting that a large proportion of the material will be entertaining, informative, and lasting. These are "mature" fanzines - real fully formed expressions of their editor's interests, enthusiasms, and skills. And for me they are often the ones that are centered on science fiction.

That's an oversimplification, of course, and there are exceptions in all three areas (where does UK fan Pete Young's *Zoo Nation* fit, for example, an excellent fanzine but not slotting easily into any of these hasty categories - wow, maybe it is a golden throwback, perhaps that's why I recognised it with such pleasure when I saw my first issue at Easter 2003!).



I dunno, I tend to think the days of the fanzine review are past, and more than that that fanzine reviews are not even required any more. It may have been true that Once Upon A Time our Little Jimmy Fan would read the *Fanalytic Eye* or somesuch and be rushing out the next morning mailing off postage stamps to Harry Bell for a copy of *Grimwab* (because he certainly wouldn't have been getting one for free, oh most definitely not!), but there's not a scrap of evidence that anyone actually does that any more. And as has been discussed many times we have found ourselves in the position where we discover that it is no longer a proud and lonely thing to be a Fan - scifi is everywhere, today's "fans" do not need to seek company beyond the hills.



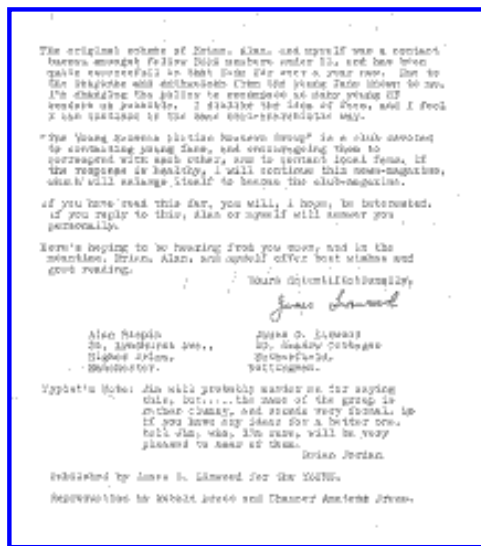
Grimwab, March 1966; cover by Harry Bell.



Harry Bell, shortly before his beard withdrew from public life

I remember from innumerable conversations past that it irked you that you had to send me stamps for a copy of *Grimwab*. But what was *Grimwab*? A fanzine produced at a time when the fannish tradition had been lost, when the awful PaDS ruled the earth, and Mary Reed's Tribe X was inventing new traditions (which subsequently passed away of course). I asked for stamps for *Grimwab* because *everybody* asked for stamps in the several fanzines I'd seen up till then. *Grimwab* wasn't any good until I got hold of Tom Porter's fanzine collection (there's another "what happened to him?"), read it, and realised how wrong everything was. I tried, but I couldn't put it back the way I knew it should be. I do hope you're not REALLY still irked about the stamps, but it does seem a long time to be still going on about it. You can have the stamps back...

--Harry Bell, Wegenheim, September 2003



And of course whatever fanzine reviews exist today are different; it all goes hand in hand with the stronger intellectual skills that are more common among fans now than they were in my day. Your typical piece of fanzine commentary is like a piece of critical art now, all very well expressed, most certainly showing the benefits of a university education, mostly accurate and reasonable, and somehow totally lacking in the kind of cheerfully critical enthusiasm that made me want to rush out and get fanzines back in the days when giant Linwoods ruled the roost.

 *All cover scans by Gregory Pickersgill from the Memory Hole Permacollection at www.gostak.demon.co.uk. Special thanks to Julian Headlong, Peter Weston, and Dave Wood for the Pickersgill photographs. Dated September 2003.

I think it can be tremendously refreshing if a creator of literature has something on his mind other than the history of literature so far. Literature should not disappear up its own asshole, so to speak.
 -- Kurt Vonnegut, "Paris Review," Spring 1977

In a Galaxy Far, Far Away*

Artwork recycled William Rotsler

By Howard DeVore

"If Howard hadn't done a Boswell on George Young, he'd be totally unknown today."

Once upon a time in a distant galaxy, George Young was "the lady from the welfare." He worked for the state of Michigan in Detroit in an office on Seven Mile Road and Schaefer. It is not a bad job. Mostly what they did was to take taxes from the poor people of Michigan (hereafter known as taxpayers), and redistribute that loot to people who don't have money of their own to buy cigarettes, beer, weed, crack cocaine, food, pretzels, diapers, and potato chips, in that order.

This is not the most desirable neighborhood in Detroit. The welfare office is on the corner, then there's a row of buildings down Seven Mile Road. Behind the storefronts is a huge parking lot for the state workers to park their cars in, and it's also a convenient place to conduct private enterprise ("Just let me have a nickel bag, man.") Each morning George Young would park his car in this questionable lot and enter the building through the back door. Automatic, unconscious, whistling a mindless tune, ready and able to perform his daily tasks.



George Young at 18. Photo courtesy Howard DeVore collection.

The back door employee entrance was guarded by a security guard whose duties included keeping the undesirables out of the building.

This particular morning George entered the big state building, still whistling, and went across the room to his Dilbert-like cubicle. Still running on automatic, George started to interview a client who had been waiting for him to show up for a while.

Perhaps an hour later the security guard happened to glance outside. He noticed that George's car was parking perhaps 200 feet away from the door. The hood of George's car was up and there was a man leaning under it and doing something to the engine while another man set behind the steering wheel.

The security guard, ever prepared, leaned outside and yelled, "Hey! What are you guys doing with that car?"

The man beneath the hood raised up, took a quick glance at the uniformed guard, and yelled back at him, "Man, you come out here...I'm goin' to blow your fuckin' head off!"

This seemed very counter productive to the security guard, so he hid behind the brick wall, but he did phone George and tell him about the incident.

George ran from the front of the building toward the back door, exclaiming, "Call the police, they're stealing my Hupmobile! They're taking my car and I just put new hubcaps on it."
(Thereby doubling its accessed evaluation.)

The state security guard peeped outside the door again. He saw that the engine was running again. The outside man slammed the hood, jumped inside, and the car moved forward.

It moved about fifty feet and rolled to another stop. The passenger got out, raised the hood, shook a few

wires, and the engine started again. He slammed the hood down quickly and got back inside the car. It wheezed, coughed a bit, rolled ten feet, and the engine quit once more. The passenger got out, lifted the hood, shook the same wires, and the car started again. The engine purred and ran smoothly. The man slammed the hood down, gave the tires two or three rapid-punch kicks, and got back inside the car.

The car headed for the exit half a block away. It paused at the intersection as they waited for traffic to clear. Then, at the exact worst moment, the engine quit as the car stalled once more.

George had reached the back door where the security guard was hiding by that time. He opened it with a violent tug, stuck his head outside, and yelled, "Leave my Hupmobile alone!"

The hood was already up and the engine was running again. The passenger leaned out and looked back at George, flipping him a bird as he screamed, "You call this piece of shit a car?" As he sat down on the seat, the car coughed once and rolled into the street and out of sight, headed for the expressway.

George stood there helpless and watched his wonderfully improved car disappear from view.

That evening after work, George rode a beat-up old city transit bus home. The next morning he rode a shiny new bus to work. The bus didn't break down getting him there, and he didn't have to change one much less two tires. George enjoyed the ride to work like a new experience. He realized it was nice to know he could get to work and actually get there on time for a change.

About noon, one of his co-workers asked, "George, is that your car sitting at a funny angle beside the expressway about two blocks west of here?"

A bit later, someone from his office drove George onto the freeway to see the car. Yep, it was his all right!

That's when he remembered that he had meant to buy gas the day before, but had put off doing it until after work.

Fortunately, George was prepared for almost everything. In the trunk of his car he had a little back-up help...an empty one-gallon gas can. George's co-worker drove him with his emergency can to the closest gasoline station. George bought one gallon of gas and had his friend drive him back to where his car had been abandoned beside the expressway.

George poured the gasoline from the can into his car, and started it right away on the first try. It ran as good as ever, which wasn't very good to begin with, but at least it ran!



*Revised from a Trufen posting dated September 2003.

True terror is to wake up one morning and discover your high school class is running the country.
--Kurt Vonnegut

"I've Got Some Friends Inside"*

By Earl Kemp

The other night I caught Alger Hiss on television. He was making the point that even in the best of all possible legal systems (which ours is not), mistakes occur and innocent men go to prison. As you know, I sincerely believe that you are totally innocent of the charges upon which you stand convicted and, indeed, that you are innocent of all charges. Your going to prison is of enormous personal pain to me. I have done all I know how to do and cannot add anything to what I have previously said to you. You are not only innocent, but you are a wonderful person. I only hope that the prison experience does not rest too heavily on you. I was comforted, a little, by seeing how well Alger Hiss looked and how proud he appeared as he insisted upon his innocence and his hope that he would someday, in his lifetime, be vindicated.

--Stanley Fleishman, December 30, 1975

(1-6-76) When I left the courtroom we sat in a back room for half an hour or so and then, chained and handcuffed (three people on our chain but me

ant for four), along with TV8 and Cathy Clark who followed us, filming, all the way until we were inside the jail doors, in color close-up. I wonder what she had to say on the Evening News?

Once inside the jail building we sat inside another holding cell, some seven or eight people, until 3:30 p.m. before they began processing us into the inside....

Processing consisted of filling out forms with lots of extraneous questions, eight separate different identical-pose photos, two and three-quarter separate different sets of fingerprints, disrobing, storage of clothes, perfunctory asshole check for contraband, compulsory shower, dressing: boxer shorts, T-shirt, white socks, loafer tennis shoes (much used), short sleeve jump suit with holes in both front pockets for playing with myself through. As always, the Mexicans are constantly pulling at their dicks. A casual scan around this room usually picks up three or four at it, but self-consciously and nonsexually. A cultural trait perhaps?

This facility [Metropolitan Correction Center] is called the Tijuana Hilton and is about 95% Mexican. All public announcements and commands are in Spanish with a minor attempt at English. I am on the 8th floor which is a multiple-level floor housing about 80 prisoners but it is not full. The physical plan is very nice but the structure is radically poor. (For such a relatively new building) you would not believe the cracked plaster, etc. It is *almost* frightening just being inside the building it is *that* inferiorly built. Perhaps some form of contractor ripoff....

Extremely noisy as the Mexicans are given to loud shouts and farting noises and screams of *Chinga tu madre*. Lights finally out at 10 p.m., then on again at 6 a.m. for breakfast.... There was a whole orange on my plate; I started to keep it for later. A Mexican tried with difficulty to tell me that I couldn't do that because it would be considered contraband and be confiscated. I ate the orange.

Cigarettes are passed out free in here, liberally and in great quantity. There is no escape on this floor from a constant stream of smoke, even though the air conditioner works hard to clear it. Also no escape from the air conditioner itself; cold drafts abound.

(1-7-76) This place is not at all like a college or military situation when a group of guys get together in areas of dress and deportment. No nudity and an admonition to not "indecently expose" oneself....

...I answered Stanley's letter and, in so doing, I surprised myself at my ability to do so in the spirit of rational understanding and forgiveness (though that is not quite the correct word). I *know* now beyond any question my own value to the citizens - not the administration - of my (by *choice*, which is so much more significant than by birth) nation and no thing short of death or mind alteration can stop my concern - first - for all of them, even the bad ones.

Perhaps I am off again on a Messiah trip or some undefinable association with Christ, but the millions of miles I have traveled, the truly significant good I have accomplished, the emotional support of important persons in many countries, all these compel me to rise above myself (and coincidentally them), despite myself (and coincidentally them), in ever increasing degrees.

The future (for all my children, real and unreal, known and unknown) is known and secure.

(1-8-76) Last night we were issued clean sheets and pillowcases and this morning, right after breakfast, we had another general shakedown (the second in two days).... The first thing that happened was the clean sheets were tossed in the middle of the dirty floor. Yes, we still have to use them and you're right, it doesn't make much sense. The search lasted from 8:30 until 11 and as far as I know no contraband was found. The whole thing is peculiar? Half the searchers were girls, a couple of cute ones and a couple of dykes.... You would not believe the cacophony of sounds the Mexican guys kept up in their presence. There was universal applause and appreciation for each step the cute ones took and loud pig sounds and calls of "machos" for each butch step of the others. Also an enormous amount of slight of hand going on while visibly manipulating contraband around the searchers....

Squeaky Fromme is on 9, just above me, and Tim Leary is on 5, secluded so as to not contaminate anyone's mind. I am constantly amazed at the types of people in here.... Some are quite simple and naïve people and others are sophisticated, affluent, high-I.Q. types....

Christ, I wish I could talk with Tim Leary. The freedom within him must be enormous. I would like to confirm (I think he could do it for me) some of my realizations. Here, everywhere I look, I see something I know *first hand*, and were I to attempt relating that fact to most of the people within a square mile of this building, I would receive only blank stares. Here in the shitty 8th floor library are books written by friends - close friends - I have known for years, but if I were to say Harold Robbins it would be incomprehensible. On TV was a movie located in Marseilles and it was all I could do not to say, "Hey, I know that place well." Meaningless to people whose horizon is limited by Los Angeles on one side and Tijuana on the other.... It is no wonder why they feel I must be confined. I forgive them....

(1-11-76) Some guys were smoking pot (*mota*) in here this afternoon, a commonplace happening; no mistaking the powerful odor. They left a trail of debris and seeds (imagine going to all the trouble of smuggling seeds into here?) across the floor. Fortunately someone spotted it before a guard did because about four of them went on a quick sweep and mop trip across the floor....

A Mexican in here barks like a dog, another crows just exactly like a rooster and yet a third one makes most convincing fart sounds. The floor echoes quite a bit and they get on sound trips that drive me out of my mind: bark answered by crow by fart by bark, etc. I wonder if any one of them ever gives a passing thought to the state of the world?

(1-16-76) There are about three big dealers on this floor, not necessarily dope dealers. I don't know and

it's not important. *They* are the big dealers, constantly receiving the best of everything, from officers and inmates alike. It is amusing watching them. I do not know what it is they do (or did) to receive all the attention. Whatever it is, they get it first. Their clothes are hand picked for color and newness; ours are random as they come. They are fed first at every meal.... They do a minimum of "easy" work while we are assigned sweeping, moping, etc. (that they never do). They always have cigarettes, coffee, whatever, and sit around all day, frequently with officers, and bullshit. Very noticeably privileged people with nothing visibly being done to merit their quite special status. Sure makes me wonder. On the other hand, I have not seen any of them do anything objectionable to anyone and they have been cordial, if not downright nice, to me. (They are all gringo, but that is not the answer. Most of the officers are not.) I still can't figure any of it out.

Promoter - not to be confused with big dealer - is a Mexican dude. He *floats* around as if he owns the joint, has special attention, too. (Best noticed in handpicked clothes and in others "running and fetching" for him.) Wears big pilot-type sunshades in here, a forbidden item, and bebops around swaggeringly whenever he has to move for any reason. Does no work - always too busy promoting a deal or handicapping horse races. Looked up to by most of the Mexicans (envy?) because of looks? Fluent English? Success? - whatever, I can't figure it either, but there are lots of them subservient to him and/or trying to gain favor with him through gifts or services.

Last night's bullshit session turned to sex, the first I've overheard, and was quite interesting:

"The first few weeks in here, I had to beat off regularly, but then the need just disappeared by itself. It's been months without even that now. I don't even know if I'll be able to get it up when I get out of here."

"I was here a whole week before I could sleep at night, I was so afraid someone'd buttfuck me in the dark."

"I think it's an unconscious mental adjustment wherein your mind just simply turns off of sex. Really the only way you can get through something like this without flipping out."

Does an entire person atrophy from disuse? Is disuse misuse? What kind of basic unrealized readjustments will I have to make when I get out of here? How goes it with all the sane, law-abiding citizens?

I hope life is realer for them than for me.

(1-18-76) Time inside here takes on its own dimensions, which are not the dimensions outside of here. (Slower for some and undoubtedly faster for others.) The most immediately visible aspect is in the inmate's movements. When moving from one place to another, especially when being told to move for whatever reason, you could not possibly believe how slowly that movement is accomplished. It is almost as if two steps backward are made for each single forward step. It extends to all other body movements, too, very slowly indeed, like watching a (bad) movie filmed entirely in slowmotion.

(1-19-76) Now that two weeks have passed with me securely locked within an atmosphere of (at least) quiet contemplation, I now find it possible to make a minimal effort to convey my feelings to you.....

I have recognized my own uniqueness for quite some time now and I suppose in doing so I have created my own worst opposition. It is because of this fact that I have allowed harm to come to my person and, through me, to cause additional harm to all those who love me.

It is a quite abstract, quite perverse Kafkaian mental world wherein most of the things that have happened to me within the last five years have never happened at all. Yet I sit here locked within a "corrective"

institution that would be totally impossible for me to gain entry to through any (such) effort of my own, a fact better known to the persons responsible for my being here than to myself....

...at the end of my appeals, when it was inevitable for me to acknowledge the fact of my conviction, I encountered a lady that I do not know at all, except by sight. I had seen her at some of my trial sessions and been told that she had been instructed (as graduate work?) to investigate some aspects of the trial for San Diego State University. What or how deeply she probed, I do not know, but evidently she delved deeply enough. I encountered her, as I said, quite by accident at a swap meet. We were face to face before I saw her. Instantly she grabbed me to her and started crying genuine tears of frustration and sorrow and resigned inevitability. I cried too. I held her in my arms and I comforted her and I told her to not worry or be sad, that life would somehow go on. I comforted her while people looked on in wonder. And all the time her mind was giving my mind the last missing piece of information. Someone does know. A person whose name I do not know has looked into my soul and washed me with tears of stark reality....

...the identity of the young lady to whom you spoke in the swap meet. Funny, because the *very next day* after you talked to her she came in to tell me that she had run into you. Her name is Linda Harshberger...she is a former student of mine and worked with a team of students purchasing porn throughout San Diego-to "prove" how easy it was to do, and how widespread it is throughout our community. She is one of the most beautiful and sensitive individuals I know.

--Jack Haberstroh, February 11, 1976

Miss Jini Carlsen, a journalism student of Dr. Jack Haberstroh, an outspoken supporter of...Kemp on First Amendment grounds, interviewed 277 males and 296 females at 27 sites throughout San Diego County over a one-month period, mid-October to mid-November, 1971. She reported 95% approved of the Presidential Commission recommendation that consenting adults should be permitted to buy and view explicit sexual material without interference from government; 94% agreed, after leafing through the Illustrated Report, that consenting adults should be permitted to purchase the book; and 60% (82% male and 39% female) favored receipt of the advertising brochure by consenting adults.

--Harold Keen, "Nixon's Revenge? Silencing the Kings of San Diego's Porno Press," *San Diego Magazine*, September 1976.

I have spent much of the last ten years of my life looking for "a better place." Consciously, seriously, probingly looking for that place. I suspect it does not exist (oh, there are many aspects better elsewhere, but they are isolated and have bads offsetting the goods) and that *this* is the better place.

This *is* the better system, even allowing for corruption and favor-buying officials and wholesale mass murder and a day-to-day top-level hypocrisy that is beyond the comprehension of any human mind.

Perhaps, at the end, on the bottom line, it is all a question of "labels" (i.e. doublethink) or of a point in time, and yesterday's Mafia is today's CIA, today's administration is tomorrow's multi-national corporation. Only the hats, the names on the doors, vary....

This is MY nation. It is not the property of the wrong doers nor are its citizens property of the state. Ultimately one must hope that the evil done, and especially the evil powers, will phase out of time. Or we (perhaps more specifically I) will phase into step with them. Either will bring with it contentment on an overall scale.

As for me, yes, I believe I am content now. I am secure in what I have done. I have no shame nor embarrassment because of what I have not done but endure responsibility for. I bear no malice toward those who would lie or fabricate for whatever rewards at whoever's decrees.

I hope that God will ultimately grant peace to their consciousness. It is by far a better thing to know you have done no wrong than to suspect that you might have....

(1-20-76) It is 6:20 a.m. I awoke early and went to the bathroom and met the Grapevine.

"If there's anything you want to do here, do it quickly; you're shipping out shortly," the Grapevine said. I see no reason to doubt it.

I asked how that was known to them while I had not been notified.

"There are ways to know."

(1-22-76) The trip up to Terminal Island began after 5 p.m. and was uneventful.... This is definitely a prison, not a detention place like MCC. There are heavy bars all over and the dust of ages and everything looks like a 1940's Warner Bros. movie and surely James Cagney and Edgar G. Robinson are in the next cell.

(1-23-76) I saw Sarah Jane Moore both at dinner last night and breakfast. She looked very much the calm, middle-aged lady that she is. Some day I will find reason and opportunity to speak to her. She appears to be quite popular.

I am constantly amazed at the number of truly beautiful people locked up in here though I know beauty is no guarantee of acceptable behavior. In particular some of the girls look like (and dress like; they are allowed their own clothes, not uniforms) high-priced models. All true foxes and all on the arm of a big black dude. Except of course the black foxes, who have white steadies.

Another thing is payoffs in here. If you really want something you find out the price then proceed. Unlike M.C.C. where cigarettes were free, they are used as cash here. They buy anything (and every thing is for sale). You wouldn't believe some of the clothes in here, remanufactured from (WW II surplus navy officer) khaki uniforms (standard issue) and "altered" by the inmate tailors. Some really fine gabardine suits in ass-gripping, crotch-displaying, fine tailoring with tight legs and wide flares over expensive and totally forbidden snakeskin boots. Today I even saw a guy in a damn nice looking safari outfit, jacket and all. And jewelry, lots and lots of really expensive gold medallions and turquoise ropes and flashy rings and quite expensive watches (though the absolute value limit allowable is \$10 per watch?).

After having a visitor, they put you through an intense, embarrassing body-cavity search looking for whatever it is you've stashed inside your asshole. It makes you wonder how the heroin or the much bulkier marijuana (you can smell it every night, all over the place) gets inside here....

(1-27-76) Yesterday we started having a series of lectures to orientate us to this place.... "You're treated altogether too well in here. If I had my way you'd all be locked up, really locked up, and have no advantages of any sort. You need to suffer.

"Don't be misled by the thought, or assume incorrectly, that this is a place of rehabilitation.

"We couldn't care less what happens here. You have been sent here for one reason only, to be punished...to the fullest extent of our abilities to do so. You have been locked away because you are a

menace to society and society must be protected from you until an adequate amount of retribution has been extracted from you.

"We intend to see that you get religion...."

"No advantage will be given you. We intend to extract the fullest measure of your time that the law will allow."

(2-4-76) I applied for a job. There is a shitty little high-school level Multilith "newspaper" here that would embarrass any first-year fanzine hack but, unbeknownst to anyone, the editor of same flitted away last Friday on his high-heels (the bulk of the newspaper currently being devoted to esoteric poetry about "pure love" and commentary on various homosexual causes) to escape clean. First thing Monday morning, being the most highly qualified person in that area ever to grace this establishment, I stood in line (third) to apply for the job....

(2-10-76) I wrote Terry and Erik letters and the simple fact of doing so just ripped the shit out of my guts and I sat here at the typewriter crying like a baby in the middle of this big open library room with all these people staring at me. It's really awful to be in a situation like this where you have to write letters to your kids. Just thinking back on it has done it to me again....

(2-26-76) It looks like I'm going to be appointed to the position of Editor of the *T.I. News* over this weekend. I'm looking forward to it with great joy because it carries with it a private office and a private typewriter and a few other prestigious concessions....

(2-28-76) It is official now. Last night I was appointed Editor of the *T.I. News*. (I had wanted to change the name to *Times* so I could be officially the T.I.T. man, but I didn't let the idea get off the ground.) Monday I move into my private office and my private time and thoughts....

(3-4-76) My number one assistant at the newspaper is a very talented militant black named Rodney who is also quite a good musician. Perhaps the biggest brain on the staff is Sara Jane Moore who is women's editor, a part-time position, and she is under really heavy restrictions and can hardly even deliver her copy to the office. Nevertheless we've had a couple of chats and I've found her to be a very bright, literate, quite dedicated in her determination, lady.... She steadfastly considers herself better than they are (better meaning on a purer moral level), and won't give in to their under-handed tactics. A most noble gesture but one that guarantees her a long sentence. At least she is completely rational about it and knows pretty much how much she is sacrificing for her personal integrity. Someone has to make a stand, she says, as if chiding me (though that isn't so as she knows nothing about my case) for surrendering my convictions and living with the flow...in order to live longer?

(3-4-76) MAIL RECEIVED: My old 4-wheel-drive gang of desert marauders posed with an ancient Saguaro cactus (grows one inch per year) in Valle de Trinidad, Baja California, Mexico, in 1966. Pictured (l to r) are Jack Daws, Earl Kemp, Skip Ross, Rob Maier, Bill Whiteside, and Dave Wheeler. One decade later, they signed this postcard and mailed it to me in Terminal Island to help me remember the good times. Postcard postmarked March 4, 1976.

(4-7-76) There is a new lawyer in the case from San Diego...he had a private conference with Judge Thompson the other day and allegedly Thompson said to him, "I never wanted to send those men to prison in the first place, but I had to do it." Whatever that means. Perhaps

someone up there is directing our courts.

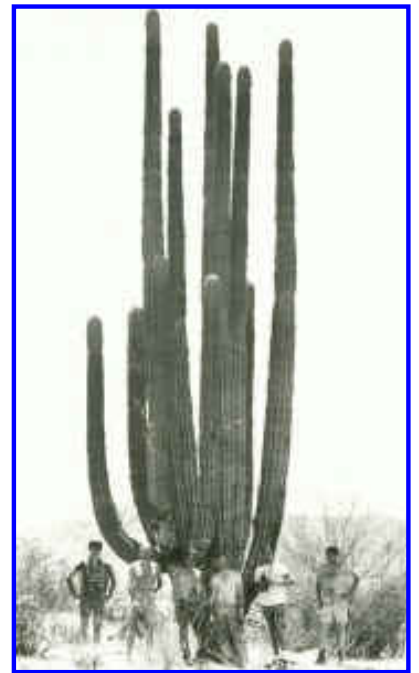
(4-29-76) ...the prosecution has gone on record as stating that they (and Washington) have no opposition for a modification in my case. Which is just about the same as saying we have no objection if you release him, as this was stated to the judge.

(5-13-76) I'm still optimistic. Papers ordering my return to San Diego were signed down there earlier this week. It is unknown to me when they will be executed but the best guess is sometime tomorrow evening....

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*Earl Kemp, *The Prison Letters of*. Excerpt dates in parenthesis. In memory of Stanley Fleishman, friend, mentor, and genius.



It's my religion the censors hate. They find me disrespectful towards their idea of God Almighty. They think it's the proper business of government to protect the reputation of God. All I can say is, "Good luck to them, and good luck to the government, and good luck to God." You know what H.L. Mencken said one time about religious people? He said he'd been greatly misunderstood. He said he didn't hate them. He simply found them comical.

-- Kurt Vonnegut, "Paris Review" Spring 1977

Dear Sir: *

By Earl Kemp

Five years have passed since we first met; yet you have never heard from me. There have been times when the urge to communicate was almost unbearable. On this occasion I am overriding all advice to the contrary to write to you. This is a personal letter, to the extent that any correspondence is personal.

I have been informed, in three brief sentences, of your conferences regarding me Friday morning (4-23). This is representative of the detail to which I am privy, and of the efforts in my behalf. Frankly, sir, I am too old and too tired to continue being "et al." I am a person and I would like to think that you will discover me prior to May 3. It is my understanding that, beyond that date, I pass out of your hands. It is the last opportunity we will have, together, to alter my future.

This letter, this one attempt over these years, is my first and last chance to reach you. Hindsight and the incredible turn of political events have caused me to spend some time restructuring my situation. It is my belief that there is greatness in all of us, and there are times that try our abilities to their fullest. Reluctantly I view this as one of those times for you. I am aware of pressures on you and the structuring of the reasoning that has been furnished you. Consequently I am compelled to speak against those efforts because, beyond you, there is nothing left for me, however it is presented to you.

I have heard of some concern about my alleged difficulty in "adjusting to prison life." And try as I can, I can't translate that into anything comprehensible, considering my routine activities here. Next comes the letter of March 22 to Mr. Sonnabaum signed by Warden Jett (these letters, as you know, are only signed

by the warden, not written by him). This letter was written by my case manager, the single person here with the responsibility of directing Parole Commission activity concerning me. His information is derived solely from Dept. of Justice written briefs concerning a probable me and bears little relationship to the real me, consequently he has no way yet of knowing who *I* am, the nature of *my* crime, the criminal intent, or the extent of *my* involvement. I interpret his letter: "I recommend against modification so I can handle him through the Parole Commission whenever I'm ready."

There are many evils here, of great potential harm to my person every day, and I do not speak of unnecessarily inflicted mental violence, but actual physical violence. I never knew a criminal before now...never had the opportunity to listen to people describe their last murder or their next bombing, what went wrong with their last bank robbery and how the next one will be foolproof. I never saw a fight before, but broken limbs and bloody noses are commonplace to me now. I never watched men make love, but am now forced to endure it regularly. I never saw heroin in my whole life, yet here it is considerably more available than Coca-Cola, and I am compelled to inhale the aroma of it cooking and watch as many as six persons pass around the same used syringe five times daily. These things are as alien to me as if they came from another planet, and they are dangerous to me beyond my ability to describe. There is nothing inside me to protect me from these things. Nothing in the structure of my past has prepared me to endure or condone such tolerated behavior. My case manager selected the word "distasteful." It is unfortunate he didn't tell you why.

I have honor, sir, and a reverence for truth that carries me beyond the point of self damage. It is my belief that, throughout these proceedings, I have not once compromised either. I am content with the record as it exists concerning me, and in the truths that are daily revealed through which all our pasts are reevaluated. My conscience has no fear of the future; the worst-real or imaginary-has long since been said of me. The good is yet to come.

Consider at least the possibility, if not the fact, that I have never been the person you were once told I was. I positively am not the person you met years ago. Is it proper to treat the person I am today as if I was the person who wasn't five years ago? I have already irretrievably lost those years, and almost everything I acquired honestly before them. Worse, so has my family. My wife and children are being punished, in some respects, to greater extents than am I.

Please don't overlook the affidavits filed on my behalf; they reveal the truths that are important to me. Remember please that I resigned from the corporations and individuals of concern to you long before this trial ever began, yet I have been "considered" with them all this time. That is cruelty, sir. Know, too, that I totally separated from the adult book industry years ago, not through any design or subterfuge aimed at you, but through my own evolvment as a growing being. I could not return to being as I was then even if I wanted to; it simply is not in me. My battles against things I considered wrong, however you wish to view them, have taken too much from me personally, and far too much from those who love me. I can cause them no further harm.

It is my earnest hope that you will act within your authority, and not relinquish your prerogative to any other. You alone have the facts, along with the untruths, concerning me as a person. You alone have the knowledge to do for me what your conscience and wisdom can arrive at.

Please do not abandon me, sir.

Totally aside, I have never had the opportunity (and I know this is not the proper time) to thank you for your personal attentions through these years, especially in regard to your allowing my unrestricted traveling abroad. It has been particularly kind of you not to separate me from my friends and neighbors in Mexico. That help from you has meant a great deal to me and my family.

In your deliberations, sir, may you find peace.

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*Excerpts from a letter to Judge Gordon Thompson, Jr. Dated April 24, 1976.

The First Amendment reads more like a dream than a law, and no other nation, so far as I know, has been crazy enough to include such a dream among its fundamental legal documents.

-- Kurt Vonnegut

Work Production Notes for Charles Paschal*

Artwork by Harry Bell

By Earl Kemp

BACKGROUND: I had been continuously employed within the adult book industry for ten years during which I became the boss of the book production division of Greenleaf Classics, Inc. as well as the conscience, the moral guide, and the soul of the division. I was also the company front, voice, greeter, entertainer, and (when required) clown. I traveled extensively and was well known by many people. I was confident that I could visit any major city anywhere in the world and find myself houseguest to someone that knew me personally and felt me to be an honored guest. I was very confident about who I was, very proud, and very exacting. I demanded from everyone near me a standard of excellence and quality noticeably above anyone else's (one exception only, my hero Barney Rossett at Grove Press consistently outdid me down the line in every direction as far as quality of workmanship was concerned, and that's totally immaterial to here and now).

At the time of my indictment, the company was the fifth largest book producing company in the USA right behind Bantam Books, and I felt I had the right to claim all of that as *my doing*. (I was not the principal in the company, or the financial backer. Other people handled the distribution and financial ends of the business...I was the end-result product.)

I was, also, at the time of the indictment and trial, presumed to be the ultimate authority on world-wide sexual laws and expressions and, because of my wide travels and many-nationality friends, possessed by a world consciousness that gave me daily traumas just trying to live down to expected, locally dictated morality.

I had also, unfortunately, during that decade of becoming a national nuisance, acquired an unhealthy appreciation for the law enforcement community in general. I personally have witnessed or been involved in or a co-conspirator to paying off **solicited** (accentuate that word) bribes from numerous representatives of the law enforcement community at every level of local, state, and federal service. And worse; direct payoffs for solicitations from a presidential cabinet-level position, one sitting president, and one sitting U.S. Supreme Court Justice. After everyone who had sworn to protect and serve had extracted their demanded dues, they all just turned their backs and walked away, greedily. All of them. Every agency at every level.

And some of them lied, and some of them manufactured things, and some of them gave perjurious and fraudulent testimony, under oath, and, in the end, every single person involved with arranging to see that I was convicted and incarcerated was, themselves, sent to prison. Every one of them except the boss, Richard Nixon, who was pardoned in error, and Patrick Buchanan, who was Nixon's speech writer, confidant, strategist, and assigned back-up for Charles Keating. Buchanan actually even wrote the dissent for Keating that appeared under his name. All this, of course, before Keating stole all those millions from Lincoln Federal Savings and Loan that left all those poor retirees with no money for the rest of their lives and brought about the collapse of the entire nationwide savings and loan industry. Keating sits today amid all that luxury he stole...a completely free man...enjoying it all...Nixon's final gift to him.

CHRONOLOGY:

3-3-71 Indicted; 20+ counts "conspiracy to mail obscene matter."
_ - _-71 trial; memory says many weeks (16?)
2-7-72 sentenced
6-7-73 judgment entered
10-_-75 appeals begin; denied (mysterious circumstances)
12-_-75 US Supreme Court
_ - _-76 denied
2-_-76 to Terminal Island
5-17-76 released on probation HELLO THERE.
(The balance of '76 plus all of 77-78-79 were totally lost years.)
_ - _-77 divorce started

ONSTAGE ACTIVITY:

In 1976, when the Supreme Court denied my petition, everything inside me began dying. Everything; shutting down one by one and turning off, automatically. I couldn't do anything, including think or walk across the street. For a while though I think I might have looked pretty normal. I believe I appeared to hang-on through the brief period of lockup at TI, and into the start of my probation period, but I'm not sure. The divorce action that started in 1977 was the final clincher, though, for me. Everything that had not already collapsed, collapsed at that time. I seem to have drifted through a fuzzy haze for all of 77-78 and 79. They were totally lost to me in any direction as far as positiveness or production were concerned.

You entered the scene somewhere around about here, driving, as I remember, a beat-up old Mercedes sedan.

For my state of mind it was necessary for me to view you only as someone positive and helpful to me. I looked at you only in that light. There could not be for me even the slightest suspicion that you could be negative toward me, I was that fragile inside my psyche; I needed professional therapy in the worst way. I was right across the board. You were an instant friend; though I could not recognize you as such for a long time. I remember I called upon you numbers of times for personal help regarding idiotic actions of my ex-wife or others, or some of the continuously ongoing harassment from local law types because of her false reports about me, and you came right away, every time, to help and to reassure me.

You might not have known that, at that time, I did not have a penny to my name and I was completely helpless and totally vulnerable to everything...not even a place to live. Apollo Caruso, a casual acquaintance, the friend of a friend I hardly knew, came to my rescue: He told me right out that he would give me three months of his energy, emotion, and best assistance, and that he had that much to spare. He adopted me and looked out for me and cared for me and fed me and slowly tried to teach me how to be a person again. He took a backdoor approach, but it worked. He inundated me in everything I had

always wanted and opened doors for me that would allow me to be, and to do, everything I had ever even dreamed of being or doing (while you looked on).

Only, we were still broke, even together, and hungry. We were wallowing around inside of the most incredible erotic fantasy ever conceived, literally six in a cluster at a time.



Completely unknown to you (I hoped at the time; I care not now) Paulie and I were working full-time part-time all that time at a large pot packaging facility in El Cajon. Our job, daily, was to select from a warehouse filled from an unlimited supply of 50-lb. hard-pressed bricks those we would process and package into 65 individual one pound packages of the best looking, smelling, and tasting pot south of Humboldt County. Unfortunately we weren't paid in cash; we were paid in food (it was a Mormon warehouse filled with Mormon food) and in all the pot we could pilfer. To the best of my knowledge, no single person ever associated with that operation, that went on for years, was ever even investigated...everyone got out free (must have been a Federal operation; it was elaborate).

I remind you of how handsome I looked in those days, at 47, and what a stud-hunk I was with the gaggle of titshakers from Dirty Dan's (and you could not tell which ones were guys) who had somehow adopted me and paraded me around for weekends at a time surrounded by nothing but acres of bare tits and pubes. And I was writhing around inside a personal living hell, doing nothing, getting nowhere, and being no one. (But damn it was nice; sometimes almost more than I could keep up with, but I tried real hard.)

And here at this point, again, you enter and make it right. I was bitching or moaning to you about my sad, useless, nothingness plight...again...and you were growing a bit tired of listening to it...again. You said, "Quit your bitching. I think you've died and gone to heaven."

I didn't hear you correctly; I asked you to repeat it and you did. Slowly I began thinking: *Is he serious? Does he really think that about me? That's a good thought; If he thinks it then there might be some hope for me after all....*

That moment was the turn-around moment in the rest of my life, and you did it. *When they get you, they'll make you suffer for having done it.*

And I suppose that's about all of it that really matters. The rest is up to you.

What I want you to find inside your memories are all those unusual and extraordinary little things related to me in some fashion including the verbal instructions passed along to you. I want you to remember the tenor of the times and, especially, your personal view of those giving you the orders. This is your one chance to vent it out, Charles, should you find anything there you need to dispose of.

I am, Charles, asking this of every significant player in the cast. I am not singling you out for anything special, beyond whatever being a friend entitles you to.

I've always known you were that; once, knowing it was the only thing that kept me going. So much for the thanks, Charles....

- - -

*For Charles Paschal. Dated 2-26-01

Everyone has my sympathy, even those I'm most indignant about. I've never written a story with a villain. I think even the rich and the powerful are capable of great moods of tenderness, brought on by dogs and children. I think everybody's programmed, and can't help what they do. But I'd still oppose the rich and powerful - that's the way I've been programmed.

--Kurt Vonnegut, 3/69

Going Over the Edge*

By Earl Kemp

When I was released from prison on May 17, 1976, and finished up all the exiting paperwork, I walked out of that door in my prison uniform and with empty pockets. In fact, everything I thought I knew, had, or owned was empty, but I couldn't recognize any of that at the time. And, I walked out of the lockup carrying some heavy baggage in the form of "Thou Shalt Nots" proscribed by the honorable Gordon Thompson, Jr. Included among them was a total prohibition against associating or consorting with any known pornographers.

Just outside the jailhouse door, waiting to claim the remains of my former self, were two of the very best known pornographers. Jerry Murray had been my close friend for years already, and Vivien Kern, from the original Gilmore Guadalajara porno mill, was right up there as well. The only thing wrong was, it wasn't me.

Nevertheless, they hustled me into Jerry's Volkswagen van where my wife Nancy and Jerry's wife Suzanne were waiting, and we went directly to the Murray's house in Pacific Beach.

Getting there was an awful ordeal, but one I would have to get used to.

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As soon as we got inside the Murray household, I began stripping. I couldn't wear that prison uniform one second longer, even if it didn't look like a prison uniform. At the time, convicts at Terminal Island were clothed in surplus Navy officer khakis that were actually rather nice, except for the convict number permanently affixed to each piece.

For the first time in over three months I had an uneventful, uncruised shower. I could just stand beneath that hot water and feel it rolling all down my body and washing away every trace of Terminal Island contamination adhering to it.

If only I could do the same thing to the inside as well. The empty place where nothing resided any longer...where there was not even the remotest hope of recovering a single fragment of any of it...ever.

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I had changed so drastically that I didn't know myself. All of those changes came about because I allowed them to do so. I am in charge of me. Why didn't I know myself any more?

I had physically changed in a number of ways. The prison food and lack of real exercise (a policy I have always supported, by the way) put on a bunch of extra pounds that I was unaccustomed to navigating around with me. My hair, such as there was of it, had turned white during my Terminal Island vacation. When I was a cook, the crew boss named me "Whitey" because of it. My plans and hopes for the future were completely obliterated. I couldn't maintain thought for any length of time on any subject.

I couldn't be a passenger in an automobile, much less be the driver. Just getting from the jail to Jerry's house was a nightmare of stark terror, careening along the freeway and residential streets, rocking from side to side...the movement, the world outside the van windows, was almost too much for me...and I had only been locked into retrospection for three months and one day, yet all these things had overtaken me and become me and I hated every one of them with all the disgust I could summon. It wasn't that I had become agoraphobic...there wasn't enough of anything even to qualify for that.

Nothing meant anything to me any more. Nothing. Not food, not family, not companionship, not books, not friends, not lovers, not nothing. All inside me was a homogenized gray mass of meaninglessness. Confusion reigned supreme.

I could not do, by decree, anything that I was qualified to do. I could not, by decree, associate with the people who had been my closest friends for the last solid decade. So what was left? *Anything I couldn't do and anyone I didn't know were okay for me.* Sure they were.

I didn't know it at the time...I've always been a slow learner...but I desperately needed some professional help. It took me a very long time to realize that, and how negatively I had evolved, and by then it was already too late. The toll had been extracted and claimed; parts of me, regardless of whatever happened, could never be reassembled.

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Within one week of my release, Jack Haberstroh contacted me and asked me to appear at a seminar he was having for a group of his students from San Diego State University. Because Jack had been a friend for some time, and had worked so strenuously during my trial to help free me, I accepted his invitation with a heavy load of inner trepidation.

I wasn't the man they wanted to see. I certainly wasn't the man I wanted to see. I didn't know how I could fake it out for them, pretend to be someone I no longer was, but I gave it a good try anyway. Fighting motion inside an automobile all the way to the campus and back, terrified of my own shadow and of all those people outside that I didn't know but all, somehow, who knew me.

It was one of the most difficult things I had ever been through, trying to be the image of respect and pride that they saw me as, while all I could see was the tarnished baggage that once held it all right in the palm of one hand.

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Home was hell, but the less said about that the better, and I'm really trying to avoid the whole issue only there's no way that can be done.... "Bianca's Hands," a short story by Truman Capote comes to mind, about a man's obsession with watching Bianca's hands.

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In July 1976, my buddy Harold Keen contacted me. He was the elder journalism statesman of San Diego County. He had been my friend for quite a few years. He followed my trial closely and everything related to it, and we spoke of it occasionally. He was something like news anchor man at TV 8 in those days, and everyone in San Diego County felt they knew him personally, it seemed. The journalism students at every major college around the county revered and respected him.

He told me he wanted to do a real down and dirty article about the trial and Richard Nixon. But most of all, Harold wanted to bitch about William Rehnquist's conflict of interest and couldn't, apparently, not stop ranting about it frequently.

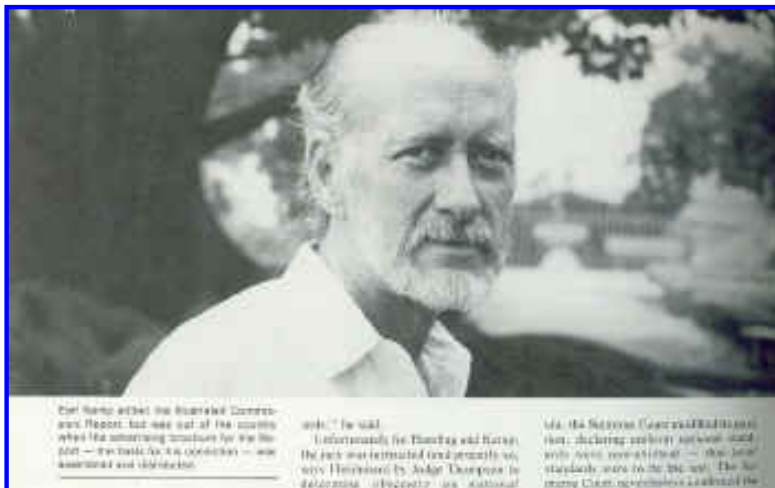
I agreed, of course. I would have done lots of things for Harold Keen; he certainly did lots of nice things for me over time.

Harold saw it as an article about both William Hamling and myself and, toward that end, he interviewed us separately, conducting a number of different sessions with each of us. He was writing the article for *San Diego* magazine and it appeared in the September 1976 issue with a banner overline reading "NIXON'S REVENGE ON SAN DIEGO'S PORNO KINGS."



Bill Reid, a prominent local portrait photographer of the period, was assigned the job of photographing me and Hamling for the issue. Considering that I didn't know who I was when he took his picture, I think it turned out rather well.

I have a copy of Harold Keen's original manuscript for his article, and I am excerpting the relevant parts here:



Richard Nixon, whose fall was hastened by a probing press, in turn left his destructive mark on at least two journalists - both San Diegans - who defied his self-anointed righteousness.

And whereas Nixon was pardoned of abusing his constitutional power and was permitted to retreat to San Clemente's serenity to make a fortune from his memoirs, his San Diego victims are smeared as ex-convicts, and ousted by court order from their particular milieu of publishing.

The saga of William Hamling and Earl Kemp, released two and one-half months ago from the Terminal Island Federal penitentiary, might well be subtitled Richard Nixon's revenge. In their case, the line of demarcation between

heroes and losers in a significant First Amendment judgment was the thinnest possible—a 5-4 vote of the Supreme Court. One vote, that of a Nixon appointee, William Rehnquist, who wrote the majority opinion, drastically altered their lives and careers.

Attorney General John Mitchell personally announced the indictment at a press conference on the steps of the Justice Department on March 5, 1971.

Hamling and Kemp were literally ahead of their time. The Illustrated Report, and even the advertising brochure, would be considered not far out of today's mainstream of sexually explicit reading matter available on

newsstands or through the mail, in [defense attorney Louis] Katz' opinion.

Some questioned the propriety of participation by Justice Rehnquist in judgment on this case. Critics point to the fact that an inherent predetermined attitude might have at least subconsciously prevailed, inasmuch as he was one of the top officials of the Justice Department, under Mitchell, at the time the indictments were handed down and announced by Mitchell at that news conference symbolically staged as a spectacle on the steps of the Justice building.

In one of his last notable dissents before he himself was forced by failing health to resign, Justice Douglas delivered a masterpiece of succinct defense of the right of consenting adults to read and view whatever they choose. The Illustrated Report, he said, added a glossary to the commission report-"not in dictionary terms but visually."

"Every item in the glossary depicted explicit sexual material within the meaning of that term as used in the report," he continued.

At Terminal Island, Kemp became editor of the prison newspaper, and...had ample opportunity to observe the extracurricular conduct of inmates. An outstanding impression was the "absolutely overwhelming" use of drugs... "Heroin was ever-present," says Kemp. "Before reaching Terminal Island, I had never, in the varied experiences of a lifetime of writing and editing, encountered heroin. At Terminal Island you literally stumble over its use-men leaning against corridor walls, in showers, toilets, even in classrooms, injecting heroin. In the dormitories. I've seen as many as five people use the same syringe without cleaning it... The volume of drugs is enormous-not only heroin but cocaine, and an extreme amount of marijuana, the air is never free of the odor. Prison officials and guards can see and smell as well as I can, but do nothing about it. A possible reason is that drugs keep the prisoners complacent and malleable. Users were usually quiet-problems with them were at a minimum. Cabinets in the dorms containing personal belongings are inspected periodically, and they pretend to be looking for dope, but I've seen the guards deliberately overlook it."

Prostitution is not an uncommon activity at Terminal Island..., according to Kemp. Although segregated in their living quarters, the men and women have ample opportunity to make the necessary arrangements..."prostitution is carried on in toilets, behind the altar in the chapel, and even under conference tables in classrooms while the class is in session," he says. "When they're caught, they're put in a lock-in cell for two or three days, and they're cheered by the other inmates on exit."

Kemp attained the post of editor of the T.I. News.... Kemp must have strained at the leash of the antisepticised journalism he was forced to present in the bi-weekly, 24-page multilith publication. Prison life was pictured as a series of sports events and entertainments, and a chance to express one's creative talents (a Poetry Page was a big feature). "Of course, we weren't allowed to publish anything critical of the personnel or the institution," Kemp declared. "It had to reflect the good things, and seemed to be aimed more at the relatives and other people on the outside, rather than the inmates. I always thought it incongruous that the most extreme words we could use in an inmate-edited paper were 'hell and damn,' when we were surrounded by 1,300 people whose every other word was 'motherfucker.'"



In his final issue before he and Hamling were returned to San Diego for modification of their sentences..., Kemp did manage to utilize the T.I. News' cover for a symbolic message: a prisoner is depicted shouting the words of the First Amendment into the air. And he managed to get by the censors a couple of fillers that leaked his own thoughts about prison life, while attributing them to others. He quoted the French historian-philosopher, Michael Foucault: "Prison is a recruitment center for the army of crime. For 200 years everybody has been saying, 'Prisons are failing: all they do is produce new criminals.' I would say on the other hand, they are a success, since that is what has been asked of them...." And on another page, squeezed between a report of a baseball game, and a listing of literary markets for prison writers was

this unobtrusive indictment, "The Product Of Imprisonment Is Recidivism," signed by one "B.L."

Kemp has special reason to feel bitter about his conviction. Although he edited the Illustrated Report, which was not declared obscene, he was out of the country...when the guilty advertising brochure was assembled and distributed.

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It was clear to me that I couldn't be a pretender, I could only be real. If I couldn't be real, then I couldn't be anything at all. Out of all this blankness there was nothing except the sidestep over the edge that was inevitable.

I began immediately declining all personal appearances and speaking engagements. I hung up a large, figurative sign saying, "Closed! Out of business!," took a deep breath, closed my eyes, and fell forward over the edge and down the slippery slope into blissful oblivion.

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*For Paulie Caruso who was ready to pick up the useless pieces. Dated September 2003.

I want to stay as close to the edge as I can without going over. Out on the edge you see all kinds of things you can't see from the center.

--Kurt Vonnegut

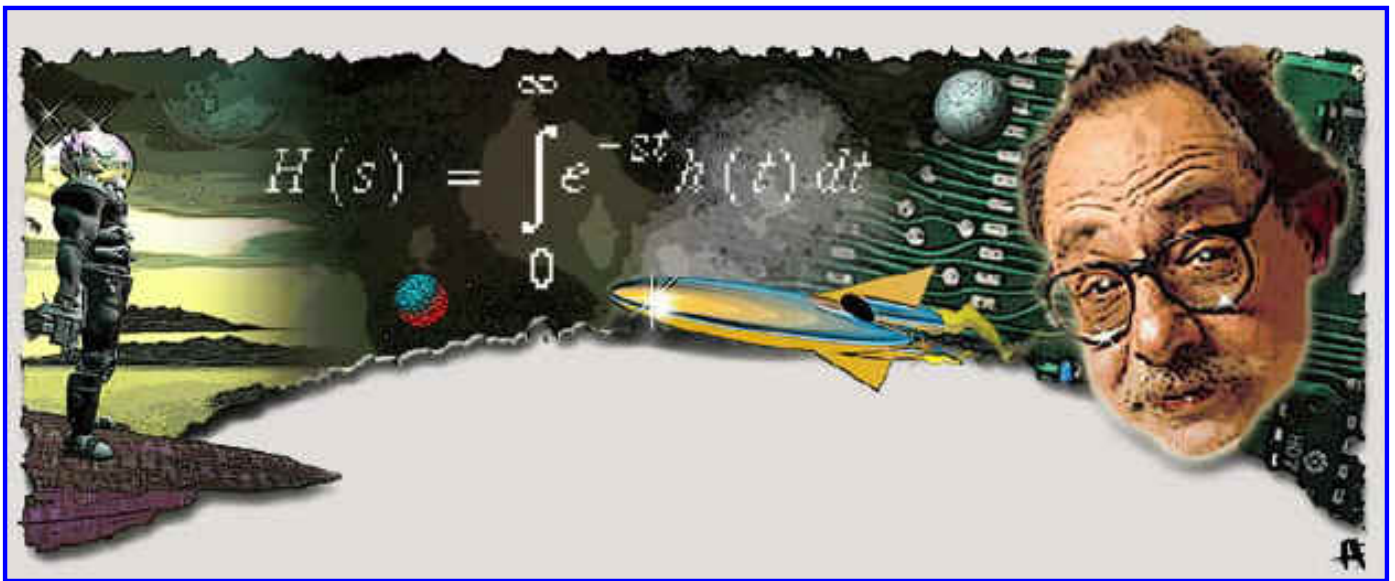
S*T*A*R*R*I*N*G Sidney Coleman

I couldn't figure out how to make this a two-faced ezine. All along I was thinking of it as a sort of improved version of an ACE Double novel where either side was the right side. It's that way with this ezine also, regardless of where you start.

Finally, I decided I'd take the easy way out and stick to alphabetical. Sidney Coleman comes first.

Then, to make sure my pseudo ACE Double looked really good, I asked Alan White to make two special covers for it.

This is Alan White's cover S*T*A*R*R*I*N*G Sidney Coleman:



Chopped Liver and Propeller Beanies*

By Earl Kemp

Robert Lichtman and I were involved in a discourse about nothing of any significance when something that was came up, the name of a mutual friend...the infamous Dr. Sidney Coleman of the Physics Department at Harvard University. Whereupon, for no reason at all, I volunteered the information that Sidney had just recently separated himself from science fiction completely, sadly.

This led to some innocuous business about Sidney's mother, Sadie Coleman, and brother Robert, who live in the Bay Area. And all that got me thinking about Sidney, so I came up with some memories.

I think Sidney Coleman was around 15 years old when I first met him, the boy genius, as he seemed to have graduated simultaneously from high school and college with a bachelor's degree. I think it took him another year or so to get his doctorate. He had a brilliant mind and sparkling wit. He was still young enough to play with and enjoy my children; they adored Squidney (their name for him; the full name was Squidney Peepots). One of my fondest memories is that of a photograph showing Sidney, wearing a propeller beanie, seated in the middle of my kitchen floor playing with my kids' toys just like one of them.

It took me many years to realize that I select and adopt the children that I never had and that, today, they are scattered pretty much everywhere.

Sidney began right away teaching me things I had never wanted or needed, most especially about gross hypocrisy and the finer arts of Catholicism. He would come to my house, enter the front door, and say: "For God's sakes, give a starving Jew a piece of pork to chew on...."

He also taught me how to appreciate the "correct" Chicago style Jewish Deli chopped chicken liver sandwich. The next closest thing I ever found was in Mexico City, of all places, though Blummer's in San Diego serves a passable substitute.

Sidney was always available, I recall, for most anything, especially if it was a party where his charm and wit frequently made everything come out right. He also seemed to have tireless energy and devoted much of it toward Chicago fan activity. He wrote an occasional humor article for one of my fanzines, and became a founding partner of Advent:Publishers, Inc.

One other special memory of Sidney, that most people might not know, is that while he was still a shallow youth, he was quite an accomplished amateur stage magician. I remember at least two different times when Sidney put on one-man shows for the University of Chicago Science Fiction Club. He had all the equipment that went with the act, too, as I recall, and would let me go with him to the magic store to buy more. His affection for magic and my curiosity made me, ever since then, attempt to unveil the trickery of most magic acts I witnessed.

Time and Fate and all those other things got in the way of living, fanning, and communicating. But my interest in magic continued along with my interest in chopped liver and everything else he taught me, and I fell into a magical hole that Sidney might have loved to be in, now and then, and I never even told him about it.

It was in the mid-1960s and I was slaving away at the Porno Factory in Evanston, Illinois. More and more it became necessary to go to New York City for business reasons: meetings with agents, writers, publishers, lawyers, lawyers, etc. (Naturally I squeezed in a few fan activities now and then at the same time.) On one of those early-on trips, friend and co-worker Bruce Elliott took me with him to a meeting of a group whose name escapes me but could have easily been the League of Professional Stage Magicians. There were at least a dozen of them at that first meeting. I became so involved with them that, over time, I attended a number of their meetings.



Sidney Coleman playing "engineer" while Terry Kemp (top right) looks on. December 1956.

...The ostensible occasion for my being in [Chicago] was a dinner meeting of Mystery Writers of America welcoming their Chicago chapter-founder, Clayton Rawson. Rawson was my editor at Simon & Schuster, ...last-chapter revisions on a new book. (*Psycho*)

...I went over to Riccardo's Restaurant. Rawson wasn't there - he'd been bumped off a plane at Albuquerque - but I found Earl and Nancy Kemp, Fran Light, Bob and Fern Tucker, and Frank Robinson...Rawson finally showed up at 9:30. His reputation as an amateur magician preceded him, and he proved it magnificently; all of us, plus Harry Stephen Keeler and several others, acted as stooges in various tricks which he used to demonstrate points in his talk on mystery-writing....

--Robert Bloch, "Chicon II-1/2," *SaFari* No. 2, SAPS No. 48, July 1959

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Bruce Elliott was once on the staff of Bill Hamling.... Bruce had written a little science fiction, but was better known as a general pulp writer, after all, he's written some of the "Shadow" novels but he was a practicing magician and publisher of the magic magazine *The Phoenix*.

--Howard DeVore, *Kissett*, SAPS, Spring 2000

There was no formal program or anything, they would just sit around a huge conference table and talk about old times...much as I am doing here at this very moment...and I would listen and enjoy and admire them all so very much. I can't remember their names...I'm good at that...but I can remember many of their faces and know that I had seen them all perform and that they were all really cream of the crop. Only it didn't end there, it just kept on getting better and better....

One of those professional magicians, the only single name I can remember, and I can remember a number of his names, was Clayton Rawson. Clayton performed professionally under the name "The Great Merlini." As a writer, Clayton wrote an excellent series of murder-mystery novels around his central character, named appropriately enough "Merlini the Magician." As an editor, Clayton edited the Inner Sanctum series of novels at Simon and Schuster for years. These included the works of My Hero Wilson Tucker. Now and then, Clayton would have to double and edit a science fiction novel.

As editor of Inner Sanctum, Clayton frequently had interactions with the *New York Times*' official last-word authority on murder fiction, H.H. Holmes, who really wasn't H.H. Holmes at all but was Billy White's identical nonexistent twin last-word authority on science fiction and everyone's favorite, Tony Boucher. See what a small world it is...?

And Sidney Coleman made all that possible. Knowing him greatly enriched my life.

I love Sidney Coleman and I'm sorry I've been talking about him behind his back the way I have been. Perhaps Robert Lichtman can help keep my secret.

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*For Sidney Coleman for no reason at all. Revised from Robert Lichtman's Lilapa mailing 542, April 2001.

Christ, I can remember when TV was going to teach my children Korean and trigonometry. Rural areas wouldn't even have to have very well educated teachers; all they'd have to do is turn on the box. Well, we can see what TV really did. Look at what the O.J. Simpson trial has done to everyone. So much for all those Tom Swifts talking about the enormous benefit of what they were doing. The information superhighway will be two lanes loaded with tollgates, and it's going to tell you what to look for. People will just watch the show.

The Punch-Line Kid*

Buddha artwork by Steve Stiles

By Earl Kemp



I recall being accosted by Sadie Coleman's street waif Sidney, the wandering Jew, in early 1952. He was trolling a bookstore looking for unsuspecting victims at the time, either that or what turned out to be his usual, stalking the science fiction section.

As a result of our encounter, Sidney decided to keep me as an acolyte. There were many things he felt compelled to teach me. He was 15 at the time and I was 23. The thought of spending time with a kid had never occurred to me. I already had two of my own at home; I didn't need another one ordering me around. Only I must have, because Sidney kept me forever.

It wasn't easy, either...way back then...listening to a kid, however smartassed he was. That was the hardest part of it all, that he was some kind of mental giant spinning wheels all around everyone he ever got close to, and making them like it.

He was at his very best when criticizing someone for what he thought was a shortcoming on their part...and doing it with sparkle and charm, with witty words that left them, while injured, somehow happy about the whole thing and anxious to tell others about it.

One of the first things Sidney ever taught me was that he loved to tell stories. I don't think he thought of them as being funny stories, but they were. He also liked to have an audience when he was telling one of those stories but, if necessary, he could go on without them.

When he had an audience, he loved to keep them enthralled by the play of his words. He held their attention completely as he tilted his head just so and grinned that patented secret-sharing grin while trying to suppress the delighted twinkles flashing like strobes out of his laughing eyes.

Little wonder he grew up to become "The Famous Professor Coleman" at Harvard whose physics classes were always packed.

Shaggy dog stories were his favorite, early on. He could hold an audience for a long time that way, stretching out the minute details of the yarn he was spinning only to land with a whomp and a pun that would leave all the listeners stunned. His favorite, for a long time, ended with, "Bear-foot boy with teak of Chan." Just thinking about that punch line brings a smile back to my thoughts.

#

I was fond of Halloween parties and WorldCon masquerades way back then. Dress up time. Becoming, briefly, another persona doing different things; to die for.

At one of those Halloween parties at my house in Chicago, Sidney Coleman showed up costumed as "Judas Iscariot as Sidney Coleman with 30 pieces of silver." In his hand, Sidney carried a pouch containing \$3.00 in dimes and, yes, in those days they were still being made of silver.

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Another favorite Sidney Coleman story is one he told very early on, about himself and some of his cousins. There is no way possible that I can recall the story anywhere near as interestingly as Sidney told it to me the first time.

There was a family reunion ongoing at one of the Coleman relative's outlying farm. There was no plumbing or sewer system, but there was a storybook classic outhouse, a one-holer, complete with cutout crescent moon door.

Sometime during the festivities, some of the younger cousins playing together came into possession of the farmer's cat. Naturally, one of them - certainly not Sidney - suggested that the proper place for the cat was accessed through that single hole in the family outhouse. And then they hid close by and waited and watched.

Uncle Moishe, having eaten too much spicy food, made a mad dash for the outhouse. In extreme haste, He dropped his pants and flopped down on that gaping hole as a massive evacuation began occurring spontaneously.

At the exact same instant the farmer's cat managed to claw its way up to the hole, into Moishe's flesh, and up Moishe's back, with both of them thoroughly decorated with all kinds and quantities of pungent fecal matter.

Moishe, screaming and running for his very life, the cat, also screaming at peak volume, still clinging to his back with all fours, ran into the middle of the family gathering seeking help.

The cousins agreed, it had been a good reunion.

#

Other Voices

There are many people who have similar anecdotes about Sidney Coleman hidden away within their consciousness. I asked a few of them, who know Sidney best, to share some of those special memories.

#

I remember Sidney Coleman's incredible joke-telling abilities.

He could make a story of what he'd done today into a hilarious adventure. He could seize the moment,



(l to r) Buck Coulson and Sidney Coleman
at Arthur and Phyllis Economou's
(Milwaukee, WI) New Year's Eve party
1961.



improvising. (Answering someone else's door, with a gentle German shepherd accompanying him, Sidney said in front of the stranger at the door, "Kill, Fang!") And he had an incredible repertory of Jewish jokes. Terry Carr once asked him, "How many jokes can you tell that start, 'One day in the garment district...?'" He was speechless, then said he couldn't put a number to them.

--Jim Caughran

#

Back in the 70s, when we had a formal occasion in the [Harvard University] Physics Department, Sidney would often appear in one of several outlandish pink suits. He always claimed that he got these at a gay clothier's in NYC. He said that he hated the clothes, but he loved the fitting.

In his prime, which lasted for a very long time from the mid 60s to the late 80s, Sidney was such a towering figure in theoretical physics that even his close colleagues (Nobel prize winners, etc.) were somewhat in awe of him. In fact, we had to be careful about talking to Sidney too soon about new ideas, because he was so smart and had such encyclopedic knowledge that he could kill nascent ideas before they really got started.

--Howard Georgi

#

"I do wish Sydney Coleman hadn't gaffiated - he was one of fandom's premier humorists, and a real Master of the brief, literate, rational, pointed, wry comment...quite the equal, I think, of Arthur Hlavaty. But perhaps it's for the best - the entire universe might unwind if there were two or more such talents active in fandom at any given time."

No disrespect to Arthur, but I think there's definitely room for two or more.

"I also wish I could locate a copy of Sydney's account of the first time he was a Visiting Lecturer at Cambridge (or possibly Oxford). After dinner in the Commons, a silver snuff-box was, as per Tradition, passed from hand to hand. Being Sydney, he opened it and took a pinch. Anyone who knows him can visualize his slow smile when one of the Dons informed him that he was the first person to do that in more than a hundred years. If memory serves, he noted that it was *fresh* snuff, and mentioned that "of course one expects an old British University to pay attention to such details".

If your file of *Lighthouse* is available, odds are very high that the above account is located in one of them. Sidney had a pretty regular column there, "Our Man In Sidney Coleman," taken largely from his Lilapa contributions back when he was active there....

Sidney's primary fanac in recent years has been writing and sending me the occasional Lilapa dues check. Which is not the same as being active there, alas. I haven't had the pleasure of seeing him in person for at least a couple years.

--Robert Lichtman

Sid Coleman is another fan who prefers two pair of glasses to bifocals. When Carol and I go to dinner with him and his wife Diana (usually with others as well) - something that hasn't happened, alas, in far too long - it's probably amusing to see us both switching back and forth as we read the menu and then turn

our attention back to The Group.

--Robert Lichtman

#

Well, Sidney Coleman *is* a Famous Old Man, and as little as six months ago it was reported in the media that he had attempted to study the ways that relativity can be violated by quantum gravity or in the high-energy cosmic rays, which personally I thought sounded vaguely illegal, and if there's anything I can't stand it's vagueness.

However, being a FOM, he's accessible. It's not like we don't know where he is.

I never did hear the circumstances of his gaffiation, if indeed there were any circumstances beyond those of just falling away. But you weren't back when he left. If you haven't been in touch since your return from Xanadu, it might be a good time to do so just for old times' sake, now that recent mentions of him have conspired to fire up old memories.

-- Dave Locke

Sydney Coleman declined to comment, saying, "At my age you tend to emit a lot of gas, and I'd rather not."

--boldly stolen from Richard Brandt's quote file by Dave Locke

#

As for Sid Coleman - I can't say I know him well. I saw the most of him in the late sixties when I lived in Brooklyn Heights. He was a friend of Terry Carr's and I saw him there. We all played charades together.

Flipping through old Terry Carr fanzines, I find Sid quoted saying: "The one good thing about stupidity is that it leads to adventure."

I can remember an extended conversation with Sid - at the Worldcon in St. Louis, I think - in which he was trying to bridge the gap between me and the Larry Niven-ness of things. Sid kept saying "subconscious" and I kept shaking my head and saying "no" until he got that while I would accept "unconscious," I wasn't ready to concede that it was "sub" anything.



And I remember Sid telling a story about being at a physics meeting in which Stephen Hawking spoke up from his wheelchair and made a point in his semi-unintelligible way. Sid said that he was tempted to reply, "That's easy for you to say," but held his tongue.

Every now and then I run into anecdotes and references to Sid in popular physics books in which he figures as an Einstein look-alike with wit.

--Alexei Panshin

#

It seems almost fantastic now, but I met Sid Coleman once. Quite a lot of us here in British fandom did, in fact, though none of us benefited from it. No aspersions cast on Sidney Coleman, far from it. The fault was all ours - none of us had the faintest idea who he was, and his well-meaning attempts to establish himself by reference to such presently acknowledged greats of fandom like Terry Carr fell equally on deaf years (Terry Carr, he's just an editor at Ace, isn't he...?).

This was back, way back, in 1973, at the Easter convention in Bristol, the horribly named OMPAcon... We here in British fandom were still in the throes of a re-inventing-it-all frenzy, having little or no knowledge of even the recent fannish past....

So we had nothing much in the way of role models, and there was a depressing (as I see it now) tendency to ignore everything...and treat events and personalities from the US as if they happened in some sort of bizarre alternate and worse world full of alien weirdoes with whom we had nothing in common....

Anyway, this urbane and charming fellow with a smart and stylish suit and a beard and long hair introduced himself to us all - more than once probably - and we were as standoffish and uninterested as only the profoundly ignorant can be. It's appalling really - I remember him so clearly, and I am horrified that I was unable to communicate on any useful level with him. All my own fault....

Anyway...I met Sid Coleman, and he was a nice man, and he tried to talk to me, and I had no idea. I'd probably still have no idea now, but I'd try a damned sight harder.

--Gregory Pickersgill

#

Well, I don't know that I have all that many Sid Coleman anecdotes. Let me think.

Back in the fifties, when we were both in the UofCSF Club, there were a few times when Sid's eager beaver attitude got on my nerves a little, and I referred to him as "Sidney the Unavoidable" (a reference to the character "Chun the Unavoidable" in Jack Vance's *The Dying Earth*). Of course I didn't mean it seriously.

In 1954 Sid and I traveled together by Greyhound to the WorldCon in San Francisco. We rode the bus each day, and stayed at a hotel each night (this was part of a special Greyhound travel package). As I recall, we stopped over in Omaha, Cheyenne, and Reno. But I don't remember anything much about the trip, so I guess nothing noteworthy happened.

Ah, now I have thought of one. I remember Martha Beck told me that she was at some sort of science fiction function and got into a conversation with a man who was a physicist. She casually mentioned Sid, and the man said in awed tones, "You know *Sidney Coleman!*?" Like a Catholic meeting someone who was a personal friend of the Pope. Up until then Martha had not known (and I didn't either) that Dr. Coleman is apparently world-famous within his specialty. Martha showed us a tape of a television interview of Sidney dealing with - I think - cosmology. Apart from that, I don't think I have ever seen a mention of him in the public prints. But within his professional set, he is apparently tops.

One other thing just came to mind. In 1968, Sid and I shared a room at the Claremont Hotel in Berkeley for the WorldCon. I met a most attractive lady during the course of the convention, and on the last day she came up to the room with me. We were not quite *in flagrante* when Sid walked in. (I had completely forgotten the possibility that he might show up, as I had other things on my mind.) He left within a few minutes, and was gentleman enough to heed my request that he not come back for a couple of hours or

so. That was a good convention.

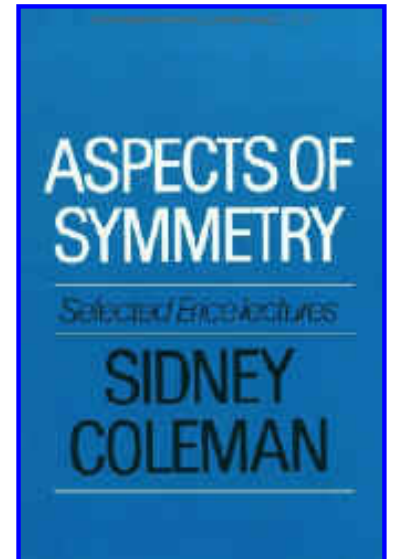
--George Price

#

A Sidney story - one that he told on himself.

While traveling - alone - in France in the early 1970s, Sidney unexpectedly contracted a case of what turned out to be crabs. "Unexpectedly" because this is customarily a venereal disease, and he had been a model of chastity throughout his trip. The offending organisms must have been concealed in the bedding of his hotel room, he decided, and so he had suffered a case of punishment without the crime. But during the trip he had not, however, remained true to the dietary restrictions imposed by the religious doctrines of his forefathers; and, he said, after visiting a French doctor and having his ailment diagnosed for what it was, he was granted a vision of his Orthodox grandfather rising up in wrath before him and thundering, "Thou hast eaten crustaceans, child, and now thou shalt be devoured by crustaceans thyself!"

--Robert Silverberg



#

Good grief, I suddenly realize it may have been over 30 years since I last saw Sidney - -which was when I played pinball with him and Bob Toomey in Pennsylvania (he was a whiz at it).

--Steve Stiles

#



I first met Sid Coleman at meetings of the University of Chicago Science Fiction Club, which met once a month in Ida Noyes Hall, on the university's wide, elm-tree-lined Midway Campus.

He was already fairly well adapted to an academic lifestyle and would fit in very nicely with the spaced-out professors, and the middling-large, yellow stone-faced buildings that graced this sort of place. He was a notably gleeful participant in the unremitting pun-warfare that clogged our conversations, and told amusing stories from behind a hand that he often used to cover his mouth; snorting and chuckling the while. A habit, I speculated, he might have acquired sitting in the back row in class and telling those same stories.

Sometime after, we had our most exciting adventure together in the back seat of a convertible. He and I hitched a ride to Midwestcon in a convertible owned by Marvin Mindez, a lawyer, and co-piloted by Frank Robinson, who later wrote *The Towering Inferno*, among other things. The design of the vehicle caused a terrible gale to swirl through the back seat, and Sid and I had to huddle with our heads covered by our jackets to keep from freezing. At that time men and boys at least wore a sport jacket to things like conventions, even if it was Cincinnati, Ohio, in the summer, so we had some protection from the chill evening air. The seatback of the front seat protected Marvin and Frank from the powerful wind, and they had a fine time on the long trip.

Earl Kemp, Ed Wood, Sid, some others, and I had created a fannish publishing house, Advent:Publishers, in 1956. Perhaps the most extensive time we spent together was preparing our first book, Damon Knight's *In Search of Wonder*. Week after week we gathered at Earl's apartment in Chicago, key lining typos in the photo-offset text. Ed Wood, a very large fan with a very large voice, and Sid, maintained an unrelenting dialog about the purpose of science fiction fandom; Ed loudly proclaiming that fandom should "spread the Science Fiction faith;" Sid insisting on a smaller purpose, like fun.

Damon's book went on sale at the 16th Worldcon, held in New York City. Afterward, Damon invited Sid and me as observers to the first Science Fiction Writers of America conference held in Milford, NJ (we were his publishers, after all). Sid openly enjoyed one of his favorite occupations, schmoozing with the pros, while they no doubt picked the more obscure facets of physics from his brain.

At Discon, Sid and Bob Briney talked a group of about six Chicago fans, including my wife, Joni, and me, into going out to eat at a Szechuan Chinese restaurant. None of the six had eaten Szechuan before; Sid and Bob did the ordering, and eventually huge mounds and bowls of steaming food were put in front of us. I, as usual, looked askance at the strange stuff, poked at it, and finally took a sip of the sour-bitter soup. I was rewarded with an abrupt, sizzling pain. The soup was hot! I let the sip etch its way around my gums, across my mouth and burn its way down my throat, taking ten minutes to do it. Aargh! That was enough for me; I pulled back from the table while the others dutifully ate a decent amount.

After the group had finished, Bob and Sid scarfed up the huge heaps of the hot stuff that remained, with what I took to be great relish. Or mustard, more likely. Their vocal cords having been singed, all the Chicagoans but me lost their voices by the time we had walked back to the hotel. This wasn't a problem for Bob and Sid, who belched and made contented sounds, patting their bellies as they went.

--Jon Stopa

#

The best story I know about Sid came from John Shipper, a fellow Illinois Institute of Technology alumnus whom I met again in Sacramento. It seems there was a faculty couple at Cal tech that owned a large dog--Doberman or some such. While he was a grad student Sid would occasionally do dog-sitting duties. While he was doing so, the doorbell to the apartment rang. Sidney opened the door with the dog close behind. "Ha! A stranger!" Sidney said, "Kill, Fang!"

--Len Zettel

#

Critics felt that a person could not be a serious artist and also have had a technical education - which I had. I know that English departments in universities, customarily without knowing what they're doing, teach dread of the engineering department, the physics department and the chemistry department. And this fear, I think, is carried over into criticism. Most of our critics are products of English departments and are very suspicious of anyone who takes an interest in technology.

-- Kurt Vonnegut, interview with Dr. Henry James Cargas in "The Christian Century," 1976

Sampling Sidney Coleman the Fan*

By Earl Kemp

Almost from the very beginning, Sidney Coleman was funny. Really funny. You had to be careful or you'd get caught up by his wit for sure.

Not only was he quite an entertainer in person, with his endless anecdotes and animated presentations, he was a damned good fanwriter as well. The problem in that was, he hardly ever did it, certainly not enough to please his waiting audience.

I have made a selection of four widely different pieces, all written by Sidney Coleman, that demonstrate the broad base of his knowledge and wit. Where appropriate, I have excerpted the best examples for you.

No. 1: "Gilding Golding," a not book review, is reprinted here from SaFari 1959:

Gilding Golding*

By Sidney Coleman

This is not a review of the latest William Golding novel. Here is why:

In 1938, John Dickson Carr published a lovely mystery novel called *The Crooked Hinge*. Much of the joy in this story comes from the audacity of its denouement; I don't want to go into detail, but the central revelation is that one of the characters, the murderer, has no legs. Normally this would be the worst kind of unfairness-to-the-reader, but the novel is so skillfully constructed that dozens of incidents that, on first reading, appear to advance the plot, establish character, set atmosphere, or be clues in the mundane, time-table sense, appear in retrospect to have double roles - they are really glaringly obvious evidences, symbolic signposts pointing to the central improbability of leglessness.

Now, imagine the predicament of a reviewer of mystery stories trying to explain the virtues of this book. He can't mention leglessness; he can't even intimate it - that would be giving away the surprise in a book where surprise is all-important. Yet how can he explain the peculiar, the wonderful, virtues of *The Crooked Hinge* without it?

The situation is ten times as bad with William Golding's *The Two Deaths of Christopher Martin*. At least in the case of *The Crooked Hinge*, although leglessness is at the base of everything, it is not at the center; there is much in the novel it does not touch. But in *Christopher Martin* that overwhelming surprise which I can only call "It," for like that of God, Its true name can not be mentioned, permeates everything; It is woven through the obvious texture of the novel like warp through woof.

Indeed, I have probably already revealed too much of the nature of It by mentioning It here, for you know now that It exists, and that It is fantastic in nature. The ideal reader of *Christopher Martin* should have no suspicion, until he is halfway through, that he is reading anything but a mundane, albeit somewhat morbid, novel about a man marooned on a rock in the middle of the Atlantic.

And then, ah, and then, the first twinges of discomfort appear; things grow stranger and stranger; It appears on the horizon; and when It finally comes forward, in the last chapter, clearly and unmistakably, the major part of the book performs an astounding gyration; words rearrange themselves to form quite

other sentences than the ones they made up on first reading, like one of those trick pictures where a group of figures turns, on the blink of an eye, into a staring and unmistakable face.

So, in order to save for you this pleasure, I must refrain from taking apart and displaying the inner parts of this wondrously contrived mechanism, and am reduced to Delphic praise and frenzied hortatory gestures. *The Two Deaths of Christopher Martin* is powerful, moving, surprising, exciting, wonderful. It is a tour de force, a coup de grace, and a roman candle. It is one of the half-dozen or so great fantastic novels that I know of. If you can't get a copy from the library, go out and buy one; the book has been remaindered. If you can't buy a copy, write to me and I'll lend you mine. Read it!

- - -

*Reprinted from *SaFari* 3, SAPS 49, October 1959.

No. 2: This is a letter to the editor, Theodore R. Cogswell, of *PITFCS*, *Proceedings of the Institute for Twenty-First Century Studies*, 1960:

PITFCS*

By Sidney Coleman

This is a letter to Ted Cogswell, True Friend, One of Nature's Gentlemen, Source of Cheap Unknowns. It is not a letter to Theodore R. Cogswell, unscrupulous, money-hungry Secretary of *PITFCS*, although there is an enclosure for him, money earned by the sweat of my brow, peddling Christoffel symbols from door to door.

The reason it is not a letter to the secretary is not so much because he caused me to insult family tradition by putting out money for that which could be obtained without (Did I ever tell you about my great-grandfather, Stephen Rich, the stingiest man in Slonim? When the local stonecutter went out of business, he had him make up a tombstone for him, cheap, with everything on it but the date of great-grandfather's death. He kept it in his front yard and tethered his goat to it. At least that's what my mother has always told me, but she's quite capable of having stolen the whole incident from an Erskine Caldwell novel.) was because I really have very little to say that would mean anything to the members of the Institute.

I am not in science fiction for money; I am in it for joy. Formally, I am a publisher (actually, 14% of a publisher); this is useful: it gets me on the mailing list of *PITFCS*, it is a handy topic of conversation at parties, it is a means whereby I meet some interesting people, it is a better hobby than stamp-collecting any day. From an economic standpoint, it plays a lesser role in my life than returning Coke bottles for refunds.

I am not interested in sf as income; I am interested in it as art. This makes me an esthete and a dilettante, and I know it. I am interested in the sf market only indirectly, because the prices paid for sf influence the quality of the finished product (I am not so much an esthete and a dilettante as to subscribe to the Catharist Fallacy - James Joyce may work for nothing, but only Ivar Jorgensen works for ½ cent a word.), or even more indirectly, because it is related to the financial well-being of some of my friends. For me to shoot off my mouth on the feasibility of a writer's union or methods of escaping ms.-eating editors would be the height of egregious bumptiousness - on this I know from nothing.

- - -

*Excerpted from *Proceedings of the Institute for Twenty-First Century Studies*, April 1960.

No. 3: My opus *Who Killed Science Fiction?* also appeared in 1960. This is excerpted from Sidney Coleman's contribution to that volume:

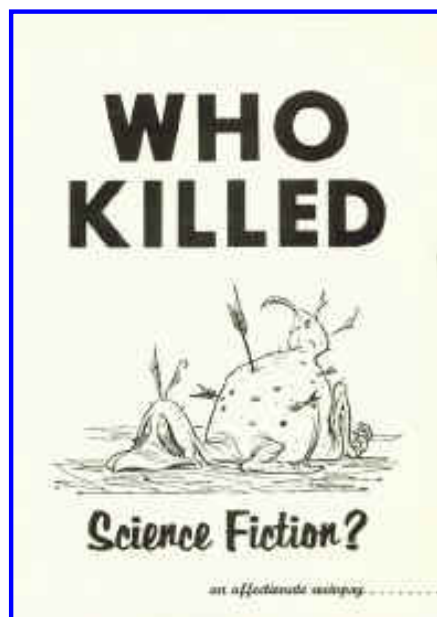
Who Killed Science Fiction?*

By Sidney Coleman

...It has been my experience, in high school and college, that there is a large group of young people who are potential science fiction readers. Sometime between ten and seventeen they come across science fiction, and are enchanted by it, but for the wrong reasons. They are enchanted by what they take to be its freshness and originality, its store of new ideas. What they think are new ideas may be new to the non-science fiction reading world, but they are really the clichés of science fiction. I don't only mean gimmicks like time-travel and robots, I mean plots like the one about the bucolic peasant-like aliens who turn out to be really so much superior to us, and moods like end-of-the-empire *weltschmerz*, and characters like...etc., ad. Nauseam.

When these young people see their supposed new ideas and fresh insights turning up again and again, they become bored with science fiction and go read something else. Often they do not realize what has happened; if queried as to why they dropped science fiction, they will say, "They don't write stories like they used to" or "I guess I just outgrew it; it doesn't seem to interest me any more." The whole process, from first discovery to total disenchantment, seems to take a year or two.

In normal times, these people are entering and leaving the science fiction world at equal rates. However, when a boom comes along, there is an enormous amount of publicity about science fiction. All of these potential short-term science fiction readers, some of whom would not, in normal times, come to science fiction until four or five years later, learn about science fiction at once. They all enter the field at once (i.e. in a year or so). A year or two later, they all leave, and the number of science fiction readers is depressed not only by those who left, but by those who, in normal times, would have been passing through the field, and now have already done so during the boom....



The two-panel Kelly Freas title page drawings for
Who Killed Science Fiction? Dated April 15, 1960.

Most science fiction is bought by people who do not read all the science fiction published, not even all the science fiction published that meets their taste. They may read three or four magazines and pocketbooks a month. Let us take as a case a man I know, an experimental physicist, whom I will call Joe Brain. Joe likes Heinlein. In days of old, when he felt the desire for some science fiction, Joe would amble down to the corner drugstore and look through the magazines. The one that had the installment of a Heinlein serial, or an Asimov novelette (Joe also likes Asimov) would be the one Joe would buy. But now, when Joe comes down to the newsstand, that magazine has got to compete not only with magazines that contain no Heinlein or Asimov, but with pocketbooks, some of which are solid Asimov or Heinlein. Joe, no fool, plunks down his 35 cents for the pocketbook getting his full 70,000 words of the desired product, instead of only 20,000 words of Heinlein and 50,000 words of some junk he doesn't like.

Somewhere, although I have never met him, there exists Joe's counterpart, Sam Clod. Sam can't stand Asimov - all that fancy talk is too much for him - but he likes Real Science Fiction Adventure, like, you know, Jerry Sohl. Sam must exist because Ace Books, which is not in business for its health (or for that matter Bantam Books, which is also not in business for its health, and is in much better health besides) finds it profitable to publish Jerry Sohl. When it comes to taste, Sam is far from Joe. But when it comes to the drugstore, he rejects the magazine as surely....

- - -

*Excerpted from *Who Killed Science Fiction?*, *The First SaFari Annual*, April 15, 1960.

The Afterthoughts*:

I had several pleasant hours of reading [*Who Killed Science Fiction?*], and even had time to spend five or ten minutes on other people's contributions...masterful. Idea, design, quality of contributions, level of illustrations, layout...Advent should publish such books.

Your writing in the introduction and the explanatory material scattered throughout is admirable. It is clear, precise, grammatical (except for the usual misplaced semi-colons) and to the point.

If you think this is weak-tea praise, or that this sort of stuff is easy to write, pick up a technical book or a newspaper some day, or read the instruction manual that comes with your hi-fi, or try and visualize what the characters are really doing in the descriptive passages in a typical science fiction story. To write clear descriptive prose requires nothing but clear thinking, patience, and discipline. Neither energy nor talent are needed. But you have always had energy and talent, and your expository prose has always been a formless blotch (I mean, until now)....

- - -

*Reprinted from *Safari* July 15, 1960

No. 4: I saved the very best for last, Sidney Coleman's "A Story To Be Illustrated Maybe," reprinted from *SaFari* February 1965. Because of the nature of this article, and the illustrations that accompanied it, I am reproducing the original here in jpeg format.

A Story To Be Illustrated Maybe

By Sidney Coleman

Sidney Coleman's Classic Complaint

A STORY TO BE ILLUSTRATED MAYBE

This is a semicolon.

It is need to separate the halves of a compound sentence. Here is a compound sentence:

"This desire has no rationale behind it; it is an unthinking or the mythical one of lemmings to plunge themselves into the sea."

See how the semi-colon separates the halves of the compound sentence!


This is Leggett, Head and Chervet.

They have written a Handbook for Writers. It is authoritative.

They say people who separate the halves of a compound sentence with a comma have committed the Comma Fault.

The Comma Fault is an hispible that they do not even mention it by name!

They call it JK.



If you commit JK too often they will read harpies after you.

THIS IS A
WRITER'S I.D.
HARPIE
WATCHING
YOU

This is a harpy.

This is Earl Kopp.

He is evil.

(You can tell he is evil by his downward-slanting eyes.)

He hates everything that is good and true and beautiful.

Earl Kopp ~~LOVES~~ semi-colons.

He has committed JK so many times that he has become like some people have filed.

This is another type of Earl Kopp.




This is Sidney Coleman.


He is good and true and beautiful.

As a matter of fact, he looks just like a semi-colon.

He would sooner join the NSV than admit JK.

He also does at least two drafts of everything he writes.





He says he does this "to correct minor infelicities of style."

Whenever he says this his eyes go sixty and he thinks of Jesse Branch Howell and Oscar Wilde.

Maybe he is queer.


* * *

Earl Karp HATES Sidney Coleman.

Once he got Sidney Coleman to write a letter for him.

Normally, Sidney Coleman does not do anything for Earl Karp, because Sidney Coleman is pure IVORY and Earl Karp is evil.

But this time was special. This time was for a good cause.



This time was to help square a man who was not only evil but stupid.

Also ugly.

So in so horrible that we do not mention his by name! We call him 99c.

99c has close like Earl Karp has harpies.

#

WHAT-MY WOOAH!


The letter was Sidney Coleman's masterpiece.

He took three drafts to write it.

When it was done, it had such-color like some people have harpies.

When he was done, he felt so good he called Earl Karp harpies leopard.

So felt like Voltaire, only wittier.



When he came home, he locked himself in his Ford lined room with a bottle of green shartness and read antiquarian harpies History through three times!

So am to queer.

#


When Earl Karp got "his hands on Sidney Coleman's letter," he laughed for twenty-four hours.

He laughed like an irresponsible fascist.

When he was done he put Sidney Coleman's letter on steacil.

He put the first draft on steacil.

He left out all the connections but one.



He left that one in to increase the torment.

He is subtle and cruel.

This is the Marquis de Sade.

Earl Karp is so nasty he makes his look like Mary Worth.

When he was done, he felt so good that he spent the rest of the day pulling wings off harpies.

#

When Sidney Coleman saw what Earl Karp had done to his letter, he said things we can not write here.

To write them would be 6jr.

So told Earl Karp, "You have got a vulture at my liver."

Maybe he is only stupid.

#

Whenever Earl Karp does something like this, Sidney Coleman shows his right forefinger.

He now has the largest callous in the Western hemisphere.

If you buy him a drink he will show it to you.

It is a good thing he does not know what Earl Karp is going to do next.

He is going to introduce subtle misspellings in Sidney Coleman's next story.

So think Midwest fudon zoods its own Rick Steazy.

#

L*H*V*O*I:

See, Prince. You can learn something useful from reading SAPS Steaz.

You can learn how to write like Murray Leinster,

-erc

The telling of jokes is an art of its own, and it always rises from some emotional threat. The best jokes are dangerous, and dangerous because they are in some way truthful.

-- Kurt Vonnegut, 9/18/02, *McSweeney's*

S*T*A*R*R*I*N*G

Kurt Vonnegut

I couldn't figure out how to make this a two-faced ezine. All along I was thinking of it as a sort of improved version of an ACE Double novel where either side was the right side. It's that way with this ezine also, regardless of where you start.

Finally, I decided I'd take the easy way out and stick to alphabetical. Kurt Vonnegut comes second.

Then, to make sure my pseudo ACE Double looked really good, I asked Alan White to make two special covers for it.

This is Alan White's cover S*T*A*R*R*I*N*G Kurt Vonnegut



A Tentative Tangling of Tentacles*

Two Days In Leeds With Kurt Vonnegut

By Andrew Darlington

"One requirement is that the opening of a book be seductive. If he's smart a writer will begin a little archly, a little cutely, a little too forward. A stranger is going to open this book and either decide to read it, to give it the next few hours-or not. And so if I'm a little cute or a little too glitzy in the beginning, this is to hook the stranger. This person will not read the damn book if you do not seduce them. It's...prostitution, yes. It is 'I'll give you the best night you ever had if you give me \$7.'"

--Kurt Vonnegut, March 1983

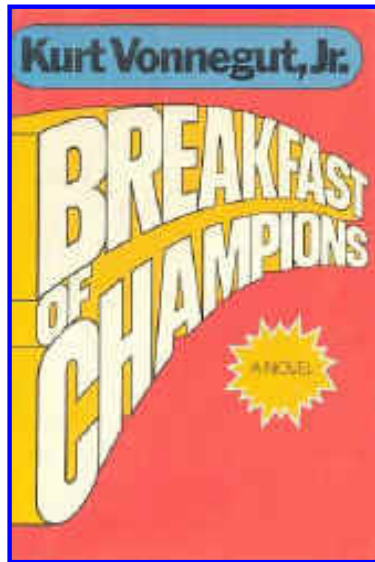
It was then my biro snapped.

Sat alone in the swish ritz of the Queens Hotel reception feeling vaguely displaced and disapproved of, with the nib in one hand bleeding blood-blue bile and the open mouth plastic tube in the other drip-feeding my fingers a steady pulse of ink.

Then the menopausal receptionist stacked-smiles at me. "You can go up now, Mr. Darlington."

Maneuvering splintered plastic bits down between my shoes and soft-shuffling them back out of sight,

streaking rich pile, I head out for the elevator (chintzy inner décor of Yorkshire moors) and angle down a corridor of doors, carefully not smear-touching anything. What if Vonnegut wants to shake hands and I finger-print him, biro ink him? Cosmic confrontation time with the author of *Breakfast of Champions*, *Slapstick*, *Player Piano*, etc., etc., and I'm sticky fingering blue goo....



First floor, Door 116. A room with window gawping out across City Square where cars revolve in endless train and some armoured king in equestrian statue is fenced in behind a scaffold-cage having pigeon shit surgically sand-blasted. Two chairs over-low slung are drawn close to a gas fire ratcheted too high and in cherry-red intensity. Vonnegut in short red scarf is hunkered down there miserly slurping up a surplus capacity of heat. He gets up, draws me in, his guileless smile plastered aslant, but thankfully he doesn't offer his hand....



The fantastic caricature of Kurt Vonnegut on the cover of *Science Fiction Review* 50 is the work of George Kochell. Courtesy Robert Lichtman collection. Dated Spring 1984.

He's about my height but slouched; defensively drawn in slightly despite the openness of his manner. His moustache is a couple of shades greyer than his hair, which is as tight-curved as clusters of cartoon thought-bubbles, like on the book covers but a little more disciplined, not as raggedy tousled - as if he's made an effort to smarten up his act for this tour. His brown close-check jacket doesn't match his pants and there's a tiredness in his eyes that you pick up on lurking just behind the homely courtesy.

Formalities disposed of, tape machine positioned between us, I confess that many of my interviews tend to wind up in Rock-oriented papers, and-priorities up front-ask his views on the state of that art. After all, didn't the Grateful Dead name their music publishing company after his "Ice 9" invention? Didn't Al Stewart tag a track off his *Modern Times* album for Vonnegut's *Sirens of Titan*? And isn't there, even now out the window and across the square, a band in Leeds called Slaughterhouse 5?

Is it true that certain of your books are banned in certain American States?

"Well, they try to ban them." The fact seems not to faze him. "It's illegal, but we have to sue these people again and again. Periodically remind them of the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. Somebody circulated a list of supposedly bad books and this list has never been upgraded. It just keeps floating round and floating round, and it's 12, 13 years old now, but school boards and parents in small towns lift this list and wonder if these bad books (which they've never read!) are in their libraries. And they are. And they throw them out!"



Banned or no, his science fiction travelogue of the Dresden holocaust, *Slaughterhouse 5*, was translated



into an incandescent film by George Roy Hill (of *Gorp* and *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* notoriety). Around the same time Vonnegut's play *Happy Birthday Wanda June* less successfully became a television movie starring Rod Steiger and Susanna York. Then '75 saw a kaleidoscopic phantasmagoria of various elements from the Vonnegut canon whipped up into a low-budget fly-past for American cable and BBC bio-pic slots called *Between Time and Timbuktu*. Since then Robert (M.A.S.H.) Altman reportedly tried for the still-born rights to *Breakfast of Champions* - and was outbid; and John Cale even more recently announced he'd completed the score for a short movie based on Vonnegut's vignette "Who Am I This Time?" Director reputed to be Jonathan Demmes of *Caged Heat*.

Are there other stories you'd like to be filmed?

"No. I don't want to push my luck. I don't think my books make good movies. It's just the way I write. I don't praise myself for this, but I am a presence in my own stories. So anybody who tries to make a movie out of a story of mine is gonna wind up a character short. Because I am in fact in it. And I can't act for sour apples."

You were quoted as disliking *Happy Birthday Wanda June*?

"That was the worst movie I ever saw. There was a big depression in Hollywood when that was made and when *Slaughterhouse 5* was made. There were only two movies being made in Hollywood at that time- and they were both mine! One was the best movie ever made, and the other was the worst movie ever made."

It takes a ton of money to make a movie or a TV show. Never mind that you have to deal with the scum of the earth if you try to make one.

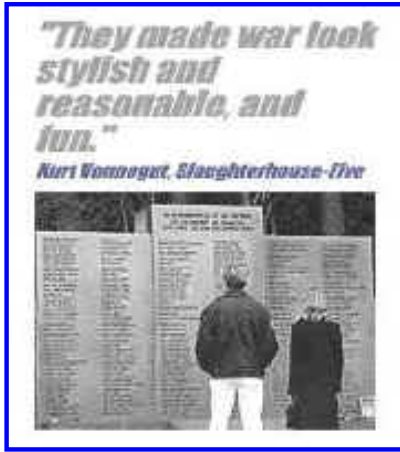
--Kurt Vonnegut, "Coda to My Career as a Writer for Periodicals"

With nothing else volunteered I go for the wide-angle lens. Kurt Vonnegut - destroyer of worlds, black humorist, existential absurdist - are you an optimist?

"As regards human nature - sure." An expansive shrug, a dismissive gesture with his hands. "But I think what our culture requires us to do is extremely dangerous. And so 'the culture' is a leading character in my books again and again. And the culture is a very stoo-pid task-master. It makes these bizarre demands on us - and THERE IS, IN FACT, NOBODY THERE! There's an actual lack of personality in culture (although television is coming close to being such a person in our lives now)." A pause. "But there have been these acts of mercy on battlefields where someone has declined to kill. THAT'S what they're there to do! "Why on earth are you here? Why on earth were you ever born?-in order to KILL this person before you!" And yet people have declined to do this and managed to survive themselves." Vonnegut talks slowly, humorously; when he talks he gives his whole concentration on you, eyes at pinpoint attentiveness. When he talks he talks for you and no one else.

So you see social pressures stuck in absurd ruts, while individual acts provide an escape clause?

"Yes, There's a great campaign in the United States by people who have guns and ammunition to sell,



that every household should own a gun. And of course-it's very American to have a gun, supposedly. But I mean, this is all just advertising. So much of this culture has been created. How Americans act has been created. No American should go out with his shoes unshined. When you go out at night you should get dressed up. These are ideas derived from people with something to sell you. They would love to sell you a tuxedo. And they would love to sell you shoe polish. They would love to sell you razor blades - and look at you with your beard! The culture is so absurd. Most people can't even imagine stepping outside their culture and criticizing it. They assume that it's utterly given - just like the chemical makeup of the atmosphere. And yet it's clearly an invention that can be added to all the time by vested interests. Look at what Hitler added to German culture! Children come up through the Hitler youth - or whatever - and accept it. None of it is

criticized. But it's not fear that makes them unwilling to criticize, they just don't realize, just don't understand that it CAN be criticized. That it IS arbitrary." An odd, quirky smile. A long deep-furrowed fourth generation German-American face. A man who lived through the fire-bombing of Dresden by sitting out the storm in the "natural living rock" bunker of an abattoir numbered Slaughterhouse 5. That was February, 13th/14th, 1945. Now he homes in for the punchline. "I mean - we've gotten in enough trouble trying to imagine what God wants. We're in worse trouble giving our sole respect to our culture."

It's odd. Vonnegut's on a promotional tour for his latest novel, *Deadeye Dick*. A tight round of appearances, cities, press and radio calls, some television, world-in-a-trunk repetition chaperoned by the brisk knife-edge-crease efficiency of smart upwardly mobile PR men. But in this impersonal hotel room slotted in 20-minute segments, he unwinds the whole automatic-pilot pre-programmed rigidly schedule-bound cat's cradle routine down to a relaxing interlude with an old friend. A neat trick it seems - comes natural to him. A calm, slightly fuddled eye to the promo storm.

The ink on my fingers was suddenly not so outa place after all....

"I thought scientists were going to find out exactly how everything worked and then make it work better. I fully expected that by the time I was 21, some scientist would have taken a color photograph of God almighty-and sold it to Popular Mechanics magazine. Scientific truth was going to make us so happy and comfortable.... What actually happened when I was 21 was that we dropped scientific truth on Hiroshima. We killed everyone there."

--Kurt Vonnegut, *Breakfast of Champions*

To be is to do. -Socrates

To do is to be. -Jean Paul Sartre

Do be do be do. -Frank Sinatra

--Kurt Vonnegut, *Deadeye Dick*

"2BRO2B," by Kurt Vonnegut [*If*, January 1962], should be added to this list.

--Earl Kemp

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Chicks. Sausages. Antlers. Pennants. A clothes line. A pawn shop sign. A "very poorly cleaned"

blackboard. Last time I was here at Leeds Playhouse it was Ian Carr's *Nucleus* astage, not this Props Dept. detritus of oddities. Carr blew a stunning set-possibly casually connected to a large chunk of the theatre's roof coming adrift in subsequent gales-but even then the place wasn't this full or this abuzz with electric expectancy. The foyer is awash with refugees hunting cancellations or camping out to catch His Master's Voice relayed on wire through tannoy amplification as a Management concession to the punters they're either shoe-horning in or having to turn away. Press immunity has its advantages. I've seen much here from Brecht's *Chalk Circle* to Mike Westbrook's magnificent *Cortege*, but I've never witnessed it like this. And this night is for a 61-year-old writer who shuffles out in blue two-piece suit, round-toe black shoes, red tie, sleepy eyed. To deliver a rambling idiosyncratic talk (very) loosely pegged out around a thematic clothes line of his life achievements. "I want credit as the man responsible for (a) the Kilgore Trout story (b) the Neuter story, etc., etc."

A humorous, sometimes comic performance received as Holy Writ by the sycophantic assembled. Each anecdote rapturously received, each in-reference smugly responded to, each hint of near-profundity applauded to death. From "If you want to hurt your parents and you don't have nerve enough to become a homosexual-least you can do is go into the arts"; to "I was raised a pacifist. I'm a pacifist now." Hi ho. So it goes. Vonnegut says *Rolling Stone* magazine gave him the '60s. And looking around I'd guess this is something like a photofit fake-up of what your statistically average *Rolling Stone* reader might look like in '83. Still hairy but also rather threadbare. Brightly crosspatch and fringed in attempted suburban bohemia, but in strict monogamous couples, or student clusters; arty manuscripts in closets, piles of poems in manila folders in drawers filled in with their relevant rejection slips. Low culture literate. Vonnegut programmed in with Tolkien, D.M. Thomas, Mervyn Peake, and *Watership Down*.

And Vonnegut plays to expectations. Extends the woolly eccentricity of his novels across the stage for around 45 highly entertaining minutes. A hectically assembled ramshackle self-indulgence of inner mumblings, slapstick monologue, and muddle-headed throw-away whimsy. He taps it out with chalk on the blackboard and peppers it richly with "Wampeters, Foma and Granfallons." Random notes? "It's ALL random notes!"

He does his "farting tapdancer" routine from *Breakfast of Champions* to illustrate the Trout technique. It concerns the "alien Zog from Margo, a planet where the natives converse by means of farts and tapdancing. He lands at night in Connecticut. He's no sooner touched down than he sees a house on fire. He rushes into the house farting and tapdancing, warning the people about the terrible danger they are in. The head of the house brains Zog with a golf club. An example of a tragic failure to communicate." He feeds an ad for *Deadeye Dick* ("my new book, my wonderful new book") in off-hand send-up-that still gets the message across to the satisfaction of the PR chaperones.

Then in what appears to be a less ambiguous vein, he speaks out against writers who "present their credentials" as educated people, showing some familiarity with Latin and Greek, and Greek mythology, having traveled in Europe some, seen the important cathedrals, the important paintings. "I," he protests, "make no such allusions. I offer no credentials to prove that I am indeed an educated person." Instead he declares, "I am educated as an anthropologist and what impressed me is what the anthropologist Claude Levi Strauss said at the end of his career. That he thought all cultures were equally rich and complex. That there is no one with a deprived culture."

Elitist academics and writers scorn "the sort of population we have in New York today-Hispanics and blacks," but "I'm sure they have myths and culture as rich as theirs, or as mine, or as anyone's. What used to be standards for style or literacy - or evidence that you are a good writer - are becoming obsolete. Most critics believe in those standards - that a person SHOULD have a little Latin, a little Greek, and should know the myths of the Minotaur and so forth. This has made it very hard for us to create an American literature. I'm from Indianapolis, Indiana, and when I express that culture, or do honour to that

culture, it is scorned by some critics as simply being beneath notice. This is a cultural matter and should be acknowledged as a cultural matter. The cultural standards for judging literature should be abandoned, and everyone should be credited with having a rich culture to begin with. And let's begin from there and see what a person can do with his own-rather than the critic's-culture."



The audience goes ape-shit. Like he's delivered a personal exoneration on the sanctity of their taste, but it makes me a little uneasy. It comes just a whit too cutesy, a bit like telling the people what they wanna hear. A pat on the head for the collective ego. I mean, I don't know Indianapolis, but I'd guess that its dominant popular mythologies are not that different to those of Dublin, Leeds, or pretty much anywhere else in the West-world. Television, Rock and Sports Stars, Movies. Sure-I'd agree that if a writer wants to reach anything other than a micro-elite then they've got to relate to that culture. But to eulogize it on this podium seems slightly over the top. Vonnegut infects this audience with an awe at their own profundity. Rubber-stamps their smug complacency rather than stimulating them to s-t-r-e-t-c-h. Isn't there just the merest whiff of condescension? And-with security as tight as a drum-there's no chance to explore the theme yet. There's no time-squeeze between his set's completion and the PR men high-jacking him for book autographing

chores in the lobby.

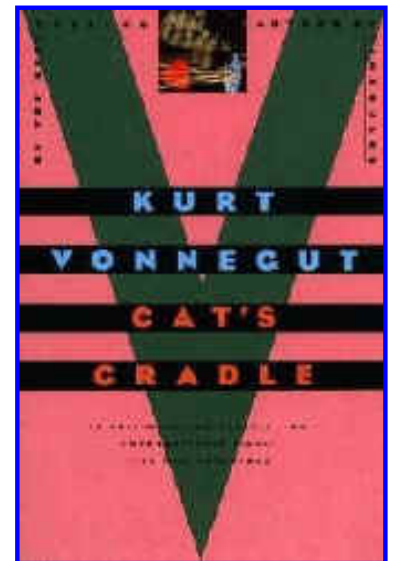
But I determine to find time....

"He walked out into the night with his flashlight. He was still giggling. He was making the flashlight beam dance over all the dead people stacked outside. He put his hand on my head, and do you know what that marvelous man said to me?... 'Son,' my father said to me, 'someday this will all be yours.'"

--Kurt Vonnegut, *Cat's Cradle*

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The intense heat from the keyed-up gas fire, and his insistence on poring directly over it to scoop up as much as possible, gets uncomfortable. I want to put to him the question of his condescending to his audience but can't find a way to do it without running the risk of interview time being abruptly terminated and winding up back in Reception with the menopausal receptionist and the bits of my broken biro. So I bide my time with droplets of sweat running down the inside of my shirt. And we talk around his career as a science fiction writer, through the highpoint books *Cat's Cradle*, *Sirens of Titan*, and *Slaughterhouse 5*; then his apparent decline into a clutch of self-referential books content to serve the by-then massive Vonnegut industry. Does his new book break from this sequence?



He capsule-reviews the "Neuter Novel," *Deadeye Dick*. "Rudy Waltz, the hero, has no interest in sex whatsoever," he relates amiably, "because he accidentally shot a pregnant woman when he was 11 years old. He has no interest in anything actually. But he foresees, and I foresee the next big parade up Fifth Avenue is going to surprise American civilization. Of course, the homosexuals suddenly poured into Fifth Avenue and marched, revealing how numerous they were, how proud they were, and how many votes they had.

The next flurry up Fifth Avenue is going to be the Neuters. And it is going to be the biggest parade that



New York City has ever seen! There's going to be women who look like Marilyn Munroe out on the street carrying signs, "DID IT TWICE - NEEDED IT BOTH TIMES." There's going to be professional athletes- perhaps American Football Players stripped to the waist-holding placards saying, "HAVEN'T DONE IT FOR 2 YEARS - NEVER FELT BETTER" and that sort of thing. This may turn out to be ¼ of the population of New York City. We have no idea how many neuters there are around, because they send off no sex signals. They're not signaling to other people to "come to me, look at me," and all that. So you simply don't notice them. Rudy Waltz - the hero of my novel-this neuter, looks like Gary Cooper! He's that big and that handsome. And in Greenwich Village, the sex capital of the world, nobody sees him when he walks down the street. He'll walk into a coffee shop and sit down and not get waited on, because he is a neuter...."

The phone rings. A persistent reminder from the lobby that my time's up. With nothing to lose I make my play for extra time. One of the things that struck me last night, I offer, was your put-down of "High Culture" (knowledge of Latin, Greek, etc.), in favor of "Folk Culture" (television and street culture). It seemed to me rather condescending, I mean, YOU obviously relate to literary precedents as well as Pop influences...?

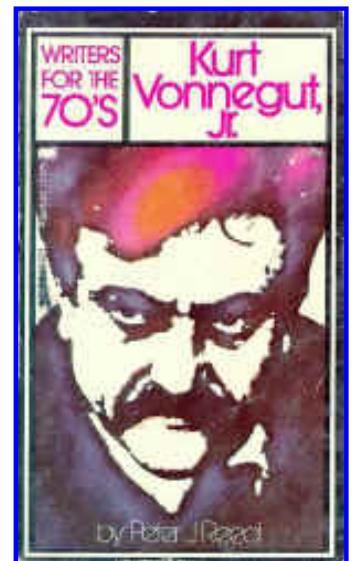
"No. But I didn't - you mentioned television, I didn't. But these people have...."

Was it just ethnic cultures you were referring to then?

"Well, whatever. You can get bizarre combinations in a city like New York where there is a lot of intermarriage and all that. But then, I believe that everyone has myths - which are ways of discussing life. In the same way that the Bible parables are; here's a story, we can talk around that. And the Hispanics and the blacks, for example, or the Eastern European Jews or whoever is in New York have parables already. You and I don't know them, or perhaps I do know them. They also have rich music traditions. A lot of Hispanics are part Indian and presumably know old legends from pre-Columbian times. Every culture, every person is a parable."

You mean a common currency of ideas to which people relate. But must that only apply to ethnic groups?

He's shrugging his coat on. Thinking on his feet. "The telly was your invention, because I did not say they had a culture built on television."



Actually he had hinted as much a few thousand words back when he'd accused television of "coming close to being" the "personality in our culture." But instead I just suggest that the dominant contemporary mythologies would be Movie Stars, Sports personalities, that sort of thing.

"Well, you can discuss life around them, those things," he concedes. "That's not a question of how bad that stuff is, or how good." He's warming to the subject. "I wouldn't mind having somebody be hit pretty hard by some drama on television-but certainly NOT a situation comedy-and choose to refer to it from time to time in the presence of other people who had seen it." Coat flapping, glasses now perched precariously on the end of his nose, a giant case bulging in all the wrong places, he starts acting out possible dialogues. "Now why did she DO that? Why was she drunk that night? Did she have to get drunk

that night, or was she only pretending to be drunk?" He pauses for a moment as we head out for the corridor. "It's the same sort of thing as 'was Hamlet crazy?' One is reputable, and one isn't. Ye-e-e-s..." Perhaps that's what he meant all along Perhaps to the Playhouse audience it is Vonnegut's writing that has created their mythologies, not Shakespeare or television....

Minutes later, sat alone in the swish ritz of the Queens Hotel reception playing back the tape. I see Vonnegut, coat unfastened and dismally blowing, looking vaguely tired and harassed, exit through the plate glass doors to be swallowed up by the waiting taxi. En route for Manchester, another stream of interview games and impertinent questions. Another night, another \$7!

"About endings, people complain about the endings of my books. Endings do not matter. They don't. I end *Cat's Cradle* with the end of the world. Somebody thought that was a comment of mine of some sort. It was just a way to end the damn book. People imagine the ending is what we have been building up to the whole time. This is not what we've been building up to. What we have been building up to has occurred about two-thirds of the way through the book. Every message has gotten through, every scene has been played. The last part of the book is saying 'thank you for coming, really, that's all there is, the food is gone, we're out of ice cubes, look what time it is, here's your coat, let's get together again real soon.' It's goodbye...."

--Kurt Vonnegut, March 1983

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*All quotes/novel extracts courtesy of Jonathan Cape Publishers. Reprinted from *Science Fiction Review* 50, Spring 1984 with permission of Richard E. Geis. Special thanks to Robert Lichtman for not only providing the text of this piece but the cover jpeg as well.



The two real political parties in America are the Winners and the Losers. The people don't acknowledge this. They claim membership in two imaginary parties, the Republicans and the Democrats, instead.

--Kurt Vonnegut, Wampeters, Foma and Granfalloon,
"In a Manner that Must Shame God Himself"

Author's note: I have recently spent about one and a half years writing a fairly hefty book (so hefty, actually, that it finally appeared in two volumes) about science fiction. In essence, it consists of a historical overview of the field along with more detailed but still fairly brief essays on 102 individual authors, whom I consider essential. Your respected editor, Earl Kemp, when learning that one of the authors so presented was Kurt Vonnegut, asked me to translate my text about him, and my attempt to do so is what follows. I do believe, however, that when reading it, it might be wise to bear in mind that my book was written to format for a publisher in a country where science fiction is neither well known, well respected, nor indeed even a given part of the publishing scene, and that the idea of the book was to introduce, explain, and in a sense defend science fiction to readers unfamiliar with the field, its traditions, idioms, and authors.

The Titan of Sirens*

An Overview of Kurt Vonnegut's Writings

By John-Henri Holmberg



John-Henri Holmberg just outside the gates to W. Somerset Maugham's former villa on Cap Ferras, right between Cannes and St. Tropez on the French Riviera.

American author Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. was born in Indianapolis, Indiana in 1922. He was born to initially wealthy parents, who lost their fortune in the 1929 stock market crash. He began writing while at school and from the age of fourteen to eighteen at various times held positions as a reporter, a columnist, and an editor at the student paper *Shortridge Daily Echo*.

In 1940, he began studying biochemistry at Cornell University, where he also wrote for the *Cornell Sun*. In early 1943 he enlisted in the US Army and was trained as a gunner but was later shipped to the European theater as part of the 106th Infantry Division. In December 1944, Vonnegut was captured by the Germans during the Battle of the Bulge.

Vonnegut was transported to a prisoner of war camp at Dresden, where on February 13, 1945, he lived through the allied saturation bombing of Dresden, which caused a firestorm killing 135,000 of the city's inhabitants. That Vonnegut survived at all is due only to the fact that the group of prisoners to which he belonged was quartered in an underground storage, previously used for newly slaughtered meat. In April, Dresden was captured by the Soviet Red Army and Vonnegut was freed. In May he returned to the United States, married his childhood sweetheart Jane Marie Cox, and simultaneously began to study anthropology at the University of Chicago and to work as a reporter for Chicago City News Bureau. When his suggestions for a thesis were all rejected, Vonnegut left Chicago and went to work as a public relations officer for General Electric in Schenectady, while trying to break through as a fiction writer. His first short story, "Report on the Barnhouse Effect," was published in *Collier's* in 1950; in 1952, he published his first novel, *Player Piano*.

Even so, the next few years were troublesome. Vonnegut wrote slowly and found no large audience, and his few short stories and fewer novels did not provide sufficient income to support his family. He tried a number of professions, one of them as a Saab salesman, until the middle of the sixties, when he was finally able to live off the income from his writing. His definitive breakthrough came in 1969, when *Slaughterhouse-Five* was published and became an immediate bestseller. After that, grants, awards, and honors began to be heaped on Vonnegut. In quick succession, he became a Harvard lecturer, a PEN member of the board, and first a member and later the vice president of the National Institute of Arts and Letters; he received honorary degrees from numerous universities, and succeeded Anthony Burgess as visiting professor of English literature at New York's City University.



EXAMPLE: This picture shows how Kurt Vonnegut's "Report of the Barnhouse Effect" was presented in *Collier's*, February 11, 1950.

Many silly things have been said and written about Kurt Vonnegut. One is that the style and themes of his writings have changed radically, another that he denies writing science fiction, a third that in any case his work is so drastically different from that of other sf writers that regardless of his own opinion, he cannot be viewed as belonging to the field.

I was put in a ghetto - science fiction - which serious critics need never read. My education was technical...and the prejudice is that anybody who knows how his refrigerator works can't possibly be an artist.

--Kurt Vonnegut phone interview with *Knoxville News-Sentinel*, 4/01

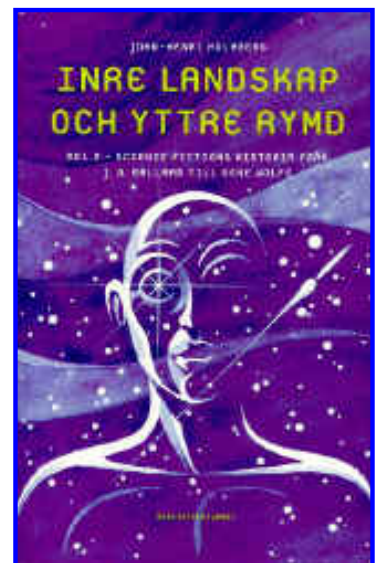
Isaac Asimov has said Vonnegut is "a science fiction writer in that he writes of societies different from ours, of technological capacities we don't yet have, of universes whose rulers are other than those of ours. Kurt Vonnegut is also a satirist, a keen observer of the follies of mankind and of the hypocrisies of its leaders. The combination is a powerful one."

Anybody who announces that he is a science fiction writer is announcing that he is in damn bad company financially and artistically.

--Kurt Vonnegut, *Who Killed Science Fiction?*, 1960

The first statement does have some basis, although only in a very specific sense: Vonnegut's first five novels, from *Player Piano* through *God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater*, do differ considerably in narrative technique from all of his later work. To that extent his writing has indeed changed. But note that the breach is neither thematic nor even to any important degree stylistic; it is structural. In *Slaughterhouse-Five*, Vonnegut found a less formal, more anecdotal and collage-like form of telling his story, and indeed even explains it to his readers as "the telegraphic schizophrenic manner of tales on the planet Tralfamadore," which consists of clumps of symbols, each conveying "a brief, urgent message - describing a situation, a scene. We Tralfamadoreans read them all at once, not one after the other. There isn't any particular relationship between all the messages, except that the author has chosen them carefully, so that, when seen all at once, they produce an image of life that is beautiful and surprising and deep. There is no beginning, no middle, no end, no suspense, no moral, no causes, no effects." He has retained that format since - or at least an approximation of it - but the major concerns of his writing have remained constant since his first novel.

As for Vonnegut's views on science fiction, they too have remained similar throughout the years. He does not belong, and has never belonged, to that group of authors who continuously meet each other and their readers at conventions or seminars or who belong to clubs or organizations. But he has been a close friend of several science fiction writers and has expressed high regard both for them and others. Many of his short stories were initially published in sf magazines, and in 1972 he was a contributor to Harlan Ellison's *Again, Dangerous Visions*, an original anthology expressly dedicated to presenting stories intended to break with some taboo previously encountered in science fiction. Much of the claim that



Cover of *Inre landskap och yttre rymd. Del 2 - science fictions historia från J. G. Ballard till Gene Wolfe* [Inner Landscape and Outer Space. Part 2 - The History of Science Fiction from J. G. Ballard to Gene Wolfe] painted by Nicolas Krizan.

Vonnegut considers himself not to be writing science fiction is based on his comment that ever since publishing *Player Piano*, he had "been a sore-headed occupant of a file drawer named 'science fiction'," which he wants out of "since so many serious critics regularly mistake the drawer for a urinal" [*New York Times Book Review*, September 5, 1965]. But the problem Vonnegut identifies rests with the "serious critics"; their mistake is to dismiss science fiction unfairly. In the same essay, Vonnegut notes that the problem can be traced back to the fact that most literature students are too lazy to study any hard science at school, and consequently have no understanding of science fiction

I have been a sore-headed occupant of a file drawer labeled "Science Fiction"...and I would like out, particularly since so many serious critics regularly mistake the drawer for a urinal.

--Kurt Vonnegut, *Wampeters, Foma and Granfaloon*, "Science Fiction"

As for the relation between Vonnegut's science fiction and that written by others, it is of course true that Vonnegut - perhaps to a larger extent than most authors - writes in a personal idiom and using a virtually unique narrative technique. Nevertheless, neither his social criticism, his black satire, nor his anti-romantic, cynical moralism is unique in science fiction. Similar views and virtually the same motifs can be found in works by major 1950s sf writers like Robert Sheckley and William Tenn. Fascinatingly enough, however, it is neither they nor indeed any of the satirists working within science fiction that Vonnegut himself has named as favorites. Virtually the opposite; the two sf authors he has repeatedly praised are Arthur C. Clarke and Theodore Sturgeon. He has called Clarke's *Childhood's End* a masterpiece, and Sturgeon "one of the best writers in America."

Much of Vonnegut's ambivalence toward science fiction, those writing it and the conditions under which they had to work at least until the 1960s, is visualized in his fictional character Kilgore Trout. Trout initially appeared in *God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater* (1965) and has reappeared repeatedly. In *Slaughterhouse-Five* (1969), he is the favorite author of main character Billy Pilgrim; in *Breakfast of Champions* (1973), on publication presented as Vonnegut's last novel, he was promised an imminent release from his literary captivity. But further novels followed, and Trout remained imprisoned; we meet him briefly in *Jailbird* (1979), in *Galápagos* (1985), in *Hocus Pocus* (1990), until finally in *Timequake* (1997), he is allowed to play the lead role.

"To you personally, who is the character Kilgore Trout?"

"You don't hear much about science-fiction writers anymore, but they're rather underpaid. So they were a generally scruffy lot versus people who wrote for glossier publications. There was one really good science-fiction writer, Theodore Sturgeon, who was named after a fish. Ted is dead now, but I always thought his name was funny. Theodore doesn't have Trout's personality, but it was his name that I was attracted to."

-- Kurt Vonnegut, 4/2/03, Lexington VA campus of Washington and Lee

Kilgore Trout is an aged, badly dressed, socially inept, and commercially failed science fiction writer. In spite of his 87 novels he has never become popular even among sf readers. Critics denounce him unanimously and his novels are published at rock bottom rates by paperback houses who reject his own titles and come up with new ones of a kind which insure that his books are sold mainly in pornography stores. Trout basically knows nothing about science, nor does he care about it. His writing skills are

minimal and his power of creating characters is nonexistent. But his concepts and visions are original and powerful; they tower far above his intellectual and literary capacity of justly presenting them. Of course Kilgore Trout is a symbol both for Vonnegut himself and for science fiction in general, but reasonably he also symbolizes every serious writer aware of the sad fact that not even his best work manages to live up to his inner vision of what he would have wanted to achieve.

Vonnegut, however, goes several steps further. In *God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater*, the protagonist Eliot Rosewater meets Trout at a conference of science fiction writers in a Milford motel (where indeed since the late 1950s an annual sf writers' seminar was organized by Damon Knight). Rosewater is full of enthusiasm:

"I love you sons of bitches. You're all I read any more. You're the only ones who'll talk about the really *terrific* changes going on, the only ones crazy enough to know that life is a space voyage, and not a short one, either, but one that'll last for billions of years. You're the only ones with guts enough to *really* care about the future, who really notice what machines do to us, what wars do to us, what cities do to us, what great, simplified ideas do to us, what huge misunderstandings, mistakes, accidents, and disasters do to us. You are the only ones zany enough to agonize over time and distance without limit, over mysteries that will never die, over the fact that we are right now determining whether the space voyage for the next billion years or so is going to be Heaven or Hell."

But, again, nothing is as simple as it may seem. The quote is from a Vonnegut novel, but the speaker is Eliot Rosewater, not Vonnegut. And Eliot Rosewater is a drunkard and a maniac - the only person in the world not afflicted by "samaritrophia," a disease defined as "the pathological suppression of an active consciousness by the rest of the mind." Even the physician defining the disease notes that the last thing any sensible individual would want is to be cured of it.

Rosewater, never even infected, spends his time giving away his huge fortune to the needy. Who would take seriously his views on literature? And besides, a few pages after his tribute, Rosewater compares science fiction to pornography, noting that both offer fantasies of an "impossibly hospitable world." Perhaps we should suspect that this is Vonnegut's way of having it both ways: he can defend science fiction, but if called on to stand by his defense, he can always disclaim it as just the rantings of a notoriously sodden fictional character. For clearly, Kurt Vonnegut is very tired of being the victim of what he has called "a hate crime ... commonly practiced by the American literary establishment. It wasn't racism or sexism or ageism. It was 'genreism.' Definition: 'The unexamined conviction that anyone who wrote science fiction wasn't really a writer, but a geek of some sort.'" [In "Foreword", *A Saucer of Loneliness. The Complete Stories of Theodore Sturgeon: Volume VII*, 2000.]

Player Piano is, on the surface, a traditional dystopian novel, depicting an unpleasant future world where automation has run amok to the point where humans have become virtually superfluous as constantly more both occupations and decisions have been taken over by advanced machinery. What Vonnegut satirizes, however - apart, of course, from virtually everything else that happens to come along - is one of the foundations of modern science fiction: the idea of know-how practicality, the gadgeteering spirit which characterizes so many of the classical heroes of sf. The world in the novel, interestingly enough, has not been created by evil dictators or even by design; it is the result of the indomitable will of individual Americans to tinker with machines in order to make them more efficient. This is repeatedly underscored by anecdotal evidence, such as the brief story about the barber who constantly worries about someone inventing a machine to replace him, and while worrying works out how such a machine could be built, constructs it, sells it, and retires to live on royalties while all other barbers are put out of business.

Player Piano ends - as so many novels set in nasty futures - with a revolution, where one of the revolutionaries is Dr. Paul Proteus, son of the first National Industrial, Commercial, Communications,

Foodstuffs, and Resources Director, or, in other words, the first benign American dictator, during whose tenure the Presidency has become a purely symbolic office, equivalent to the kings and queens embellishing various European democracies. Paul Proteus, well in keeping with the traditions of dystopian fiction, becomes disenchanted with the world his father made and with the elite to which he himself belongs, and helps to plan an overthrow of the automated society. But in Vonnegut's novel, the revolution fails both overtly and implicitly. Overtly, since the revolutionaries manage to take over and partly wreck only a few cities like Oakland and Salt Lake City, but neither New York, Chicago, nor any of the other major cities. Implicitly, since after his revolutionaries have captured their cities and demolished their machines, Vonnegut shows them spending their time before surrendering on fiddling with the devices they have destroyed, trying to get them to work again. The dystopia envisioned is, the novel concludes, unavoidable, since it is simply the inevitable consequence of human nature and American culture.

In expressing this view, *Player Piano* is in fact typical of Vonnegut's science fiction, which in a sense could be called a form of "anti-science fiction." Elsewhere in my book, I argue that the most basic idea inherent in science fiction is that of the Enlightenment: that we live in a knowable universe, that only through sensory information and rational thought can we achieve knowledge, and that only through science and technology can we master and influence the world. Vonnegut, however, repeatedly chooses to portray technology, science and, indeed, rationality itself as negatives. Explicitly, he states this theme in *The Sirens of Titan*: "Mankind flung its advance agents ever outward, ever outward. Eventually it flung them out into space, into the colorless, tasteless, weightless sea of outwardness without end. [...] These unhappy agents found what had already been found in abundance on Earth - a nightmare of meaninglessness without end. The bounties of space, of infinite outwardness, were three: empty heroics, low comedy, and pointless death. Outwardness lost, at last, its imagined attractions. Only inwardness remained *terra incognita*. This was the beginning of goodness and wisdom." In this sense, what is satirized and attacked in his novels is modernity itself. Thus, Vonnegut's response to the industrial and scientific age is deeply reactionary, fundamentally emotional rather than intellectual, but he is hardly the first artist to react in this fashion; from William Wordsworth on, poets and writers have raged against the "soullessness" of the Enlightenment.

Along with the non-sf novel *Mother Night* (1962), which is perhaps his best work, *Player Piano* is Vonnegut's most traditionally structured and written novel, and to that extent quite different from his later books; already in his second novel, *The Sirens of Titan* (1959), there are hints of the kind of highly personal, slapdash collage storytelling, part narrative, part commentary, part self-indulgent slapstick and part autobiography, that make up his later work. Nevertheless, *The Sirens of Titan* is a strong, impressive work, brimming with impulsive and often extremely funny notions, darkly sarcastic and extravagantly original; in science fictional terms, this is William Tenn at his most savagely satirical, done by Alfred Bester at his most pyrotechnical and with a generous seasoning of offbeat Philip K. Dick notions. But, as with *Player Piano*, ultimately the point of *The Sirens of Titan* is that there is no point to either human intelligence, human ambition, or humanity's efforts to understand and master the natural world. At the end of the novel, its central characters - and in fact all of humanity - learn that the last fifty thousand years of human history have all been manipulated by the enigmatic, immensely superior alien Tralfamadorians in order to deliver a replacement part to a robot messenger spaceship stranded on Titan, and, much worse, that the message which the ship is supposed to convey to another alien race discovered at vast distance consists of the single word "Greetings." This ending, of course, also implies that the spoof religion used in the novel to satirize organized religions is, in fact, the only faith actually to have stumbled on the truth; it worships "God the Utterly Indifferent."

Vonnegut is a case in point. In a year when his *Sirens of Titan*, an unbelievably adroit and inventive book, vastly superior to anything else even attempted that year, was published, the Hugo went to a second-class, inept, paucive, adolescent, hysterical piece of nonsense, strictly on the reputation of

the author, who has done infinitely better work in the past.
--Harlan Ellison, *The Double: Bill Symposium*, 1963-64

Baird Searles, in his often clever *A Reader's Guide to Science Fiction* (1979), excludes Vonnegut from his miniature portraits of sf authors, but otherwise generally ends his characterizations with sometimes striking, sometimes absurd suggestions: "If you like Hubbard, we suggest C.M. Kornbluth or Mack Reynolds." In an updated Guide, it would be reasonable to suggest that the linear descendant of *The Sirens of Titan* is Douglas Adams' bleakly farcical "Hitch-Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy" series.

Mother Night is purportedly the "confessions" of Howard W. Campbell, Jr., an American accused of war crimes as a Nazi propagandist, but also a heroic double agent. The novel is beautifully balanced; not only the reader, but seemingly Campbell himself, remains uncertain of which of his rôles represents his true self - if, indeed, there is any true self or truth to be found. The book is not only the most tightly structured and sustained of Vonnegut's novels, but also the only one to remain successfully ambiguous until the end - where, in fact, it turns into Vonnegut's perhaps most implicitly moralistic work, since the summation of his life Campbell reaches is that his stance of disinterested impartiality, of ironic nonpartisanship, is in fact not only untenable but inhuman: "I think that tonight is the night I will hang Howard W. Campbell, Jr., for crimes against himself." *Cat's Cradle* (1963), on the other hand, is probably his most explicitly moralistic work.

The novel contrasts two attitudes and two views of man. One is represented by the brilliant scientist Felix Hoennicker, once one of the fathers of the atomic bomb, now the inventor of "Ice-Nine," a substance which can annihilate all life on earth since its melting point is well over 100 degrees Fahrenheit. The other is represented by the dangerous maniac Bokonon, who invents an absurd religion which he himself admits is pure fantasy, but which makes life possible to bear for the destitute inhabitants of the small Caribbean island where Bokonon resides. Vonnegut is hardly subtle. Hoennicker lets his three mentally retarded children play with his "Ice-Nine"; the coldly intellectual scientist has no feelings even for his own offspring. While Bokonon, the holy fool, cares for and even compassionately falsifies reality in order to help his fellow men. The illusions even of a patently false faith give comfort; the visions of science threaten all life. It is interesting to compare this notion, repeatedly stressed by Vonnegut, to the idea presented in such early Robert Coover novels as *The Origin of the Brunists* (1966), *The Universal Baseball Association, J. Henry Waugh, Prop.* (1968), or *The Public Burning* (1977) - thematically strongly linked works which from various angles examine the vital psychological necessity of creating order, patterns, and "meaning" despite living in an entropic universe of chance, chaos, and final meaninglessness. What fascinates Coover is the human ability to build patterns and to construct "meanings" which make life bearable.

To Coover, there is no morality inherent in different choices of patterns; life is its own meaning and end, and whatever order we create to enjoy life is good, provided we remember that the patterns are of our own making and so manage not to be diminished or imprisoned by them. The sense of desolate pointlessness in Vonnegut's universe is echoed in Coover's, but with a difference: Vonnegut ridicules our capacity to delude ourselves into believing that there is some purpose to existence, while Coover applauds it, since it helps bring joy to living.



Kurt Vonnegut's "The Big Trip Up Yonder" appeared in *Galaxy*.
January 1954.

Still, this comparison must not be taken too far. In an essay on Jonathan Swift, Vonnegut has written: "I had a teacher in high school who assured me that a person has to be at least a little insane to harp on human disgustingness as much as Swift does. And Swift harps on it long before Gulliver has gone insane. I would tell that teacher now, if she were still alive, that his harping is so relentless that it becomes ridiculous, and is meant to be ridiculous, and that Swift is teaching us a lesson almost as important as the one about our not being lambs: that our readiness to feel disgust for ourselves and others is not, perhaps, the guardian of civilization so many of us imagine it to be. Disgust, in fact, may be the chief damager of our reason, of our common sense--may make us act against our best interests, may make us insane." ["Jonathan Swift Misperceived," first printed in Vonnegut's non-fiction collection *Palm Sunday*, 1981.]

It is definitely arguable that Vonnegut's novels are written with a not dissimilar idea in mind; just as they generally lack specific villains, since the forces of evil in them are led mainly by characters ridiculous rather than sinister, so they generally lack heroes, since the good characters often turn out to be just as ridiculous as the bad ones. In his short stories, however, with less room for extended complications either to his plots or characters, Vonnegut is sometimes less universal in his satire. In "Welcome to the Monkey House" (1968), the World Government tries to resolve overpopulation by two means: state-owned Ethical Suicide Parlors are set up adjacent to every Howard Johnson's, staffed by tall, beautiful, and nearly naked women who inject their clients with a deadly poison, and a compulsory birth control pill is introduced - "ethical because they didn't interfere with a person's ability to reproduce, which would have been unnatural and immoral. All the pills did was take every bit of pleasure out of sex."

Again, there is a rebel in dystopia, this time named Billy the Poet, a man who refuses the compulsory pills and tries to undermine the system by raping Suicide Parlor Hostesses (and giving them immoral and illegal birth control pills), thereby reintroducing the joy of sex to the world. Toward the end of the story, Vonnegut even lets Billy wax rhetorical: "If you go back through history, you'll find that the people who have been most eager to rule, to make the laws, to enforce the laws and to tell everybody exactly how God Almighty wants things here on Earth - those people have forgiven themselves and their friends for anything and everything. But they have been absolutely disgusted and terrified by the natural sexuality of common men and women. Why this is so, I do not know. [...] But] I do know this: The triumph of that sort of disgust and terror is now complete."

Not uninterestingly, this echoes a speech in a novel by a very different author: "If you learn how to rule one single man's soul, you can get the rest of mankind. [...] Here's another way. This is most important. Don't allow men to be happy. Happiness is self-contained and self-sufficient. Happy men have no time and no use for you. Happy men are free men. So kill their joy in living. [...] Look at any great system of ethics, from the Orient up. Didn't they all preach the sacrifice of personal joy? [...] Just prove that a thing makes men happy - and you've damned it. That's how far we've come. We've tied happiness to guilt. And we've got mankind by the throat." This quote is from a speech by arch-villain Ellsworth Monkton Toohey, in Ayn Rand's *The Fountainhead* (1943). It would be absurd to claim any great affinity between the romantic libertarian Rand and the satiric socialist Vonnegut, but on one issue I suspect that they would grudgingly agree completely: that of each individual's right to find happiness on his or her own terms.

This thought, incidentally, is the entire point to one of Vonnegut's strongest short stories, "Harrison Bergeron" (*The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*, October 1961), another dystopic vignette of a society where "everybody was finally equal. They weren't only equal before God and the law. They were equal every which way. Nobody was smarter than anybody else. Nobody was better looking than anybody else. Nobody was stronger or quicker than anybody else. All this equality was due to the 211th, 212th, and 213th Amendments to the Constitution, and to the unceasing vigilance of agents of the United States Handicapper General." In this society, the beautiful wear hideous or silly masks, the strong are

saddled with weights, and the intelligent with "mental handicap radios" sending bursts of interfering noise into their ears.

The protagonist, Harrison Bergeron, tears off his handicaps to dance unhampered his joy in life and is promptly shot dead by the Handicapper General; the story is a savage satire on egalitarianism. As an aside, it is not uninteresting to note that in Sweden, Vonnegut began to be translated in 1970 and was unanimously hailed as a major American author, notable for his criticism of American society. Swedish science fiction critic Sam J. Lundwall, citing his short stories, calls him "the most biting satirist of science fiction" [in *Science Fiction: What It's All About*, 1971]. But when Vonnegut's short story collection *Welcome to the Monkey House* (1968) was published in Swedish, in 1971, one of the 25 stories in the original had been deleted: "Harrison Bergeron." Sweden, priding itself on its decades-long project of social engineering aimed at creating the world's first egalitarian society, rejoiced at Vonnegut's digs at American morality, consumerism, religiousness, and prudery - but, at least in the opinion of Vonnegut's publishers, could not bear to see its own pet holy grail subjected to the same kind of mockery. I suspect that Vonnegut, if aware of this, would find it both irresistibly funny and unbearably sad.

1969 saw publication of Vonnegut's breakout novel, his first unqualified critical as well as public success: *Slaughterhouse-Five, or, The Children's Crusade: A Duty-Dance with Death*. Here, for the first time, he deals directly with his experiences of the war and, in particular, with the firebombing of Dresden, although an earlier attempt can be found in *God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater*, where Eliot Rosewater at one point imagines himself in the firestorming of a city. The novel's protagonist, Billy Pilgrim, is adrift in time, living and experiencing every moment of his life simultaneously. The patchwork novel simulates this by sudden shifts from past to future, from the profound to the trivial, from the unique to the bromidic. Part of Pilgrim's life is spent as an exhibit on the distant planet Tralfamadore; this is where he learns "the secret of life," which is that time does not change. "It does not lend itself to warnings or explanations," a Tralfamadorian tells Pilgrim. "It simply is. Take it moment by moment, and you will find that we are all, as I've said before, bugs in amber. [...] We spend eternity looking at pleasant moments." Or, in other words, the one solution to misery is to disregard unhappiness and to live fully only in the happy moments we experience.

The 1972 George Roy Hill movie was well received by Vonnegut, but to others it was a dismal failure; what in the novel works as savage satire - as for instance the technique of contrasting the Dresden horrors with the momentary irritations of life in a 1960s upper middle class suburb - in the movie at best becomes simpleminded or tasteless slapstick comedy, and their main point is lost. In the novel, Billy Pilgrim gradually can be pieced together as a man who ever since the Dresden holocaust has refused to let himself feel, reflect, or even remember other than superficially; when kidnapped by the Tralfamadorians, the "secret of life" they present him with and which we have previously discussed turns out, in fact, to be identical to his own manner of dealing with his own unbearable experiences. And, just as Howard W. Campbell, Jr. was forced to realize in *Mother Night*, indifference is neither a possible nor human answer to life.

Perhaps due to the strength and vividness of the memories he finally finds himself able to relate,



Kurt Vonnegut called *Slaughterhouse-Five* "The best movie ever made." From the Universal film we see Billy Pilgrim and Montana Wildhack [Michael Sacks and Valerie Perrine] on Tralfamadore. Photo dated 1972.

Slaughterhouse-Five achieves an immediacy and power seldom again to be found in Vonnegut's work.

The 1970s novels *A Breakfast of Champions* (1973), *Slapstick!* (1976), and *Jailbird* (1979) are weaker but offer the innovation of presenting Kurt Vonnegut himself as a recurring fictional character. In the first of them, said on publication to be his final novel, he closes the book with setting Kilgore Trout and his other characters free: "'Arise, Mr. Trout, you are free, you are free.' [...] Here was what Kilgore Trout cried out to me in my father's voice: 'Make me young, make me young, make me young!'" In this novel, meta-fiction achieves a kind of apotheosis; it tells the story of Dwayne Hoover, who is on the verge of total breakdown from trying to make sense of his existence, and finally discovers an answer in Kilgore Trout's novel "Now It Can Be Told," which is written as a letter from the Creator of the Universe to the only living being with a free will.

In his letter, the Creator explains that he has made the universe into the absurd mess it is in order to learn how the being with free will may react to it. But even though Hoover the novel character accepts this as a valid explanation, it is unfortunately also an explanation devastating enough to drive him insane and make him attack everyone he meets, including Kilgore Trout the novel character, who is then freed by Kurt Vonnegut the novel character... and we are left to wonder not only who wrote "Now It Can Be Told," but also who wrote *A Breakfast of Champions*. It is hardly by chance that subsequently to this novel, Philip José Farmer wrote and published as by Kilgore Trout his literary in-joke novel *Venus on the Half-Shell*.

Slapstick! is a vaguely sketched post-holocaust novel where, peculiarly, the Heinleinesque notion of artificial extended families is suggested as an antidote to the rootlessness in current society; in *Jailbird*, Kilgore Trout is back - "He could not make it on the outside. That is no disgrace. A lot of good people can't make it on the outside." Or is Vonnegut talking about himself, the author who now publishes his second novel after the one he said would be his last?

In *Galápagos* (1985), the million-year-old narrator (who turns out to be the ghost of Kilgore Trout's son) recounts the story of how humanity almost perished when virtually all women were rendered sterile in a plague. By chance, however, a small group of isolated and consequently uninfected individuals found themselves on the Galápagos islands, where their descendants gradually evolved into a new species - they have evolved flippers to swim the sea, live off seaweed, and are equipped only with small, safe brains, unable to comprehend their mortality - which Vonnegut makes very clear is a definite improvement on the huge, threatening, and death-fearing brains of their remote ancestors, ourselves.

Hocus Pocus (1990) is a satire on the vulgar materialism and dangerous inventiveness of our present, notable for numerous cryptic references to Arthur C. Clarke; the Tralfamadorians are back again, and indeed very little in this book feels either new or even rephrased. The conflict it portrays is that between the small-scale hypocrisy of the past - endlessly lauded by Vonnegut, as in the brief "Where I Live" (1964), where he characterizes his village of Barnstable as having "a policy of never accepting anything. As a happy consequence, it changes about as fast as the rules of chess" - and the hypocrisy of the present, which is larger in scale and therefore less humane.

This contrasting, which can be traced back through many of Vonnegut's works, presumably reflects his emotional response to youthful memories; there is no doubt that he is well aware of the fact that the lost middle America he mourns was full of prejudice, hypocrisy, indifference, and insularity, but he imbues it also with a staunch nobility which he seems unable to find any equivalent to in the present, whose prejudice, hypocrisy, indifference, and insularity he views only as evidence of vulgar materialism. Critics have noted that regardless of which names he gives them, many of the cities in Vonnegut's fictions are virtually indistinguishable not only from each other, but more particularly from Indianapolis, where he was born and grew up; his nostalgic mood is, perhaps, his least attractive one, and we can rejoice that *Hocus*

Pocus did not become his last novel.

Instead, according to repeated statements, that distinction belongs to *Timequake* (1997). In this work, almost touchingly, Kurt Vonnegut returns to his beginnings. The premise of the book is that for some unknown reason, on February 13, 2001, the universe decided not to expand further; instead, everything in it was warped back to February 17, 1991, and has to spend ten years in repeating every minute event of the past decade - but this time regardless of the wishes of those involved, who become a kind of helpless spectators of their own actions and words. The real quake, however, occurs when the ten years of repetition end and free will once again kicks in. Planes drop from the air as pilots no longer bother to fly them; cars crash into buildings; ships sail into hurricanes, and surgeons abandon their patients. The earth becomes a disaster area, and humanity is beset by total, collective apathy; only one single man, it seems, may possess the ability to restore the will to live. This man, it turns out, is hack science fiction author Kilgore Trout.

Timequake is in many ways the least traditional novel Vonnegut has written, which should say a great deal of its careless intermingling of brief stories - many of the Trout's - and anecdotal memories, of personal opinion and autobiography, of humorous asides and drawn out discussions between Trout and Vonnegut himself, who both find themselves at a writers' retreat during half of the quake. One of the things they discuss is writing, and while Vonnegut in *God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater* let Eliot Rosewater express his admiration for science fiction, this time Kilgore Trout is allowed to explain himself: "If I'd wasted my time creating characters [...] I would never have gotten around to calling attention to things that really matter: irresistible forces in nature, and cruel inventions, and cockamamie ideals and governments and economies that make heroes and heroines alike feel like something the cat dragged in."

Timequake is Vonnegut's literary testament. It is a book in which he on the one hand directly presents his views on politics and literature, on morality and family, on the attitudes and ideas shaping the present, while on the other hand depicting the present as a time when too many of us have given up, accepted whatever happens to be, and resigned ourselves to being merely observers in a world where the wishes or hopes of individuals no longer matter. At its core, it also conveys the almost touching notion that Kurt Vonnegut at 75 finds us at a crossroads where our civilization is running amok on auto-pilot and where the only person able to infuse it once again with vitality and direction is a science fiction author - by all means aged, disheveled, and of uncertain talent, but a man whose sense of wonder has never lost its power to enchant.

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On writing: "Still and all, why bother? Here's my answer: Many people need desperately to receive this message: 'I feel and think much as you do, care about many of the things you care about, although most people don't care about them. You are not alone.'"

-- Kurt Vonnegut, *Timequake*

Confessions of a Vonnegut Junkie

By M Andre Z Eckenrode

For your own sake, please, stop reading this now, before it's too late. Before you become like me.

I wasn't always like this. And though I'd spent more than half my life not being a Kurt Vonnegut junkie, it seems so long ago now that I began to lose myself to it. Before I could see what was happening, the transformation was complete. There's no escape for me now. I'm doomed to spend the rest of my days seeking out uncollected nuggets of Vonnegut wisdom, no matter how insignificant and obscure.

.How insignificant and obscure could a nugget of Vonnegut wisdom be, you might ask? Please don't tell anyone else this: I collect book blurbs by Vonnegut. Not only that, but I'm also compelled to create HTML transcripts out of them complete with pictures of the books they were used on, along with the more substantial Vonnegut material I track down. If that isn't obsessive, I don't know what is.

Anyway, this is my life now. I'm stuck with it, and I've reluctantly learned to accept it. But it's not too late for you. You have your whole life ahead of you, if only you can tear yourself away from reading what I can't help myself but write. Please.

(Sigh.) I realize now that it won't be any use for me to implore you to stop reading. You're going to read this anyway, so it's out of my hands. The best I can do for you is to spell out what my pitfalls were, so that you can hopefully recognize them before you stumble upon them.

Where should I begin?

When I was young, I was not much of a reader. I rarely read books, and when I was assigned to write book reports in school, I usually made them up as best I could from whatever sources I could find that were not books.

I was a big fan of popular and not-so-popular music, though. My tastes tended toward musicians who were reasonably popular at the time, but had large bodies of earlier, generally unappreciated (here) work. One such musician for me was Al Stewart, a folk-pop-rock musician from the UK. He was popular in the US in the late 1970s for his pop radio hits "Year of the Cat" and "Time Passages," but it turned out he had released six other records before the albums those hits were culled from. Well, I had to get them and find out how he got to where he was now. (Shades of things to come for me.)

On Al Stewart's 1975 album *Modern Times* (clearly, Stewart is fascinated with time) I found a song titled "Sirens of Titan." On the album's gatefold lyric sheet, below the song's lyrics, it was stated: "After Kurt Vonnegut, Jr." This held no significance for me whatsoever. It was a fun and cool song, but I did not feel compelled to look Vonnegut up.

A close friend to whom I lent the album was familiar with Vonnegut, though, and he had read Vonnegut's



M Andre Z Eckenrode is shown with his Vonnegut stash.

Photo by Ivan Eckenrode, July 2003

novel *Sirens of Titan* and enjoyed it enough to borrow it from the library on my behalf and try to talk me into reading it. I took the book from him, telling him that I might check it out, but I could not get myself to open it. I had *other* things to do. I returned it to him unread. Marty Light, where are you now?

Three or four years later, I was turning yet another friend on to the pleasures of Al Stewart's *Modern Times* when he, too, commented on Vonnegut and *Sirens of Titan* (which he had a copy of). Whoa. If *two* of my friends, whose opinions in music I trusted very much, thought Vonnegut was a big deal, there must be something to it. After several weeks of rumination, I read my friend's copy of *Sirens*, and quietly snickered at myself for having put Vonnegut off before. The book was a blast. It was very funny, and managed to make me *think* about things at the same time it was making me laugh. Vonnegut was all right.

Within a month or two, I also borrowed and read my friend's copy of *Slaughterhouse-Five*. This one was quite a bit more serious than *Sirens*, but I was able to recognize it as an important novel, filled with many moments of sheer genius. If there were books like Vonnegut's out there, reading wasn't really so bad. I began to collect and read the rest of his books.

Do I blame my friends for my current predicament? Actually, no. And although I've certainly shown a predisposition for my own obsessive behavior, I don't blame myself. And I don't blame Vonnegut either. So who do I blame? One man: Jerry Klinkowitz.

Who is Jerry Klinkowitz? He is a one-man wonder regarding Kurt Vonnegut. He has edited books of essays about Vonnegut, contributed essays to books on Vonnegut edited by others, and to various scholarly journals, and written book-length studies of Vonnegut's works of his own. Klinkowitz may have had more to say so far about Vonnegut than Vonnegut himself has written and said.

And Klinkowitz writes plenty of books on other subjects as well.

One book of essays co-edited by Jerry Klinkowitz (with Donald L. Lawler), was *Vonnegut in America* (Delacorte Press/Seymour Lawrence, 1977). I saw a stack of copies of this book on the discount table at a local bookstore at one point and thought, why not? I bought a copy. That was probably my downfall.

In the book was an essay by Klinkowitz titled "A Do-it-Yourself Story Collection by Kurt Vonnegut," which gave detailed instructions on tracking down and getting copies of Vonnegut's many then-uncollected short stories that had been published in *Collier's*, *Saturday Evening Post*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Argosy*, and other magazines in the 1950s and 60s. Seemed like a cool thing to do to me.

The book also included a bibliography of Vonnegut's works, listing not only the uncollected short stories mentioned above, but a multitude of uncollected essays by him, interviews with him, and articles quoting him. Hey, I figured, while I'm at the library, I'll check these out too. Little did I realize how it would mushroom.

My first trip to the library wasn't nearly as successful as I'd hoped. My local public library did not have any of *Collier's* or *Argosy* in their collection, nor 95 percent of the other publications I was looking for, and *Saturday Evening Post* was only available on microfilm. I hate microfilm. It's black and white and gets all scratched up, I can never seem to get an entire page consistently focused, and it almost always looks



EXAMPLE: This picture shows how Kurt Vonnegut's "Souvenir" was presented in *Argosy*, December 1952.

worse in print than it does on the screen.

My main beef in this case was that I couldn't see the illustrations that accompanied Vonnegut's stories in full color and detail. Well - I could still read the stories, which was the primary thing after all, and there didn't seem to be anything I could do about the rest of it at the moment, so I made what copies I could and moved on.



EXAMPLE: This picture shows how Kurt Vonnegut's "Tom Edison's Shaggy Dog" was presented in *Collier's*, March 14, 1953.

It was then time to check out other nearby libraries. Looking through the periodicals index at Millersville University, I saw that they did indeed have at least *Collier's* in their collection, and in bound form (not microfilm!). My heart raced-until I read the next few lines. There were gaps in the collection, including one from 1950-53, the very years in which Vonnegut's stories appeared. To this day, I swear that some other local Vonnegut fanatic must have lifted them before I got there.

But Millersville did have a number of the other publications that I had failed to find at the public library. Most were on microfilm, but that was still better than nothing. I also located some items at the Franklin and Marshall College library, and at the library of the local theological seminary (looking for interviews that had been published in *National Catholic Reporter* and *Christianity Today*).

Millersville University also had something else relating to Vonnegut that I did not expect, and which turned out to be somewhat of a curse: *Kurt Vonnegut: A Comprehensive Bibliography* by our notorious Mr. Klinkowitz, along with Asa Pieratt and Julie Huffman-klinkowitz (Archon Books, 1987). This was a much more recent and, indeed, *comprehensive* bibliography than the one I found in *Vonnegut in America*. It turned out that not only had Vonnegut been

quite busy generating more uncollected essays, interviews, and articles since the earlier bibliography was published, there were additional earlier items that had been turned up.

And there was this interesting detail revealed in the bibliography about the stories and essays that had already been collected: many of them had been altered or edited somewhat from the text of their original appearances. If I wanted to truly understand Vonnegut's thoughts at the time he wrote them, I was going to have to track down and read the original versions.

But there were still all these items from the first bibliography that I couldn't find, and now many more (including some from *very* obscure sources) from the new one. How was I ever going to get my hands on all this stuff? If I didn't, then surely there would be some facet of Vonnegut's life and work that I would fail to understand. I would be missing something.

Then I discovered the miracle of interlibrary loan. I had not realized that my local library could obtain books for me from other libraries near and far. I could also request photocopies of periodical and newspaper material that was not held locally. That helped take care of a big chunk of the stuff I couldn't find here.

But *still* - not everything. There were some things so obscure, not even distant libraries had copies of them, it seemed. For instance, Vonnegut had written essays for several museum exhibition programs. I

took my quest to the next level, and wrote directly to the museums, and to other publishers of scarce Vonnegut material, and they largely took care of me. The museums even sent me the actual programs featuring Vonnegut's essays. After all these years, they still had some copies. I was inching closer to my goal of getting my hands on copies of *everything*, that I knew of, that Vonnegut said or wrote that was published.

Around this time, I made a visit to a local antiquarian book store, and noticed they had a stack of old issues of *Saturday Evening Post* for sale, at one dollar per issue. Could there be any with Vonnegut's stories (original appearances only, please) in them? There in fact was such a one. I snapped it up.

Shortly afterward, I started scouring local flea markets and antique dealers for potential sources of more Vonnegut stories in their original appearances, as well as Vonnegut essays, reviews, and interviews. And I found a really terrific source about fifteen miles from my house. A man there had a barn that was absolutely stacked with all kinds of paper collectibles. There were hundreds, maybe thousands of issues of *Saturday Evening Post*, *Collier's*, and *Life*. He didn't have every kind of magazine I was looking for, and he certainly didn't have every single issue I was looking for of the ones he did have, but it was closer to Vonnegut heaven than I'd ever expected to get. During the course of several trips over several years, I wound up finding about 35 of the issues that I wanted, at two to three dollars each.

Of course, there were even now a handful of items from the bibliography that remained out of my reach. What to do? Well, Klinkowitz had gotten me into this mess. Maybe he could get me out. If he knew about them, he must surely know how to get copies of them. In fact, he probably had copies of them. And he did, for the most part. I wrote him in care of his publisher, asking how I could obtain copies of this and that. He was very nice, and actually sent me copies of most of what I had requested.



Kurt Vonnegut's "Tom Edison's Shaggy Dog" appeared in *Collier's*, March 14, 1953.

Klinkowitz also suggested that I contact Asa Pieratt, one of his co-authors for the 1987 bibliography, who it turned out lived not far from me. I did, and surprise, surprise, Asa was a Vonnegut junkie too. Asa has been enormously helpful. He has not only sent me copies of many items and brought a number of other things regarding Vonnegut to my attention, but also sent me some fascinating and not widely available original material that he had gotten Vonnegut to personally sign.

But there were still a few things that even Klinkowitz and Pieratt did not have, or could no longer locate in their files, or whatever. I couldn't think of any new avenues to take for these at the time, so I moved on to other Vonnegut matters.

I began coming across essays by, and interviews with, Vonnegut, both new and preceding the 1987 bibliography but not listed in it. I saw a few books at the bookstore that claimed on their covers to have introductions written by Vonnegut. One of these, in the discount bin, was from 1985, which predated the "comprehensive" bibliography. Did I know about something by Vonnegut that Klinkowitz and Pieratt were not aware of? Hmmm...

At the library, there was a microfiche periodical articles reference on which you could look up subjects alphabetically, and it would list recently published newspaper and magazine articles relating to those

subjects. I looked up Vonnegut, and found that there was a steady stream of new material by and about him. Was it possible that Klinkowitz and Pieratt did not know about at least some of these? There was one way to find out: I tracked down the items, made copies, and sent them to Klinkowitz and Pieratt. Lo and behold, they had *not* been aware of many of them, and said they appreciated my work.

It pleased me to think that this meant I was now a Vonnegut *researcher*, and not just a fanatic. But wouldn't a Vonnegut *scholar* be even better? What would I have to do to become a scholar? I'd probably have to *write* something about Vonnegut for that to happen, but I couldn't think of any aspect of Vonnegut's life or work to write about that hadn't already been written about. I initially thought that Jerry Klinkowitz had cornered the market on that, but soon discovered that there were a number of other book-length studies of Vonnegut by other scholars. Since the early 1970s, there had been no fewer than fourteen published books of literary criticism and bibliography focusing exclusively on Vonnegut. What more could possibly be said about him?

Amazingly, at least *nineteen* books about nothing but Vonnegut have appeared since then.

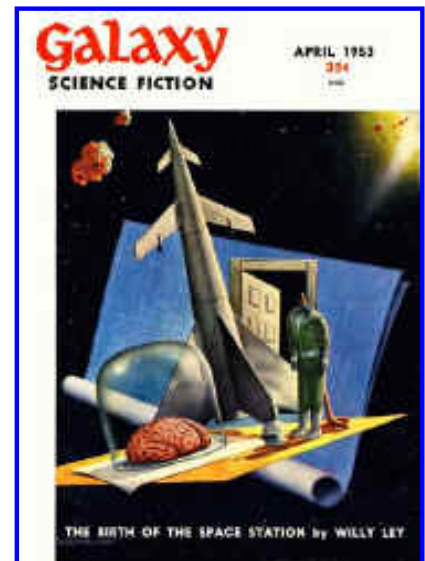
While perusing other sections of the 1987 Pieratt/Klinkowitz/Huffman-Klinkowitz bibliography, I learned that Vonnegut had also written for his high school and college newspapers - the *Shortridge Daily Echo*, Shortridge High School, Indianapolis, and *Cornell Daily Sun*, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York. While there were some details of his contributions available, they seemed to me to be less than exhaustive. Sounded like a project for Vonnegut scholar-wannabe extraordinaire Eckenrode.

But the logistics of such a project seemed forbidding. I didn't have the time or money to travel to Indianapolis and Ithaca and spend weeks poring over microfilms. I contacted the Indiana Historical Society and Olin Library at Cornell (holders of the microfilms) to find out what, exactly, it would take for me to be able to get access to them. To my eternal surprise, both were willing to send their microfilms to *my* local library via interlibrary loan for my use, and I could keep them there for up to a month.

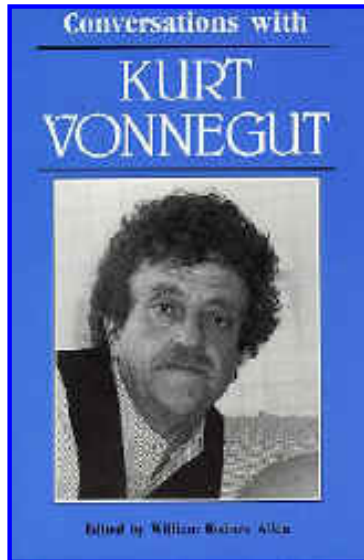
I tackled the *Shortridge Echo* first, and the *Cornell Sun* a few years later. I went to the library after work and on weekends. Other patrons there at the time probably thought I was permanently affixed to the microfilm reader. I made a note of anything that even mentioned Vonnegut's name in the newspapers, and ventured educated guesses about certain unsigned columns that looked to me like Vonnegut's handiwork. When I was done, I had identified many more columns in both newspapers that were without a doubt by Vonnegut, and found a large number of other interesting things along the way. The *Shortridge Echo*, especially, was an eye-opener in regard to Vonnegut's high school social life.

I gathered, read, and studied my copies and notes, and managed to squeeze a multiple-page essay about it all out of myself. Did this mean I was finally a real Vonnegut scholar? That's probably debatable, but I was pretty happy with myself, whatever I was.

Then Vonnegut withdrawal hit me. Most of the fun for me was in the looking and finding, followed by the reading and digesting. But at this point, it seemed I'd exhausted all of my known resources. I had no clue how to proceed any further with the outstanding bibliography items, and I'd already read and re-read what I had. Unless and until Vonnegut actually wrote something new, or did another interview, it looked like



Kurt Vonnegut's "Unready to Wear" appeared in *Galaxy*, April 1953.



there wasn't anything left to find, or at least not any reliable way of discovering it. And writing the essay was a great achievement for me as far as I was concerned, but it was probably the equivalent of a casual conversation over coffee for the likes of Jerry Klinkowitz. I didn't feel that I had any more like it in me, and it was depressing me. I needed a new Vonnegut fix, and I needed it now.

And along came the internet. When I discovered the internet, it was like a whole new Vonnegut goldmine had opened up before me. All I had to do was type "Kurt Vonnegut" into a search engine and hit return, and there would be several thousand new leads at my fingertips. Most of them turned out to be dead ends or not quite what I was looking for, but as I said earlier, most of the fun for me was in the looking and finding. It was great, and remains so.

Another great advantage of the internet is email. To some, it is a curse, but not to me. I grant that it may be somewhat of a curse to those who receive email *from me*, though few have indicated as such so far. Email has allowed me to quickly, easily, and inexpensively write to pertinent people regarding all kinds of Vonnegut leads. One of the reasons I don't like doing that via the postal service is that after going to all the trouble and paying for stamps, many people don't bother to answer my letters. Not only does email not cost me anything, I find that the success rate of getting a reply is much higher.

Also: If I come across a reference to Vonnegut speaking somewhere, such as a college or university, which he seems to do several times every year, I can now visit the school's web site, and the school's newspaper's web site, and the local town's newspaper's web site, and snoop around for any stories with quotes from Vonnegut's speech, or interviews with him.

A common and reliable source of references to upcoming speeches and appearances by Vonnegut and other new sources pertaining to him is the Vonnegut internet newsgroup. Internet newsgroups are basically giant message boards on the internet, each of which is devoted to a particular topic. The newsgroup devoted to Vonnegut is alt.books.kurt-vonnegut. There, regular participants and newcomers discuss topics and exchange information pertaining to Vonnegut. If someone in the newsgroup comes across some information about an upcoming speech by Vonnegut, or a new interview with him or article about him, he or she will usually post a message about it to bring it to everyone else's attention.

One prolific participant in the Vonnegut newsgroup is a fellow named Dave Locke. Dave is always posting information about newly found articles and interviews for the rest of us.

Dave also likes to append quotes, usually from Vonnegut's work or interviews, to the end of his newsgroup messages. He has quite an extensive and impressive collection of pertinent quotes. Vonnegut junkie that I am, the vast majority of his quotes are already quite familiar to me, but there have been a few exceptions. One such quote was attributed to something called *The Double:Bill Symposium*, which I was completely unfamiliar with. When I replied to Dave's message with questions about the source of the quote, he then kindly responded with much useful information. *Double:Bill*, it turned out, was the publication, in the 1960s, of responses from professional science fiction writers and editors to a questionnaire sent them by the late Lloyd Biggle, and Vonnegut was among those who responded.

This represented a marvelous discovery for me. The older and more obscure the Vonnegut material I come across, the more satisfying it is for me. I think that Vonnegut himself is responsible for this attitude on my part. In the preface to his essay collection *Wampeters, Foma and Granfaloons* (Delacorte Press/

Seymour Lawrence, 1974), he wrote of Jerry Klinkowitz and John Somer (co-editors of *The Vonnegut Statement*, Delacorte Press/ Seymour Lawrence, 1973) having compiled a list of everything Vonnegut had written up to that time that had not yet been collected into book form, to their knowledge:

"From all that crap, I have culled this volume. I would not have been able to do it without the help of Klinkowitz and Somer, who knew where almost all the bodies were hidden. There are only three or four works of mine they know nothing about. Not even the ordeal of the veglia, said to be the most excruciating torture devised by Earthlings, could compel me to reveal where those three or four were published and when." (*WF&G*, pages xviii-xix)

Does that sound like a challenge, or what? By now, though, I've certainly discovered more than three or four published works of Vonnegut's predating *Wampeters, Foma and Granfalloon*s that had presumably not been known to Klinkowitz and Somer, so I'm not sure which three or four he was referring to.

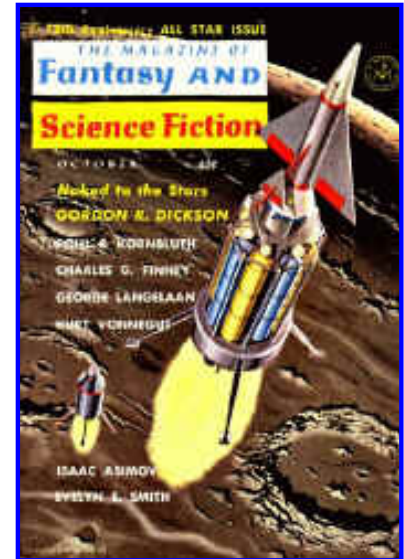
Dave Locke also included a tantalizing statement regarding another obscure SF publication called *SaFari*, which Vonnegut had also contributed to, in his reply to me. "You probably don't even want to know about [*SaFari*]," he wrote. And this was my introduction to the world of science fiction fanzines, a world that has evidently operated under my radar for a long, long time. Since before I even *had* a radar, actually. Through Dave, I had the opportunity to correspond with the editor and publisher of *SaFari*, Earl Kemp, who has since kindly provided me with copies of Vonnegut's contributions to it. And Earl, of course, has now brought me to *e!*

eBay, the internet auction site, is incredibly useful and has done wonders for my Vonnegut work. Every night, I go there and search for anything with "Vonnegut" in the title or description. Every night, there are at least several dozen new Vonnegut-related items to bid on. I sift through them, searching for any that are previously unknown to me. I also save pictures of many items to my hard drive, for use in the HTML transcripts I create.

But I don't have bottomless pockets, nor a job that pays especially well, so I rarely bid on anything. How does eBay help me, then? Well, for instance, if somebody is offering a book that is described as containing an essay by Vonnegut that I don't already have or know about, I contact my library and ask them to obtain the book for me through interlibrary loan.

Sometimes, limited-edition books with exclusive essays by Vonnegut are offered. There are several limited first editions of Vonnegut's novels like this. I can't hope to get those through my library, and they're way out my price range, so I came up with another strategy. EBay allows registered users to contact other registered users through them, and I wait until the auctions have been won by somebody, then contact the winners, telling them that I'm researching Vonnegut, and would he or she kindly make a copy of Vonnegut's exclusive essay for me when the book arrives? I start my sales pitch by pointing out that I did not bid against them for whatever it is they'd won, with the hope that this will cause them to feel some gratitude toward me. More often than not, they send me the copies I'm looking for.

A few times, my expectations have been wildly and almost *shockingly* exceeded by using this method. One fellow had just won the bidding for a CD-ROM that contained snippets of an interview with Vonnegut



Kurt Vonnegut's "Harrison Bergeron" appeared in *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*, October 1961.

conducted exclusively for it. When I contacted him and asked if he could make a copy of the CD for me, he sent me the actual CD he'd won, with instructions to make myself a copy and return the original to him. It absolutely amazes me that anyone who had just bid on and won an auction for anything, let alone an out-of-print, somewhat hard-to-find item like that, would send it away to someone he didn't even know. But I got what I wanted, and I was certainly not unappreciative.

That episode was later topped by another fellow on eBay. In response to my request for a copy of an interview from a magazine he'd won, he simply removed the pages he was interested in and sent the rest of the magazine to me to keep, with his blessing. This was something he'd just paid \$15 or so for. Unbelievable.

Yet another eBay buyer recently went out and got high-quality color photocopies of an article made for me, and did not ask me for a cent. He had first suggested that he was going to send me the actual magazine after copying his own article of interest, and I tried to talk him out of it. I think he relented after speaking with his wife. If there's anybody on this earth who has depended on the kindness of strangers, it is I.

Sometimes, my efforts to solicit copies of obscure Vonnegut material from eBay buyers are not successful. Two issues of yet another science fiction fanzine that I'd never heard of, containing entries by Vonnegut, were recently offered for sale separately. The fanzine was *Proceedings of the Institute for Twenty-First Century Studies*, or *PITFCS*, edited by the late Theodore R. Cogswell and published fairly regularly between April 1959 and December 1962, and sporadically thereafter. I contacted each issue's buyer after the sales were completed, but one of them did not respond to my request at all. While I think of the discovery of old, obscure material like this as a major triumph, a failure to obtain copies or transcripts of such material from a known source is always one of my most bitter disappointments, because I'm certain I'll never come across another copy of it again.

To make matters worse, it seemed likely that Vonnegut had perhaps contributed to other issues of *PITFCS* as well, but I had no way, to my knowledge, of finding out, let alone getting copies.

The other eBay *PITFCS* buyer did respond to my request for a copy of Vonnegut's contribution, and indicated he would be willing to send me one. But before he even received his issue from the seller, I started nosing around on the internet for more information about *PITFCS*. I soon learned that its entire run had been compiled and republished as a book (*PITFCS*, edited by Theodore R. Cogswell; Advent: Publishers, 1992), which I was able to borrow a copy of via interlibrary loan. I would no longer have to rely on the outside chance that one or more eBay sellers might eventually offer all of the issues that Vonnegut had been published in, and that I would succeed in convincing their buyers to send me copies.

Reading through George W. Price's history of Advent:Publishers "1955 Advent:uring Through the Years 2005" in the first issue of *e/* online here [LINK January 2002], I see that one of the founders and guiding forces of Advent, along with George, was our friend Earl Kemp. Earl and company had decreed that there should be a publisher of science fiction criticism in book form. Take a bow, Earl. The science fiction community thanks you, as does my own insatiable Vonnegut dependency.

So what do I do now with all this Vonnegut material I'm gathering?

I continue to share new treasures I've found with Asa Pieratt and Jerry Klinkowitz, and with a few other friends and Vonnegut fans I've found along the way, as they continue to do with me. It's the equivalent of trading baseball cards for me. I also routinely offer copies of some material to, for instance, those eBay winners from whom I'm trying to extract a copy of something else. When it turns out they're Vonnegut collectors too, they're almost always amenable.

One of my dreams is to someday have all of the material on CD as searchable digital text and pictures - hence, the HTML transcripts I've been working on. At some point, I'd also like to put up an online bibliography with pictures, and links to those items that are available elsewhere on the web. I think the internet is the ideal place for a bibliography because new items are being discovered all the time, and because it is easily accessible to a large number of people.

For some of the original material in my collection, such as the magazine short stories, I have made high-resolution color scans of the covers of the magazines and all pages of the stories, including illustrations, and put them on CD. This allows me to view them any time I want to without having to get out and handle the fifty-year-old paper copies any more. Frankly, I hope that libraries and institutions begin doing this sort of thing with their periodicals, if they haven't already. It would sure beat microfilm.

Maybe, someday, I will find it in myself to write an entire book, about Vonnegut or something else. But I'm sure I'll never catch up to Jerry Klinkowitz's published output at this point. To do that, I think I'd have to write for about twelve hours every day for the next twenty or thirty years.

In the meantime, doctors have been monitoring my condition. They tell me that if I continue my present routines without exception, and take my medications as prescribed, I should be able to live a fairly normal, healthy life.

I was gazing at a list of all I'd published, and wondering, "How the hell did I do that?" I was feeling as I feel now, like whalers Herman Melville described, who didn't talk any more. They had said absolutely everything they could ever say.

-- Kurt Vonnegut, *Timequake*

Sampling Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. the Fan*

By Earl Kemp

It is not possible to deny a talent so great as that of Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. He stands above most other writers who have ever graced the science fiction genre. From the very beginning, he had me hooked.

He was one of the lucky ones...those fortunate enough to be barraged by fan letters about how great he was and all that old stuff he heard every day; I know, I wrote them. Now and then, he would write back.

I was able to locate two things by Kurt Vonnegut that appeared in my fanzine *SaFari* in the 1960s. He didn't have much time for fanzines in those days; he was too busy writing for posterity. I consider myself extremely lucky to have had him participate in my Hugo award winning *SaFari Annual Who Killed Science Fiction?* and in the follow up issue after that.

Kurt Vonnegut, Sidney Coleman, and I also shared something else in common that was extraordinary special. All three of us, along with a whole bunch of like-minded contemporaries, were contributing members of the Institute for Twenty-First Century Studies at the same time. Ted Cogswell's fabulous pre-Internet discussion group among a stellar cast of pro- and semi-pro science fiction personalities. The better pieces were gathered and published in Cogswell's fanzine, *PITFCS Proceedings of the Institute for Twenty-First Century Studies*. Then, after that, Advent:Publishers produced the entire collection in one

huge omnibus volume in 1992.

Kurt Vonnegut made numerous contributions to those Studies. I have made a selection of quotes from those appearances by excerpting the best examples for you.

No. 1: *PITFCS Proceedings of the Institute for Twenty-First Century Studies*, Advent 1992:

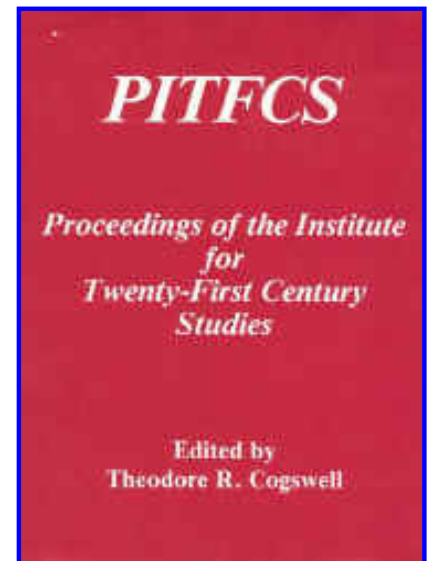
PITFCS*

By Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.

Those writers who think of science fiction as a separate category of writing must feel in need of a homeland. They must long for an artificial state like Israel. It is very bad for a writer to feel cozy and at home. If many good writers have stopped writing science fiction, that's fine. It means that many good writers are wandering, feeling wry, homeless, and pointless. When writers do that, historians of literature can sit back complacently, knowing that one of the wanderers, at the very least, will create something original, startling, strong, and true.

#

I will tell you one thing other than the money thing that makes many of us feel footless and peculiar-and that is the political thing. And the more I think about the political thing, the more I think I understand some people's hankering to keep science fiction alive as something separate from other writing.



To be quick about it: this country has no radical press, every healthy society should have a radical press, and we probably could and should be it in the good old U.S.A.

While I am no student of our so-called field, I have the impression that, wild men though we fancy ourselves, we are behind *Fortune* magazine by at least ten years politically. As for frankness, our lag must be on the order of centuries.

We take the stuff of Sunday supplements, move it into the anti-universe a billion years from now, suffocate it in fine writing, to all practical purposes put it into unbreakable code-and then we feel brave and sly because we have published ideas that would have, in the thirteenth, fourteenth, or fifteenth century, got us burned at the stake.

Back in Public School 43 in Indianapolis, The James Whitcomb Riley School, a teacher told me that people could say anything they wanted to say in the U.S.A., just as long as they didn't start riots. For all I know, the antique statute the teacher was talking about may still be on the books. If it is, we could get famous and important and popular by taking advantage of it until the Legislature lowered the boom.

#

I had a friend who quit work for a year so he could think things out, and at the end of the year I asked him what he had decided, and he said he had decided not to read any more. He said it was reading and not cigarettes that made him feel so lousy all the time. "I don't itch all over any more," he said. I have since

noticed that people who never read anything are almost always lovable and in full bloom. Perhaps, as responsible drug manufacturers, we should print the skull and crossbones on everything we sell.

#

TEK-DYNE LABS

"In the Shadows of M.I.T."
Cambridge, Mass.

Dear Sir:

Are you and your loved ones potential shelter hoppers? What is a shelter hopper? It is any person badly in need of shelter during World War Three, sort of a Twentieth-Century Everyman.

We here at Tek-Dyne have been thinking about all the families too big or too lazy or too poor to build adequate fall-out shelters. Is yours among them? If so, you should equip your family with Tek-Dyne Shelter-Hopping Kits, which are remarkably cheap, and which are guaranteed to open any shelter yet recommended by Civil Defense.

Our cheapest kit, selling for \$14.95, consists of a World War Two surplus cylinder of Cyklon-B, made by I.G. Farben, and a shaped charge for blowing the lock on any shelter door. More luxurious kits include C.D. uniforms, sirens for blowing all-clear signals, tape recordings of old A.E.C. speeches on the relative harmlessness of fall-out, tape recordings of beloved family pets scratching to be let in, grenades, bazookas, flamethrowers, and so on.

We recommend that no informed person go anywhere without the basic kit, since the necessity of getting into a shelter is likely to arise at any time. We therefore package the kits to look like attaché cases, lunch pails, hatboxes, shopping bags, copies of Dr. Zhivago, and so on.

As a rule of thumb, we recommend that, for minimum safety during nuclear war, each person be equipped to take over at least three shelters. We say this because there are bound to be disappointments-meagerly equipped shelters, shelters furnished in bad taste, septic tanks mistaken for shelters, and so on.

One town figured the appalling cost of building community shelters, decided instead to buy enough kits to take over the shelters of an adjoining town, thereby saving enough money to send the high school band to the next Orange Bowl game.

With every order goes a subscription to our newsletter, The Minuteman, which tells who is building shelters where, what they are putting into them, how the owners intend to defend them, and so on.

More details on request.

Very Truly Yours,
Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.
Manager of Sales

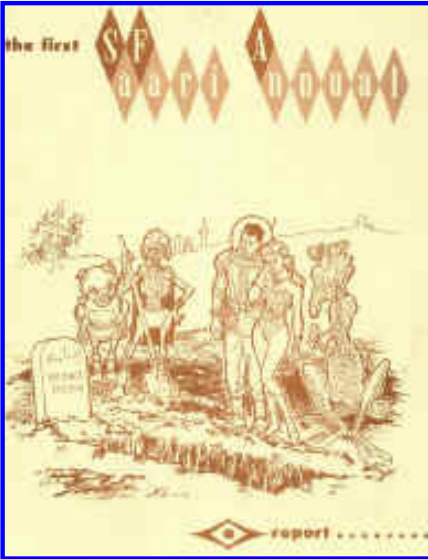
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*Excerpted from *Proceedings of the Institute for Twenty-First Century Studies*, April 1960.

No. 2: My opus *Who Killed Science Fiction?* also appeared in 1960. This is excerpted from Kurt Vonnegut's contribution to that volume:

Who Killed Science Fiction?*

By Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.



Thank you for [*Who Killed Science Fiction?*]....I must compliment you on it, as it is really well gotten up. I think it will be of great use to publishers and authors alike....

--Hugo Gernsback, *SaFari*, July 15, 1960

Nobody killed science fiction. Science fiction is not dead. More money will be spent on stories with science in them during the next year than in any year in history-will be spent by magazines, television, radio, book publishers, movies, and even Broadway.

So what is the beef?

The pulp writers can't make a living any more? Tant pis. They made intelligent readers want to throw up.

Anybody who announces that he is a science fiction writer is announcing that he is in damn bad company financially and artistically.

You are trying to conduct a post-mortem without a corpse. I would love to provide you with one. I would love to see the expression science fiction butchered this very minute in order that stories with science in them not be identified, in the minds of intelligent readers, with pulpsters, beginners, and hacks.

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*Reprinted from *SaFari Annual Who Killed Science Fiction?* April 15, 1960

The Afterthoughts*:

Thanks for the handsome present [his contributor copy of *Who Killed Science Fiction?*]...My own contribution was irresponsible, and I'm sorry for it.

What it expressed more than anything else was my own isolation. I don't know anybody else in the field, not even fans, and so I tend to think of the field as something far far away and belonging to strangers. That is self-pitying thinking without merit...



There seems to be fair agreement as to what the best pieces of work in the field have been. It might be interesting to make a list of those best pieces, a hundred of them, say-and, after each title, to name the thing most attacked, the thing most praised, and, in the barest possible terms, the intended moral. You might discover in that way the spiritual basis of the almost crazy affection many intelligent people have for the artificial category of writing known as science fiction...

All the shoptalk by ink-stained wretches leads nowhere. Underneath all that shoptalk something very important spiritually may be going on. I hope so....

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*Reprinted from *SaFari* July 15, 1960

I do not think that science fiction is logically a separate form of fiction. It is simply fiction with an emphasis on technology. The term only has meaning because there is a little society of writers who are, for some reason, pleased to think of themselves as separate.

-- Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., *The Double:Bill Symposium*, 1963-64

Words of Wonderment

Selections From the Kurt Vonnegut Quote File

Compiled by el Grand Quote Master Dave Locke

Q: "Based on what you've read and seen in the media, what is not being said in the mainstream press about President Bush's policies and the impending war in Iraq?"

A: "That they are nonsense."

-- Kurt Vonnegut, 1/27/03, "In These Times"

"Television drama, although not yet classified as fine art, has on occasion performed marvelous services for Americans who want us to be less paranoid, to be fairer and more merciful. *M.A.S.H.* and *Law and Order*, to name only two shows, have been stunning masterpieces in that regard."

-- Kurt Vonnegut, 1/27/03, "In These Times"

Q: "What targets would you consider fair game for a satirist today?"

A: "Assholes."

-- Kurt Vonnegut, 1/27/03, "In These Times"

"The Internet has already become for a fortunate few ('spiritual scuba divers', one is tempted to call them) a limitless ocean without bottom or shores. In whose depths one can breathe effortlessly - in and out, in and out. It is the habitat of the newest creatures to evolve in our part of the Milky Way - as enchanting and nobly bizarre as any giant manta or moray eel, say. They are recorded thoughts and feelings about what it is like to be a living thing."

-- Kurt Vonnegut, 9/99

"I'm afraid that I'm like Joe Heller. I don't vote anymore and that is terrible and I don't recommend that to anybody. Joe Heller never voted. He didn't want to be complicit."

-- Kurt Vonnegut, explaining why he didn't vote, National Public Radio, 11/6/02

"Your planet's immune system is trying to get rid of you."

-- a Kurt Vonnegut bumpersticker

PLAYER PIANO:

"A step backward, after making a wrong turn, is a step in the right direction."

"Most fascinating game there is, keeping things from staying the way they are."

PALM SUNDAY:

"As for literary criticism in general: I have long felt that any reviewer who expresses rage and loathing for a novel or a play or a poem is preposterous. He or she is like a person who has put on full armor and attacked a hot fudge sundae or a banana split."

"I try to keep deep love out of my stories because, once that particular subject comes up, it is almost impossible to talk about anything else. Readers don't want to hear about anything else. They go gaga about love. If a lover in a story wins his true love, that's the end of the tale, even if World War III is about to begin, and the sky is black with flying saucers."

"Simplicity of language is not only reputable, but perhaps even sacred."

"Some critics take issue with me because I make my points and discuss my ideas with jokes, rather than with oceanic tragedy."

-- Kurt Vonnegut, 9/18/02, McSweeney's

"True terror is to wake up one morning and discover your high school class is running the country."

-- Kurt Vonnegut

"I was a victim of a series of accidents, as are we all."

-- The Space Wanderer, *Sirens of Titan*

"When writers crack up, when they really end up in the nut house, is when they can't do it any more."

-- Kurt Vonnegut



Valerie Perrine played the part of Montana Wildhack in the Universal Pictures version of Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five*, 1972.

"If I am going to spend eternity visiting this moment and that, I'm grateful that so many of those moments are nice."

-- Kurt Vonnegut, *Slaughterhouse 5*

"I'm paranoid as an act of good citizenship, concerned about what the powerful people are up to. I suspect them of making money any way they can. It intrigues me that people want to be rich, and I try to imagine what they do when they are rich."

-- Kurt Vonnegut, 1963

"There's a game for every season - ice hockey, basketball, baseball, football. Life soon appears to be a game, and it isn't. In games the object is to win, but in life the object is not to win. The object of the whole world is to preserve the game board and the pieces, and there is no such game."

-- Kurt Vonnegut, 3/69

"It's hard work," he said. "It's not pleasant - just in solitude, writing. You can't have anybody around. It's a very lonesome business, and we're social animals."

-- phone interview with Kurt Vonnegut, Knoxville News-Sentinel, 4/01

"1492. The teachers told the children that this was when the continent was discovered by human beings. Actually, millions of human beings were already living full and imaginative lives on the continent in 1492. That was simply the year in which sea pirates began to cheat and rob and kill them."

-- Kurt Vonnegut, *Breakfast of Champions*

The Church of God the Utterly Indifferent, from *Sirens of Titan*

"Ideas or the lack of them can cause disease."

-- Kurt Vonnegut

"People have to talk about something just to keep their voice boxes in working order so they'll have good voice boxes in case there's ever anything really meaningful to say."

-- Kurt Vonnegut

"Peculiar travel suggestions are dancing lessons from God."

-- Kurt Vonnegut

"The humanist behaves well without any expectations of rewards or punishments in an afterlife. They served, as indeed my ancestors in Indianapolis had done, the only abstraction with which they had any familiarity, which is community. And that's been enough."

-- Kurt Vonnegut, *Star News* article, 6/00

"Or with the computer mania. What you can do is, you can retreat from it. We were talking about if you don't like life, you can retreat from it. If you don't like all this technological stuff, you can put together some kind of life apart from all of it. Of course, the grotesque example of somebody that did that, long before there were technologies, was Henry David Thoreau. But he was protecting his soul, and his personality. It's harder and harder to do that now."

-- Kurt Vonnegut, *Star News* article, 6/00



Kurt Vonnegut's "2BRO2B" appeared in *If*, January 1962.

"This is what I find most encouraging about the writing trades: They allow mediocre people who are patient and industrious to revise their stupidity, to edit themselves into something like intelligence. They also allow lunatics to seem saner than sane."

-- Kurt Vonnegut

"Writers get to treat their mental illnesses every day."

-- Kurt Vonnegut

"And what is literature, Rabo," he said, "but an insider's newsletters about affairs relating to molecules, of no importance to anything in the universe but a few molecules who have the disease called 'thought.'"

-- Kurt Vonnegut, "Bluebeard", 1987

"I think that one of the things parents have to do is to teach children hypocrisy, because that's how you survive - by being nice to people who are contemptible. So the kid coming into the world sees hypocrisy and wants to point it out. You're nice to this awful person? What you're doing is a crime, isn't it, Dad?"

-- Kurt Vonnegut, 10/99 *Salon* interview

I think we don't care much anymore. Most of us, as when we were children, have very sound ethical instincts and realize that it's all a lot of baloney. And so we're completely fatalistic about our government's being for sale.

-- Kurt Vonnegut 10/99 *Salon* interview
