

IONISPHERE 22



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**Bulletin of the National Fantasy Fan Federation
Fan-Pro Coordinating Bureau**

Ionisphere is the official publication of the N3F's Fan-Pro Coordinating Bureau, edited by John Thiel, 30 N. 19th Street, Lafayette, Indiana 47904, which may be reached at the editor's address, kinethiel@mymetronet.net . It has been an N3F publication for over three years now and is still going strong. Don't forget to check the publications annals at the N3F site if you want to see back issues of it.

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Heath Row, General Backing,

Heath Row is a new member of this bureau, added this month. He has a lot of background in science fiction and is welcomed as a new addition.

Contents of this issue

Editorial, by John Thiel, page three

Author Interview, James E. Gunn, by John Thiel, page five

Author Interview, Lee S. King, by Tamara Wilhite, page nine

This Year's TAFF Representative: Michael Lowrey, statement by Michael Lowrey, page twelve

Some Characteristics of Science Fiction: Orwell & Sheckley, by Jeffrey Redmond, page fourteen

Time and Now, by Will Mayo, page twenty two

Ulterior Motives, Jeffrey Redmond, page twenty four

The Moon, by John Polselli, page thirty

EDITORIAL



By **John Thiel**

What Now, My Love?

It was quite an adventure, living in the 20th Century. Now we have the uncertainty of the 21st to contend with, hoping that optimistic events will come to outnumber the pessimistic ones. The “World Is In An Uproar, the Danger Zone Is Everywhere” (Ray Charles). Governmental people are toppling in the Capitol. You look around, and there’s nowhere there isn’t trouble happening. You might “cry to the rock, rock won’t you hide me?” but not find a place to hide. I think Buck Rogers himself might be appalled if this is what he found in the 21st Century. Things were tame for him compared to all of this.

So what of science fiction? There are vast schisms in what was once a more cohesive field or area of interest, and fandom has been substantially sundered; a whole lot of fandom went under to feuding, which didn’t pay off for anyone any more than feuding paid off for the Martins and the Coys. It’s time now, perhaps, to survey where we are at after all that unrest and trouble. It hasn’t stopped, but nothing new has been added. It looks like the last juggernauts have been hurled and all that’s left is trouble being fomented. It might seem like an exercise in futility to try to patch up science fiction and fantasy fandom when the government itself is requiring being patched up and when who knows for sure what nameless wars may still be going on? But still and all, this is the aim of the Fan-Pro Coordinating Bureau. To kind of look around and sort of maybe get things together again, maybe not very well, but at all.

All the writers interviewed here have expressed what tough going it is in doing writing and getting anywhere with it, and the fans seem to be doing nothing but complaining. But when we are doing something, and it’s something we should be doing, even if we are not achieving great successes, we are doing things, and that is better than

not doing anything or doing something that gets us in trouble.

I think as Ionisphere continues to progress, we will get more and more of a foothold on what we are doing and will find ourselves closer and closer to the satisfaction of some of our desires. If it is not so, tell the wind about it. Going for the goal has something to be said for it, and that will continue to be our policy here.



Ionospheric research center



Ionospheric travel vehicle

AUTHOR INTERVIEW: JAMES E. GUNN

by JOHN THIEL

James E. Gunn has been contributing to science fiction over the years, has been nominated for several awards and has won a Hugo for a nonfiction book about science fiction and a Grand Master Award for lifetime achievement. He is located at the University of Kansas and has shown an academic interest in the science fiction field as well as writing science fiction. He can be found on Facebook.



IO: There seems to be a multiplicity in things you write about. What are your major themes in writing? Have you any connection with the avant-garde tendency in writing, or the school of the avant-garde? You've been described as influential in science fiction's "New Wave". What do you think of this description, and do you have any thoughts about the New Wave?

JG: My goal in writing science fiction was to build on its virtues and try to write them better. Other writers of my generation were trying to do much the same thing, while some of them wrote something different under the science fiction umbrella, like the New Wave. I never counted myself among the New Wave or avante garde group. As I look back upon my body of work, I find the major theme to be philosophical, like *THE JOY MAKERS*, which was inspired by an article on "Feeling" (which became an article about feeling happy) in the Encyclopedia Britannica, which ended with the statement that "the true science of applied hedonics is not yet born", and I based my novel on the development of a science of happiness. And *THE IMMORTALS* was not so much about the immortal man but about the impact on society of the knowledge that immortality was possible. And so to my most recent novels, the *TRANSCENDENTAL* trilogy, which is about the impact on humanity and a galactic civilization of a possible machine that can achieve transcendence directly.

IO: Noticing that you have an academic position in science fiction, what does your academic work consist of? What activities regarding science fiction have you participated in academically?

JG: I was present at the founding of SFRA and a charter member of SFWA, and served in several roles in both. I gave numerous talks at all educational levels, papers and talks at national organizations including teachers and writers, and was on three overseas lecture tours for the U.S. Information Agency, in addition to dozens of articles.

IO: What are some major points in your career as a science fiction writer and commentator?

JG: I had two periods of full-time writing, the first from 1948 to 1949, when I returned to the University to get my Master's Degree in English, a year and a half as an editor for Western Printing and Lithographing Company of Racine, Wisconsin when I attended my first science fiction convention in Chicago in 1952, learned from my agent that he had sold four stories for me, and left Racine to return to full-time writing, a period in which I wrote two novels and numerous short stories that laid the groundwork for several more novels. Our move to Lawrence in 1955 got me involved in the University once more and

led to a ten-year period as a director of public relations, during a period of student unrest that kept me from writing for half a dozen years until I began to take my month's vacation and devoted it to writing, during which my writing matured and I created parts or all of three novels, including KAMPUS, THE BURNING, and THE LISTENERS. And then in 1970 I decided to resign my position and become a full-time teacher. During my first year in that position I wrote the lectures for my first real science fiction class, lectures that later became the first of two histories of science fiction (the other was Brian Aldiss's MILLION YEAR SPREE).

I was impressed with much of the New Wave. It produced many excellent writers and it elevated the level of writing skills among the American authors who originally fought it as being in opposition to the positive philosophical approach of American SF, but many of its stylistic innovations became part of American authors' writing tools. I was never a New Waver, and today I am considered the last living author of the Golden Age and old-fashioned.

IO: What is your impression of science fiction's place in the world? What contributions do you think it has made generally speaking?

JG: One has only to read references to science fiction in new developments in science and technology. In addition it has served as a constant reminder to scientists and the general public that new developments must be considered in light of their human applications and social impact, and science fiction writers are often solicited to provide their insight into scientific and technological innovations. In addition, as I have pointed out in recent years, science fiction has the potential of changing attitudes and even, possibly, brains themselves, and would be useful additions to curriculums in all levels of education. Even **The New Yorker** has issues with sections of science fiction stories, and **The New York Times** has solicited my contributions on issues. The full potential of SF to be helpful in education and on issue evaluation has not yet been realized.

IO: What are your main activities presently?

JG: I have a couple of books coming out, PILGRIMS TO TRANSCENDENCE and THE PROTOCOLS OF READING SCIENCE FICTION. I have had two (maybe three) novelettes accepted for publication by **Asimov's SF Magazine** and submitted as a novella for book publication.

IO: James Gunn adds the following biographical notes:

JG: I retired from my teaching position in 1993, although I continued to teach my summer workshop and intensive English institute on The Teaching of Science Fiction,

while being Professor Emeritus, until about ten years ago. I participated in some other University activities including a couple of faculty colloquiums, but that, like my teaching, is probably beyond my physical capabilities now.

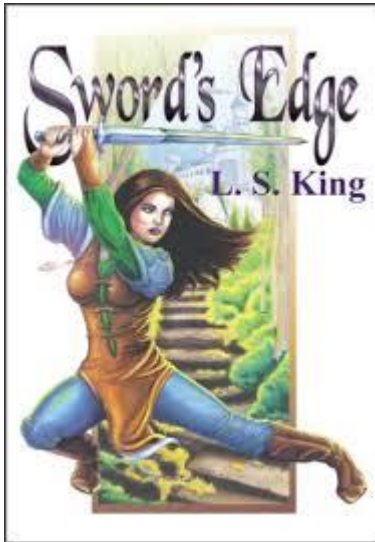
I held several positions at the University before I became a full-time teacher in the English department in 1970, including managing editor of the Alumni Associations magazine and newsletter and then Administrative Assistant to the Chancellor for University Relations from 1960 to 1970. I began writing science fiction in 1948, sold my first story that year and had three stories published in 1949. My first two novels were published in 1955, and since then I have published forty-eight books (and three more in the pipeline), about twenty novels or short story collections, and the rest are anthologies or books about science fiction. My best known novels are *The Immortals* (which became a TV movie of the week and then a series in 1969 and 1970 under the title "The Immortal"), *The Joy Makers*, *Star Bridge* (with Jack Williamson), *Kampus*, and the recent *Transcendental* trilogy. My best known anthology is the volume *The Road to Science Fiction*, and my best known book about science fiction is *Alternate Worlds: The Illustrated History of Science Fiction*.

I have been president of the Science Fiction Writers of America and the Science Fiction Research Association, as well as being awarded the SFWA's Pilgrim Award, SFWA's Grand Master, and induction in the Science Fiction Hall of Fame.



AUTHOR INTERVIEW: LEE S. KING

by TAMARA WILHITE



TW: Your bio says you were inspired by science fiction classics like THE OUTER LIMITS and THE TWILIGHT ZONE. What other classics have influenced your work?

LK: Prof. Tolkien's works and also C.S. Lewis, not to mention the old classic SF masters, such as R.A. Heinlein and Isaac Asimov. If I had time to mull it over, I could probably add quite a few more names to the list, but I'll leave it at that.

TW: You write fan fiction as well as full length novels. Are any of your novels based on fan fiction?

LK: Not at all. I haven't actually written fanfic in ages. I did enjoy it, and occasionally get the urge, but I have too much of my own writing to do!

TW: You've had short stories published in a number of magazines. Which ones tie into your novels?

LK: "The Last Hurrah" was written almost fifteen years ago, and is a short story which takes place about 1,500 years before the events in DEUCES WILD, in the early days of the Terran Republic, which has long since fallen and been replaced with various galactic governments.

"The Grift" is a stand-alone short story involving my two protagonists from DEUCES WILD. There are two short stories ("Alternate Path" and "Petition") and a vignette ("Bitter Storm") about a particular character in the Sword's Edge Chronicles which I have compiled into an e-book entitled ALCANDHAR.

TW: Why do you call the Sword's Edge Chronicles fantasy with a science fiction twist?

The science fiction elements like aliens and an alien planet seem purely science fiction.

LK: The planet in which most of the stories take place is very medieval-ish, with swords, capes, castles and basically an agrarian society. Normally in such settings, one expects magic of some sort to pop out of the ground. In this case, it's forgotten alien technology that slowly is rediscovered, so the setting feels like fantasy, even though it's science fiction.

TW: What is the general plot of the Sword's Edge Chronicles?

LK: Using the KISS principle and to hopefully avoid spoilers: in the midst of upheaval in their societal and leadership structure, long-lost technology is rediscovered, and with it, even more devastating changes threaten to create chaos on their world.

TW: Where does the name of your website and publisher, Loriendil, come from?

LK: Many, perhaps most, of my stories come originally from dreams. So many years ago, I came up with the name Loriendil as "one who loves dreams" based on my understanding of Prof. Tolkien's Quenya language of both the word Lorien and the suffix -dil. Since it was my online user name almost everywhere, I then decided to use it as a website and also a publishing name.

TW: Deuces Wild is hard science fiction with more than a hint of Western. How is that possible in the distant future?

LK: While accuracy is important for me personally as a science fiction writer (which is why I have two science geeks, one a physicist, to check through all my science), I don't consider Deuces Wild hard science fiction, but rather space opera.

In the distant future, there are still planets being colonized, and as Heinlein points out in TUNNEL IN THE SKY, the best way to do that is old-fashioned pioneering, horses and cattle instead of advanced machinery which needs constant repair and replacing. So that's where the Western vibe comes from.

TW: How many books are there in the Deuces Wild series?

LK: Two at the moment.

TW: You've managed several magazines and support author's groups. How would you describe the state of the paying market for science fiction and fantasy?

LK: It's hard to say. There have been ups and downs from the time I first got involved in online SF magazines, but I seem to see an upswing, which is encouraging (especially since I'm always looking for more good stories to read).

TW: What are you currently working on?

LK: I'm working on book three of the Deuces Wild series, and also planning ahead for

the next book in the Sword's Edge Chronicles.

TW: Is there anything you want to add?

LK: I would love to offer enough encouragement to writers. It's so easy to feel like giving up, or think you're not good enough. But writers *write*, so don't let circumstances, other people, or even **you** tell you that you can't or shouldn't write!



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IONOSPHERIC STUDY AREA, Photo From Shutterstock.

This Year's TAFF Representative: Michael Lowrey

**A long time N3F member has earned
the signal honor of being fandom's
representative at the 2020 Worldcon
via the Transatlantic Fan Fund**



**Here he describes the campaign,
the nomination and vote,
and his plans for making the
transatlantic trip**

I have always been internationally-minded, with fannish acquaintances across the globe. I had been an unsuccessful nominee for TAFF twice before, once back in 2014 and again in 2019 (when I was one of three Irish-Americans vying to attend the Worldcon in Dublin and Eurocon in Belfast). When it was decided that the 2020 TAFF trip should be West-East (since Worldcon will be in New Zealand this year), I thought vaguely about running again, although I was a bit hesitant, given my two prior losses. Nevertheless, when to my delight a prior winner contacted me and suggested that I try again this year if I was interested, it was not too hard to persuade me, once the friends whom I consulted assured me that such a bid on my part would not be regarded as an ego trip. While nobody can be a candidate without getting the proper number of nominees from each side of the Great Water, it is an open secret that potential nominees put together a slate of nominations for themselves. I had no problem finding friends on both sides willing to nominate me, even though the deadline was tight (in fact, I got one nomination too many, and one had to be dropped).

To my utter amazement, the only other person to be nominated was fellow Midwesterner Ann Totusek; and her platform boiled down to "I've already been to an Eastercon; send Orange Mike!" This odd situation was looked at askance by some people, most vocally by Las Vegas fan Nic Farey, long a TAFF supporter and himself an expatriate Brit, who published editorials in his fanzine **This Here** urging voters to "Hold Over Funds" and arguing that I should have the will power to decline such an (in his opinion) tainted award. He allowed me to respond, and he and I remain friends who happen to disagree on this topic. I am delighted that somebody took the matter seriously enough to discuss it at length. (The discussion sprawled across issues #22-#25 of This Here— <http://efanzines.com/ThisHere> , which is a zine more people should be reading anyway.

Bluntly, nobody [Except maybe me] was all that surprised when I was the winner. Nic grumbled, and I'm sure there were other comments nobody passed on to me; but mostly I got congratulations and offers of help and hospitality. I was, and am, delighted and humbled.

I am taking a hunk of the "sabbatical time" I had banked up out of unused vacation, and will be spending almost a month on my TAFF voyage. The exigencies of the calendar are allowing me to start in March with the Swecon (Swedish national con) and end with Eastercon (the British national con) in mid-April. I am making what I believe to be the strongest-ever effort to have the West-East TAFF trip be more than just a visit to the British Isles. Besides Sweden, I have already made arrangements which will take me to fandoms in Finland, Poland, Spain and [perhaps] the Netherlands (at a minimum) before stepping foot on the British Isles. (I don't count airport connections in Iceland and Norway.) I will be journaling as I go; a Milwaukee fan has given me a smartphone to use as a camera on my voyage; and I hope to publish a TAFF trip report in near-record time. (I know; watch the *hubris*.) Then I have two years of administering the North American end of TAFF to look forward to. —Michael J. Lowrey

Introduction

Science fiction is one of the most popular aspects of modern literature. And at the same time, the origin of science fiction literature dates back to ancient times. Ancient writers attempted to represent their ideas in fictional forms, and unite these fictional forms with their knowledge of real life. In the course of time, science fiction literature evolved, but it always remained focused on the representation of ideas, concepts, and beliefs of the writers. These were different from those that dominated reality, but were often closely intertwined with real life, or represented an alternative to various real life issues, problems, and beliefs.

As a result, science fiction is an in-depth genre of literature, which allows writers to develop new concepts and ideas, and present these in a literary form as an alternative vision to the reality presented by other writers. It is possible to refer to science fiction literary works created by such outstanding writers as George Orwell and Robert Sheckley. They created numerous sci fi literary works, which are both science fiction and also a sort of philosophic works, and also creations of these writers to convey their ideas, and warn mankind about the risks that accompanied developments in our contemporary civilization.

Main Characteristics of Science Fiction Literature

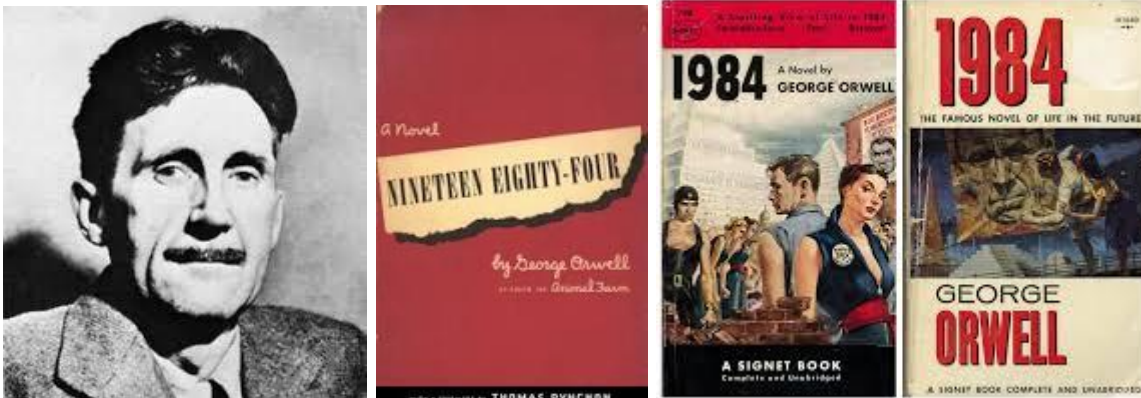
Science fiction is a very popular branch of contemporary literature. The emergence of science fiction literature is clearly intertwined with technological progress in the world. These stimulate science fiction writers to create new works, where they depict fictional worlds that derive from the ongoing progress of science and technology. At the same time, science fiction literary works do not necessarily involve a solid scientific basis on the grounds of which a science fiction book is written. Science and technology are not necessary for the creation of a science fiction literary work. Instead, the desire of a writer to present an alternative view or concept is crucial, because it is through the creation of a fictional science fiction story that the writer can express his or her alternative views or concepts.

Science and technology are important for the development of science fiction literature, but they are not crucial. Science and technology can give science fiction

writers an insight and ideas to create the form in which writers put certain content or message which they want to convey to the audience. They use scientific discoveries and technologies as tools with which they construct their science fiction stories and write their books, to convey their ideas and concepts.

Science and technology are not the core of science fiction books. Instead, science fiction writers use science and technology to foresee the further development of the world, or to present their alternative vision of the development of the world, as well as potential threats that mankind can face in the future. In this respect, the genre of anti-utopia in science fiction literature is particularly strong in the works of Orwell and Sheckley.

Science fiction literary works focus mainly on the development of alternative ideas, views, and concepts. Science fiction writers attempt to pose an answer to the question of *What If?*, and in the course of their works they suggest their ideas on the alternative development of the world, society, technologies and so on. Science fiction literary works represent a blend of fact and fancy, where science and technology are facts that lay the foundations with which writers develop their images and create their futuristic worlds. These are different from the real world and real life.



Orwell's Nineteen Eighty Four

On analyzing the development of science fiction literary works in the 20th Century, it is impossible to ignore works created by George Orwell. His contribution in the development of science fiction literature, and anti-utopia in particular, cannot be underestimated. One of the most popular and renowned works of Orwell is NINETEEN EIGHTY FOUR. This may be viewed as a classical example of a science fiction literary work, because the entire work represents the vision of the new world fancied by him.

There is the premise of the entire world having entered a new stage of its development, when a totalitarian regime establishes itself and rules the world. The author shows how the technologically advanced society is doomed to moral degradation. The totalitarian regime establishes the rules of life for the entire society. The people are not able or willing to learn the truth, and they cannot speak freely or express their ideas and share them with one another.

George Orwell does not merely create a fictional world. He constructs a new world based on the totalitarian regimes that existed in Europe during World War II, and in the post-war time. His science fiction story is based on the analysis of the current situation, and the past, with his forecasts for the future society. Orwell wrote his book as a warning to our society about the risks of neglecting democratic rights and liberties, and the oppression of individuals by the state. The world created by the author depicts vividly the horrors of a totalitarian regime, with total control over the lives and behavior of all individuals.

Orwell clearly shows that total surveillance and control lead to the degradation of society, deprivation of basic human values, and the establishment of a severe regime. Individuals play the roles of puppets, as mechanisms performing a set of functions conditioned by the state. The equality and happiness promoted by the ruling elite are ironic, with the privileged positions for just the ruling class depicted by the author. It is important to emphasize that this science fictional work implies the real world, with the existing social injustice and inequality, which the author criticizes and condemns through the images of the Big Brother and the ruling party.

1984 depicts London, England ruined by a war which goes on permanently. Orwell forecasts the effects of a World War III on the world and the life of the society. He reminds us that: "He who controls the past controls the future, and he who controls the present controls the past". Therefore, the author shows us his vision of an alternative development for the world, if the world slips toward totalitarianism, with oppression of basic human rights and liberties. "Long Live Big Brother!"



Movie scene, and art from **Nineteen Eighty Four**



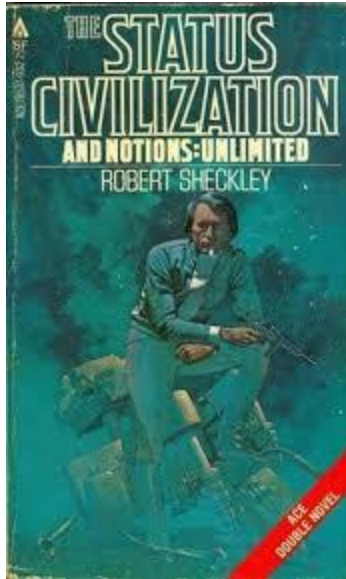
Orwell's ANIMAL FARM

Animal Farm by George Orwell is another science fiction literary work. It is to some extent similar to 1984 with critical analysis and condemnation of the totalitarian regime and society. ANIMAL FARM is an allegoric representation of the rise and establishment of Communism in the world. This is in terms of the particular farm where animals rise up against the rule of humans, and establish their own state. In actuality, the allegory was not a mere fancy of George Orwell. The book (written in 1948) was based on his analysis of the Soviet regime in the USSR. He examined critically the utopian ideals of communism, and represented it as animalism in his novel. This science fiction work represents a combination of facts and fancy of an actual totalitarian regime. There's also an ideology influencing the development of the contemporary world depicted critically, if not sarcastically.

Similarly to 1984, Orwell depicts the slip of the society toward totalitarianism. The author shows the negative impact of totalitarianism on the lives of the individuals. It is important to emphasize that his allegoric society in Animal Farm, as well as the imaginary society in 1984, depict actual totalitarian regimes existing in the world, when both novels were written.



Robert Sheckley



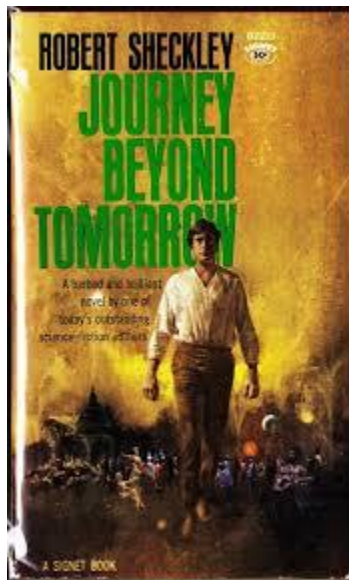
Sheckley's STATUS CIVILIZATION

George Orwell was a representative of the anti-utopian trends in science fiction literature of the 20th Century. At the same time, his ideas influenced works of other writers. Robert Sheckley was somewhat similar to Orwell. The American Sheckley used science fiction literary works to depict his vision in the life of a society of the future. His STATUS CIVILIZATION (1960) is a particularly noteworthy science fiction literary work in terms of the depiction of the new type of society.

Unlike Orwell, who depicts the drawbacks and horrors of the totalitarian state, Sheckley shows two sides of worlds which exist next to each other. He juxtaposes two antagonistic poles, two societies established on similar ground, but with different inclinations. Sheckley depicts Omega, where people have developed a cult of Evil (called "The Black One"). They have to kill, steal, and commit other crimes to make sense of their lives. There is a prison planet, where they worship the cult of Evil. Earth is an opposing planet, where people live in a presumably just world, where all people are supposedly equal and happy. In this regard, the Earth depicted by Sheckley's Status Civilization reminds us of Orwell's Animal Farm with its fundamental principle: "All animals are equal, but some are more equal than others."

In Status Civilization, people inhabiting the planet Omega are not really equal. The society is not really just, because people may live in poverty and believe that they belong to the middle class, which they define as the low-middle class. At the same time, this society depicted by Sheckley is not a mere idea of the writer. It mirrors an actual

society, divided into distinct classes, where a few people rule. The majority includes some in the middle class, while many live in poverty. In other words, similarly to George Orwell's science fiction literary works, Sheckley's alien world has depictions of real life. His work is based on facts, with ideas he brings in to show readers aspects of contemporary society. These may slip to degradation, to a life conditioned by robots, or to a life where people make a cult of Evil.



Sheckley's JOURNEY BEYOND TOMORROW

The idea of an absurd society, like the society worshipping Evil, can be traced not only in Status Civilization, but in other works written by Robert Sheckley. JOURNEY BEYOND TOMORROW (1963) is another science fiction work depicting a futuristic society (in the 3000s). Technologies have reached a high level of development, but the society depicted is still full of absurd extremes. The main character is imprisoned by the justice system, but is then freed because of a decision taken by the electronic Oracle. The Pentagon is replaced with The Octagon, and survivors of World War III escape to distant Polynesian islands. Journey Beyond Tomorrow is another science fiction work depicting an alternative view by a writer about society and the development of mankind. Sheckley takes facts from contemporary life, and uses his imagination to modify and create a futuristic society, which is totally different from our contemporary one.

Conclusions

Science fiction literary works represent their combinations of facts and fancy. And science and technology serve as tools to help science fiction writers depict new worlds and new societies. Writers depict their vision of a futuristic society. They create a fictional world, where the imaginary is closely intertwined with realistic facts taken from real life. But these are modified to the extent that the outcomes of writers' imaginations make the society and world described unique and different from real ones. At the same time, science fiction literary works represent the views and ideas of writers who attempt to create alternatives to the real world, where the impossible is possible.

Science fiction works like 1984 and Animal Farm by George Orwell, or Status Civilization by Robert Sheckley, are warnings. The public must be made aware against the development of negative trends in contemporary society, and prevent potential risks and threats to the normal lives of individuals in the future.



CULTURE CENTER

Creative works

TIME AND NOW by Will Mayo



The Buddha said, “You only think you have time.” And the people never minded him and hurried on their way always with an eye on tomorrow, always with their eyes on Heaven’s gate. Forgetting that the only time that ever mattered was right here, right now.

Today

When I was a youngster
during a busy time in my life
I said with each morning
upon rising and greeting my friends,
“Tomorrow’s the big day.”
I knew not what waited for me.
I knew only that it waited.
So I kept this up,
day after day and year after year,
saying with a sense of grand importance,

“Tomorrow’s the big day.”
My friends asked me what’s the hurry.
The grownups merely told me
not to wish my life away.
But I kept it up
the way a sinner
bets all of life’s blessings on some faraway heaven,
hoping without pause that
tomorrow would hurry up and come.
More days and years came and passed away
as I wished upon tomorrow.
I grew wild and then I grew tame
and then I got older.
I turned **25** and then **30** and then **40**
and afterwards **50**
all while wishing my life away.
Finally, the day came
that I was damned tired of waiting
and I waited no more.
“Today’s the big day!” I said.
That was the day I opened my heart
and all the earth smiled for me then.
No need of tomorrows.
I walked with pride in the land of now.

Ulterior Motives by Jeffrey Redmond



Power comes and goes

From the ancient Er-Dan manuscripts (Codex 61), as translated by Ed-Mon

On the planet of the three moons in the southern part of the Central Continent, the politician Sla-Badan rose up to become the leader of his province. He used the military and wealthy merchants to help him. But he also paid larger than usual amounts of bribes to the priests of the temples, to preach to the populations in his favor. Sla-Badan knew that he could only achieve power on control through strong-willed perseverance, and he also knew that he could be removed and destroyed if he made too many mistakes.

He became extremely mistrustful of others, and he had very few friends. Only his immediate family members and his most dependable staff assistants got close to him. And these he had known since his early childhood. He had grown up in poverty, and organized his playmates against neighborhood bullies as a young one back then. And he had learned to survive by getting the neighborhood gangs to stay busy fighting each other, and thus leave him and his family alone.

He had attended a local education center, and passed all classes there. But instead of working he had decided to get himself elected to local government offices instead. Immediately he found out that all those in all elected positions did only what the wealthy ones paid them to do. And mainly this was to help keep the ignorant and

impoverished masses under control, in order to ensure the continued positions of the top elite ones. Sla-Badan did his job exactly as he was told, and he continued to be elected and re-elected to higher offices.

His local political campaigns were paid for by the rich merchants of the district, and he was always able to win. He got several others out of local punishment interment places, to become his assistants. They would threaten and assault political rivals for him, as well as distribute gifts and promises of more to the ones eligible to vote. There was also the bribes paid regularly, and without fail, to the ones who counted the ballot votes. Sla-Badan never failed to win.

As the years went by, he became the town leader, the district leader, and finally the provincial leader, after the older previous one died. Sla-Badan put his family members in positions of power around and under him, as well as those few others who had never failed him. He was famous and powerful, and accomplished in his life. But he was far from contented. He wanted more. Being a "mere" leader of "just" a single province was not enough for him. He wanted to take over the entire land.

The southern region of the Central Continent was ruled over by the king who had been placed there. The entire continent had been under the emperor known as The Conqueror, but he had become old and died suddenly without any proper heirs. The continent had divided back into separate lands and regions, and these further into the previous separate provinces. Sla-Badan consolidated his power in his province, and began his personal drive to expand and gain so much more.

He began to travel and make speech after speech to his followers and the inhabitants of the towns and villages in all of the districts. He told them, over and over, that their poverty and plight were not their own fault. It was because of the "enemies" against them in the other places on the continent. The "foreigners" were the ones who supposedly had taken all of the wealth from them. And, after awhile, more and more of the inhabitants of the province began to believe him.

Sla-Badan then began to travel to the other provinces of the land, and he made exactly the same speeches. All of the inhabitants of the region were the same, with the same culture, heritage, and goals. It was they who were victimized by those others in the farther-away places of the continent. Sla-Badan had found an excellent way to organize and unite the inhabitants of his own areas. Create an external enemy to band together against. And, because of this, many old enemies and warring factions ceased their internal hostilities against each other. They became united, under the strong leadership

of Sla-Badan, against the new enemies beyond.

The newly-united ones joined with the new movement. Young males eagerly joined the new military forces. Sla-Badan made his younger brother the head of the militia forces, and their cousin the head of the constabulary. Militia units were often stationed in places further away from their local areas. Troops from the east were sent west, from the north to south, and so on. The young males would meet and marry young females in these other areas, and feelings of local regionalism were thus further eroded. This was replaced by a larger loyalty to the province and leader.

Sla-Badan's rule in the provinces became much stronger, and none dared to oppose him. And those who did somehow always mysteriously disappeared. Sla-Badan's power eventually became almost supreme. He joined with the leaders of the other provinces to come together as a common council of rulers over a united land. And as the inhabitants stopped fighting each other, and worked more for the common good, life for them all became better.

Sla-Badan and his co-rulers were perceived as being wise and wonderful. They were the new rulers who would keep their subjects in peace and prosperity. The economy improved, trade between the provinces increased, and the merchants became even more wealthy than ever before. Larger amounts of donations were made to the temples, and the masses were told that the deities approved of all that was happening.

Sla-Badan made himself even more popular by marrying a famous actress. She was the widow of a famous actor who had died of a disease. The actress was given even more roles to perform in the theaters of the towns, and especially in plays where the stories were all about how only strong leaders were the proper ones to rule. Eventually all five provinces of the southern region came together in this way, and Sla-Badan became the leader of the united council. He set up a new capitol city for his new land, and had only loyal ones elected from all of the districts to serve in his new government. Eventually he made himself the new leader of the entire land, especially as his co-rulers died or retired. And Sla-Badan became almost completely contented.

But as time went on, and he grew older, Sla-Badan could see fractionalizing and dissent still occurring in his land. Even though they had better lives economically, they sometimes resented the lack of political fairness in elections. And the exclusively wealthy ones always remained so, no matter what. So Sla-Badan decided to further his progress to keep his combined population too busy to do anything else. He organized many new roads, bridges, buildings, monuments, and expansions of temples to be undertaken.

All younger males were conscripted into his new army, and his younger brother was made commander in charge of it all, as well. Troops continued to be stationed in other places, to continue to meet and marry young females there. Provincialism was encouraged to be replaced by a new loyalty to land and leader. Sla-Badan began his new tour of speech making to continue to keep the populations all rallied behind and under him. And he decided to implement his ultimate goal of the defense of his newly-created land against all of those "ultimate enemies" elsewhere on the continent.

The new southern land needed further territories, from the other places on the continent, in order to grow and remain strong, Sla-Badan told them. In ancient times invaders from other places had marched through the southern region. It was then the time to repay them in kind. Those who knew their history, and disagreed with him, tried to point out that those ancient forces had actually just gone through without stopping or occupying. But these knowledgeable ones were arrested and imprisoned, and explained away as "traitors" and "enemy agents". The masses were thus told only what was the new official policy, and most of them believed what they heard.

Sla-Badan promised ever more wealth and power for them all, if they would join and stay supporting him, against the new enemies. And in this, too, he was successful. The new army was enthusiastic, well-trained, and disciplined. They were eventually equipped with better weaponry and supplies, and, initially, led out to attack and take over the smaller places next to the land. As they achieved successes, and the other parts of the continent did not unite against them to oppose this, the southerners continued to invade and conquer. They took over the marshlands of the Lakes Country first, and then became bolder, seizing the offshore islands further out from the southern coast. Sla-Badan was very pleased.

But then the others of the continent began to grow alarmed, and became worried about this new and more powerful entity in their midst. They began to reorganize their own armies, and formed alliance against the southerners. And they dared Sla-Badan to make another move, warning the southerners that they were not to attack anyone further. Sla-Badan kept his population fully informed about all of these threats against him and them. And this made him even more popular with his subjects, and further strengthened his hold over them.

Sla-Badan then decided that if he could not move out further against any more "external enemies", he would have to keep his populations united together against "internal ones". It took awhile, but he began to actually find some. Criminals were all

rounded up first, and then illegal immigrants. Finally all foreign born residents, and even mere visitors, were subjected to arrest and deportation. Sla-Badan continually warned his population about "foreign spies and saboteurs" who were supposedly out to harm the newly created and united southern land. Reports about mistreatments of southerners in other places were constantly circulated, and the population thus remained united against the others on the continent. And Sla-Badan's personal prestige and power remained secure.

Sla-Badan enjoyed his older years in wealth, opulence, and comfort. His top followers did as well. Their wives were all spoiled with gifts and luxuries, and their mistresses were, as well. The offspring of these top leaders also became part of the upper class, along with the wealthy merchants and remaining members of the old nobilities. Sla-Badan personally always considered himself to be the poor one made perfect. He thought of himself as being the greatest of personal successes. And he felt that he had achieved a great accomplishment in his own life. His dream and goal of a permanent power in the south would last forever after him, as a legacy to his personal greatness.

When Sla-Badan became very old, he made his son his heir, and his top followers' eldest sons the heirs of their positions. He had a great tomb structure built where his body was to be interned. He had many large statues of himself erected all over his "foreign free" land. And he had many manuscripts written about his important life and works kept in the archives building in his capitol city. And when Sla-Badan finally died, there was a great country-wide mourning for him. A long line of supporters attended his funeral procession, and he was praised loudly in all of the temples for his "greatness and goodness".

Soon after his death, his son was assassinated by a rival, and internal quarrels began to break out. Each province wanted more autonomy, and the poorer masses wanted more wealth for themselves. Armies from the other places on the continent began to move into the frontier area, and seize more of the bordering territories. The southern military became more provincialized, and less able to prevent these enemy troop movements. There were famines, floods, plagues, and storms in the southern region. And these further dissolved the formerly united will and ideals.

In time, the southern land became once again disunited and weakened. A fire broke out in the capitol city after hungry and unpaid workers rioted there. The fire spread and destroyed the archives building, and all of the many works written about Sla-Badan. Marauders later broke into his mausoleum, and looted it thoroughly, before they

destroyed it. And, as time went on, the many statues of himself that Sla-Badan had set up were taken down and used for other purposes. The stone was found to be excellent for breaking up and used in buildings and road repairs.

After the war of the invasion from the Western Continent, foreign armies went through the Central Continent, and they destroyed much of the systems there. The southern region was not as disrupted as the other places, but it was still affected. The provinces were broken up and given to newly created western and eastern lands. The foreign invaders found it easier to administer the continent this way. Populations shifted and migrated to other areas, and the younger generations were raised in ways different than before.

By the time of the next era, all memory of Sla-Badan and anything that he had achieved were erased from most everyone's knowledge or memory. Few statues, and almost no archival material about him existed. All trace of his mausoleum tomb was no longer visible. His family of direct descendants eventually died out, except for very distant ones. It eventually came about that there was virtually no trace or record of anything that he had accomplished still in existence anywhere. And, indeed, it was almost as if he had never even existed at all.



THE MOON by John Polselli

Going outdoors into the cold winter night I gaze upward and see the moon. I observe the craters that are illuminated like X-ray photographs displayed across its circular face. The craters resemble strange rings in a preternatural circus whose performers are invisible. It is a circus of silence akin to a dream. The moon itself seems to be dreaming. Perhaps it is dreaming of me as I stare at its pockmarked visage high above Earth in a profound silence surrounded by the blackness of space in which an audience gathers, gazing at its spotlighted face. The moon intones a prolonged note of mystery, impossible to discern with the ears but audible to the spirit and to the soul. The moon is dependable, a pleasurable and welcome ritual that does not grow stagnant with the passage of time. The moon is like the waves of the ocean. Its lesson for us is silence, the importance of listening and maintaining a sense of calmness and tranquility.

And yet she denotes madness, for she is Janus-faced. I think of my eyes reflecting her image while I gaze. She becomes more pale during the day as though she is frightened by the sun, for it is the night that remains her dwelling place, and it is during the night when I love her most of all. She is a ghost in meditation high above the anxious world.

