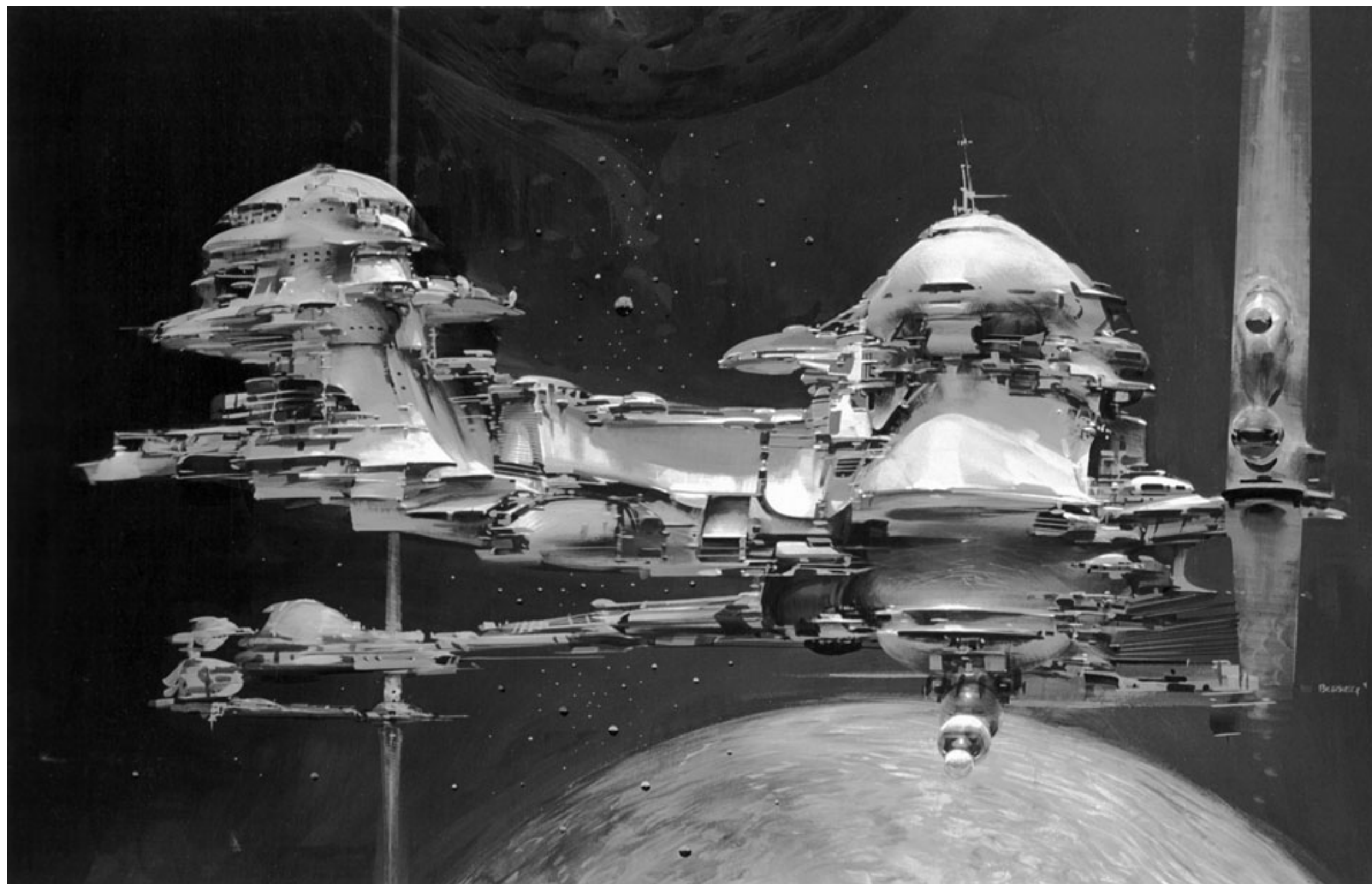


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John Berkey

BY GREG KETTER

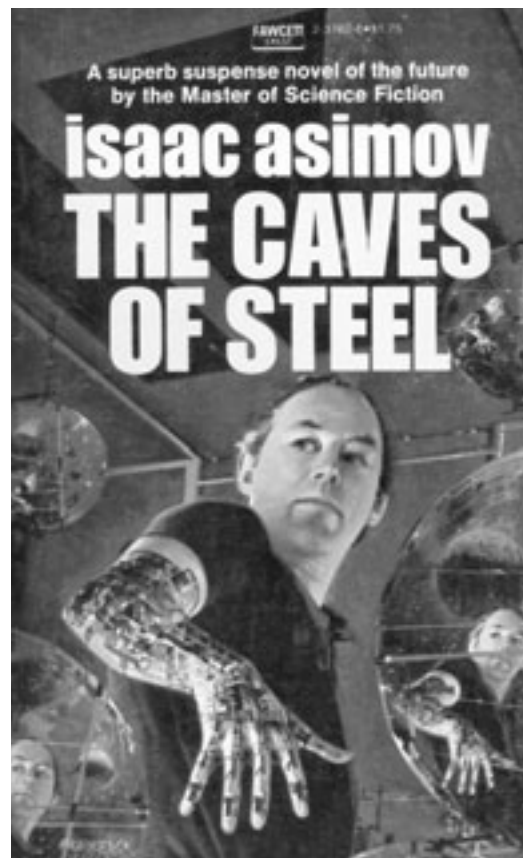
Before Sputnik was launched, ushering in an era of space exploration resulting in some of the most incredible views imaginable, John Berkey began his career creating equally incredible views at Brown & Bigelow, producing over 500 calendar illustrations, mostly landscapes and historical scenes. In the decades following, he has become, arguably, the greatest delineator of spaceships and interstellar travel the science fiction field has ever seen. His paintings have graced hundreds of book and magazine covers.

John's style is very recognizable one; a loose painterly style, very impressionistic. His palette tends toward blues, with earth tones for good measure. His spaceships are not gleaming monsters but somewhat organic and sprawling; huge, imposing structures of many levels. They are in motion, not frozen in time, but still moving along the page. Blurred features, smoke and fire; tiny details when viewed from afar, small paint blobs when closely scrutinized.

John Berkey has been a tremendous inspiration to many of today's top SF artists. Many, such as Vincent Di Fate, will acknowledge John as one of the true masters of Science Fiction illustration. In fact, he was awarded the Grand Master Award from the prestigious Spectrum series for 1999.

Many of you will recognize John Berkey for his work on Star Wars. He did posters, book covers, record album covers, as well as some of the pre-production designs for George Lucas. He has also done movie posters for *The Towering Inferno*, *Orca* and dozens of others. Most will quickly recognize his King Kong, the only good thing to come out of the 1976 remake. He is a member of the Society of Illustrators and has done their Call for Entries poster art. He did a painting for a children's book on Santa Claus and the publishers were so excited by the work, they asked for one more. And one more. And still one more, until he had illustrated the whole book. And then there was Elvis.

John did the artwork for the stamp that some people call the fat Elvis. Actually, his version was a younger, thinner, but definitely a Las Vegas style Elvis, in white jumpsuit. Ultimately, another artist's version was chosen to be the US Postal Services Elvis tribute.



JOHN DID THIS SELF-PORTRAIT AROUND 1970

John has done some Santa Claus stamps as well as movie star stamps. He had one book collecting his work, *Painted Space* (Friedlander, 1991), now sadly out-of-print.

His book covers include works by Isaac Asimov, Ben Bova, Philip K. Dick, Glen Cook and many more. He has done work for *Omni*, *Science Fiction Age*, *Discover*, *National Geographic*, *TV Guide* and *The Plain Truth*. In fact, he has done so many paintings for publication over the years, he has trouble remembering who he has worked for.

John is very quiet and unassuming; he is very easy to work with and a pleasure to know. If you see him around the convention, take a moment to tell him how much you've appreciated his work. This is his first convention as a Guest of Honor, so I hope you'll make him and his wife Demi feel welcome.

Maureen F. McHugh

BY ERIC M. HEIDEMAN

Maureen F. McHugh was born February 12, 1959, in Ohio. After receiving a BA from Ohio University she moved to New York City because "I always felt that to write required experience," and the experience "ought to make me re-examine things." She earned an MA in English literature from New York University, taught at the College of Staten Island, temped as a recruiter for a department store chain and clerk for a defense contractor, and wound up back in Ohio as a technical writer. On the way, she taught English for a year at Hebei Teacher's College in Shijiazhuang, China, where she was known as "Ma Xiuling (Sheoling): the exquisite sound of tinkling jade horse."

She began writing stories; eventually they started selling. Then her splendid first novel, *China Mountain Zhang*, won the Lambda Award for speculative fiction featuring a gay male protagonist; the James Tiptree, Jr. Award for (gender) role-expanding SF; and the *Locus* Award for best first novel. *China Mountain Zhang* offers casual-seeming episodes in the daily lives of people on a 22nd century Earth and Mars for which China is the cultural center. The main character, Rafael Luis "China Mountain" Zhang, is a gay male Chinese-Hispanic-American engineer living in Manhattan.

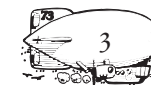
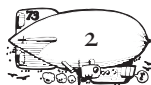
Two novels followed. *Half the Day is Night* is a suspense novel set in Caribe, an undersea

nation. In *Mission Child*, culture clash ensues between the low-tech descendants of a planet's first Earth colonists and the high-tech new Earth arrivals. Janna, a native, goes through many transformations, gaining broad knowledge of her world in order to survive. Janna's narrative voice has a beautiful, seemingly artless simplicity. Only when characters speaking out of their native tongues display awkward diction do we notice the care the author brings to all her sentences.

McHugh's "The Lincoln Train" won the 1996 Hugo Award for Best Novelette. Several years ago she quit her day-job to write fiction full-time. Recently she's taught writing part-time at the Clarion SF writing workshop, at the Viable Paradise SF workshop on Martha's Vinyard, and at Cleveland University and John Carroll University. She lives in Twinsburg, Ohio, with her toy-engineer husband, a son, and two dogs.

Her fiction makes us re-examine things. Characters arrive and depart in the middle of doing something interesting. People experience violence without learning why. We aren't used to such things in SF, but they happen all the time in life. As well as any writer, McHugh satisfies editor John W. Campbell's call for "fine contemporary fiction, written for a magazine in the 25th century."

This weekend, find out what a delight Maureen is in person: warm, funny, insightful, good.



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Winnowing My Folly

BY LENNY BAILES

Old Arnold Rimmer's Dead. No, no, no, he's outside, looking in.

Not Timothy Leary, these days, but a hologram with attitude from the British Red Dwarf TV series. Sunday night in San Francisco is junk-"sci-fi" night on our public access TV station. If parades of marooned Space Rastas and aging Timelords flickered across my TV screen on any other night, I would probably still be blissfully unaware of them. But Sundays are a bit edgy. My Sunday afternoons are usually spent in composing cutting-edge technoid computer product reviews. I spend hours striving for those profound revelations that will induce the Matrix (yet one more time) to dispatch catfood-scrip certificates to my mailbox.

What I really do on Sunday afternoons is pass a lot of water. The reviews are written by psychoactive coffee beans dissolved in my Cafe Americanos, Lattes, and Cappuccinos. And I find it difficult to wind down after the coffee beans have possessed my fingers to channel the requisite spirit messages from cyber-Loa.

When the subject of "Chicken Vindaloo" dinner came up at this year's Corflu in Seattle, I made an interesting discovery: if you put four fans together in a hotel room, they will never all have watched the same episode of Red Dwarf.

"At least you don't have to time-travel to the Texas Book Repository and assassinate JFK to order a Chicken Vindaloo dinner in this town," I remarked to Tami Vining.

"Huh?"

"Yeah," agreed (former Minneapolis fan) Luke McGuff. "That's true."

"What?" said (Seattle fan) Randy Byers.

"Lister (quasi-dead hologram Arnold Rimmer's dread-locked buddy) wrecked the entire space-time continuum for a Chicken Vindaloo dinner," I explained. "The guy was accidentally put into suspended animation for three million years as punishment for smuggling a cat onto the Red Dwarf space station. Driven to temporal distraction by his craving for curry, Lister bumped into Lee Harvey Oswald while time travelling back to Dallas for Indian takeout — thus cancelling the JFK assassination. Which caused a world

holocaust (and dried up the Chicken Vindaloo supply) until the revived JFK decided to commit suicide, restoring the continuum by becoming the second gunman and shooting himself at the Grassy Knoll."

"I saw the one with the Cat teaching the spaceships to jitterbug," Randy said.

"Didn't see it," said Luke.

In the dark insomniac hours that bridge the weekend with the workweek, I've found myself unnaturally susceptible to flickering UHF shadows. But, then, I've always had the habit of absorbing surrealistic drama and playing it back to myself in transmogrified versions.

Like Winnie the Pooh, I'm always composing nonsense songs in my head. When I hear a radio playing and I'm reading an SF paperback, the two events fuse in my brain.

In the village, the Pleiades Village, Illyrion sleeps tonight.

We're the Intervention! Oh yeah. We're the Intervention and a whole lot more!

Shadow and Claw! Voices all voluble, knot that's insoluble — issued by Tor.

I discovered Gilbert and Sullivan in the record collection at the Charlotte-Mecklenberg public library, after my father's job change forced our family's relocation from New York to the Deep South. G&S kept me sane in high school (or at least entertained) while I plotted my collegiate escape to someplace where they had free, available electric mimeographs. That place eventually became Los Angeles, when the University of California at L.A. offered me a student loan. I had already published fanzines and hung out with SF fans when I lived near New York City. In Charlotte, North Carolina, most everyone thought I had a funny accent and weird ideas. However, the G&S operettas were my solace. They inspired me to create my own homegrown sallies into the world of Topsy-Turvy.

Which I did after moving to L.A. I've never found anything in this world closer to the G&S Topsy-Turvy world than meetings of the Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society (or LASFS). When LASFS and I first met, the group



didn't have its own clubhouse. Instead, meetings were held inside a city-owned concrete bunker at the Silverlake Playground in East Los Angeles. Collators of APA-L (the weekly LASFS amateur press association) would conduct a mad caucus race around a table in the back room. Mailings had to be stapled and distributed before custodians chased everyone out of the building promptly at 10 P.M. In the front room, whacked-out parliamentary debates would transpire—about things like the legality of suppressing the status report of the Committee to Put Rubber Tips on Clubroom Chairs.

I discovered the following record of my first in-person encounter with the LASFS recently, while burrowing through my fanzine collection.

RECITATIVE: You want to know what really happens at LASFS meetings? Your puzzlement is quite amusing, I confess
The LASFans are a zanier crew than you could ever guess!

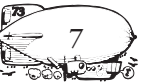
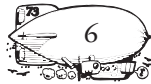
FRONT ROOM CHORUS: We LASFans are a zanier crew than you could ever guess...

[Cue orchestra. Flurry of flute trills over dramatic half-insane (fannish) laughter]

When mundane clods shake down at Silverlake and the fans of LA convene,
The eldritch spell called APA-L produces a joint crudzine—
When the backroom teems with ungodly screams, and Bruce Pelz wails, "Shut the door!"
Then is the LASFS meeting day, then is the Halfworld's tour!

CHORUS: Ha! ha! Then is the Halfworld's tour
Then is the LASFS meeting day, the Halfworld's spectral tour.
As the minutes are read and attendees are bled till bereft of their weekly dues
Amidst retorts, committee reports precede dull movie reviews
As the time speeds by, APA-L mailings fly till at last fans can gab no more;
For Ten Bells limits LASFS Meeting Day—the end of the Halfworld's tour.

CHORUS: Ha ha! The weekly LASFS Meeting Day, the Halfworld's spectral tour!



The "Halfworld" alias for L.A. fandom was acquired in the 1940s as a reference to Robert Heinlein's story, "The Devil Makes the Law," published in Campbell's *Unknown Worlds*. If you want to know why, just read the story (renamed and reprinted as "Magic, Inc." in Del Rey's *Waldo and Magic, Inc.* paperback) and then go to a LASFS meeting. If Bruce Pelz were attending this year's Minicon (alas, Geri tells me he'll be sailing on the Suez Canal, instead), he might tell you that my song seems to scan a bit better to Sir Roderick's *Ruddigore* declamation than it did back in 1965. I've changed a couple of syllables in response to his original complaint. Bruce was a W.S. Gilbert-like co-conspirator for me during my first couple of years at UCLA. "There is only composition and decomposition in this world—and this is rot!" Bruce and I would typically eat lunch together and scribble some kind of frivolous fan-nish nonsense every day.

The Devil makes the law, the Devil makes the law. Turn on the stereo, the Devil makes the law!

So, I was talking about constantly being haunted by doggerel like this—waiting for buses, riding trains, and (especially when I was young and newly employed) while performing dull, repetitive clerk-typist tasks.

But my universe of Jungian musical archetypes expanded when I discovered folk music and rock-and-roll. It took the "folk-rock" movement of the '60s to open a few blocked neural sinuses. "Folk-rock" was a media/marketing term for the merging of intricate lyrics with catchy danceable tunes. Its exemplars were the songs of the Byrds, Fairport Convention, and ur-source Bob Dylan.

The '60s were a Big Deal to me, as the decade of one's late teens and early twenties is to everyone. But I believe there was also something definitely new in the external world—a compact that created a safe place for high-strung, cerebral geeks (like me) to explore our animal natures as well as our capacities for quick wit.

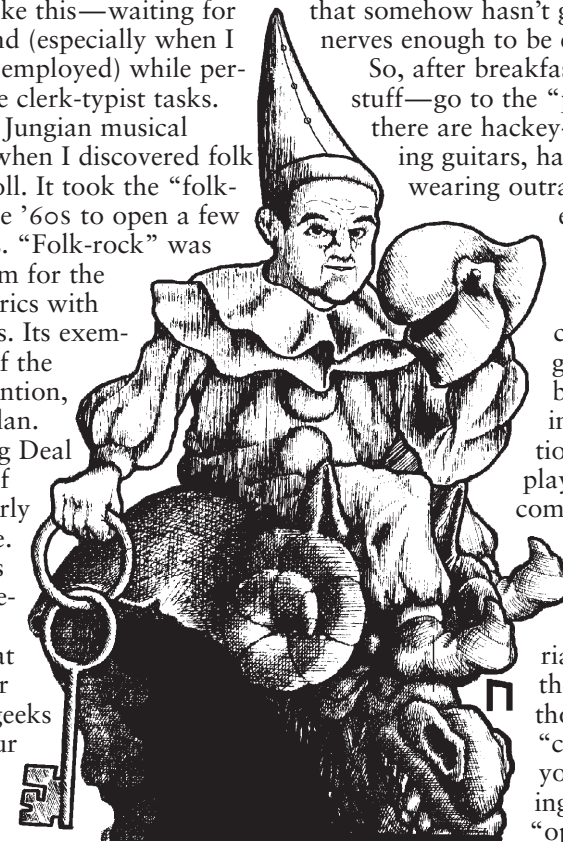
By the time some of you got a chance to meet this experience, it was probably well into its gold-plated dotage and a good deal less attractive and mysterious. As for what it felt like, I can offer you an analogy. (In fact, I did offer this analogy to Lydia Nickerson, two years ago, on the <rec.arts.sf.fandom> newsgroup.):

IMAGINE WHAT IT WOULD BE LIKE IF EVERY day in your life was a permanent Minicon. Your apartment and town are like your room and the Radisson. You get up in the morning to get stuff for breakfast and pass a bunch of people in day-glo tee-shirts on the "street." As you hunt for an open shop to pick up eggs and coffee for the people crashed in your "room," you notice all the new posters that have materialized overnight. Most of the "stores" are run by hotel staff, but an increasing pocket of shops is manned by "convention attendees." On your way "home," someone you don't know smiles and hands you a rose (or a potted plant, if you're a more ecological type).

It might be helpful to imagine this as a Minicon year in which you aren't on the committee. Or the committee is an anarchy that somehow hasn't gotten on the hotel's nerves enough to be evicted.

So, after breakfast you do the sercon stuff—go to the "program/classes." But there are hackey-sackers, people playing guitars, handing out pamphlets, wearing outrageous tee-shirts wherever you go. And

bemused "hotel staff" in more formal clothing are behind the counters, at the desks, going about the daily business of administering American civilization and watching you play. You feel safe and comfortable—if someone falls down or cries "help!" pretty soon an ops-like long-haired person materializes and asks whether they can help. And even though you're not on the "committee," you find yourself ready and willing to assume the role of "ops-like person."



Premiering at Minicon

The Wrong World by Margaret Howes

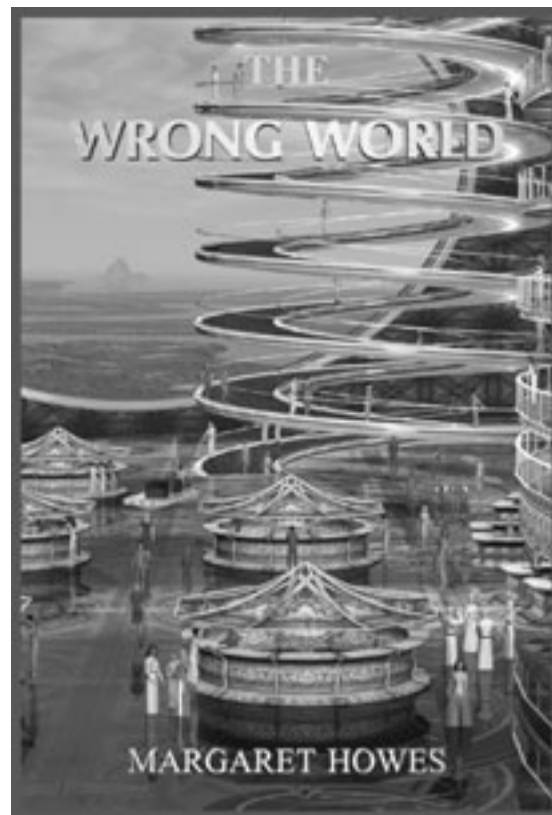
Fleeing from his home world, young Tadko Darusko arrives on the planet Monna searching for his only living relative, his father. But his father is away on a journey, and Tadko is stranded on Monna with no friends, no means of support, and no identity papers. Evading the authorities, Tadko must find a way to survive until his father's return, hoping that his father can intervene in his case....

Margaret Howes's novel reminds me of the science fiction I read as a high school student in the 1950s. It has old-fashioned sense of wonder: a vision of a future that is bigger and better than the present. If you think something's been missing from science fiction in recent decades, try *The Wrong World*. And if you think recent science fiction has been just fine, try it anyway. —Eleanor Arnason

Margaret Howes is a storyteller of subtle grace. The plot chugs along in a leisurely way that belies its relentless power—and the wonderful, apparently bottomless ability of Margaret Howes to invent detail. No "fate of the universe at stake" here, only one young man trying to stay free long enough to ask his father one question. This is good science fiction, and good story telling, and a memorable ride. —Mary Monica Pulver (a.k.a. Monica Ferris)

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Now five or ten years pass after this idyllic interlude. You look around you and discover that you're not living at the "hotel" anymore. But you remember the time when life was like a bazaar—organized by the amorphous, interchangeable "Committee." Who were they? Were you a member? Oh, to find them again and fire them all put on another "convention."

This is a simplified metaphor for life in the '60s (or at Minicon) from the point of view of a middle-class college student. It skips discussion of "life at the convention" from the perspective of the bellboy, the coffee shop waitress and the hotel manager. I hope it succeeds in evoking the mystic essence of my '60s experience for you—which is what I wanted to do.

Next topic: *You never turned around to see the frowns on the jugglers and the clowns when they all did tricks for you.*

Sometimes contemporary America seems to me like the last stages of a giant game of Parker Bros. Monopoly. All the rents have been multiplied by hotels on the lots. Creative artisans throw the dice and circle the board—until eventually most people toss in their property deeds to become employees for a few Rich Uncles. (This isn't an original metaphor. But in Philip K. Dick's 1968 novel *The Game-Players of Titan*, the landlords

with all the Property Deeds were shapeshifting aliens from Saturn's moon, rather than Terrestrial pan-global corporations.)

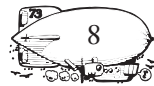
To young dot.com executives with stock options, things probably seem more like the opening phase of the Monopoly game than the final round. After years of telling Gen-Xers that their destiny in American life is to take low-paying jobs and produce/listen to grunge music on the weekends, economic mobility in our society has begun to shift. Dramatically. But I'm still worried. Maybe just by reflexive Boomer fears that I'll soon be replaced by something smarter and more adaptive than I am.

But what I think I'm worried about is a relentless drive for independent innovators in niche markets to be acquired by Owners who don't want to cater to those niche markets. We had a community of creative underground FM radio stations in the '60s. They perished because Arbitron ratings proved the stations weren't profitable enough for national advertisers. From 1980 to this penultimate millennial year, thirty-five independent, single-screen theaters in the city of San Francisco have been replaced by four multi-screen movie palaces owned and operated by media conglomerates. Mr. Celluloid Film Strip is seen now, slurping his Coke and shrugging his shoulders on almost every screen in town. The Internet is still largely an open, free-form anarchy where any artist can post an animated comic book, stream a concert, or start a radio station. But this fact has been discovered with a vengeance by media moguls. And we know what corporate entities like to do to artists and alternative communities.

This may simply be the Way of the World and pretty old news. But maybe we're about to hit some logarithmic threshold ("singularity" is a term that Vernor Vinge uses). We non-millionaires may find that our quality-of-life issues as citizens have been replaced by quality-of-life issues for conglomerates. For the conglomerates, our issues as individuals may reduce to the need for our maintenance and our entertainment—as consumers and employees rather than as citizens.

What this suggests to me in less dramatic terms is that "God is in the details" (as visionary Ted Nelson wrote in his prophetic Information Age screed, *Computer Lib/Dream Machines*). As a writer and teacher I sometimes find myself engaged in a battle to preserve the details and the spirit of my work. "That's too geeky! No one will want

MORE LENNY ON PAGE 11 ➔



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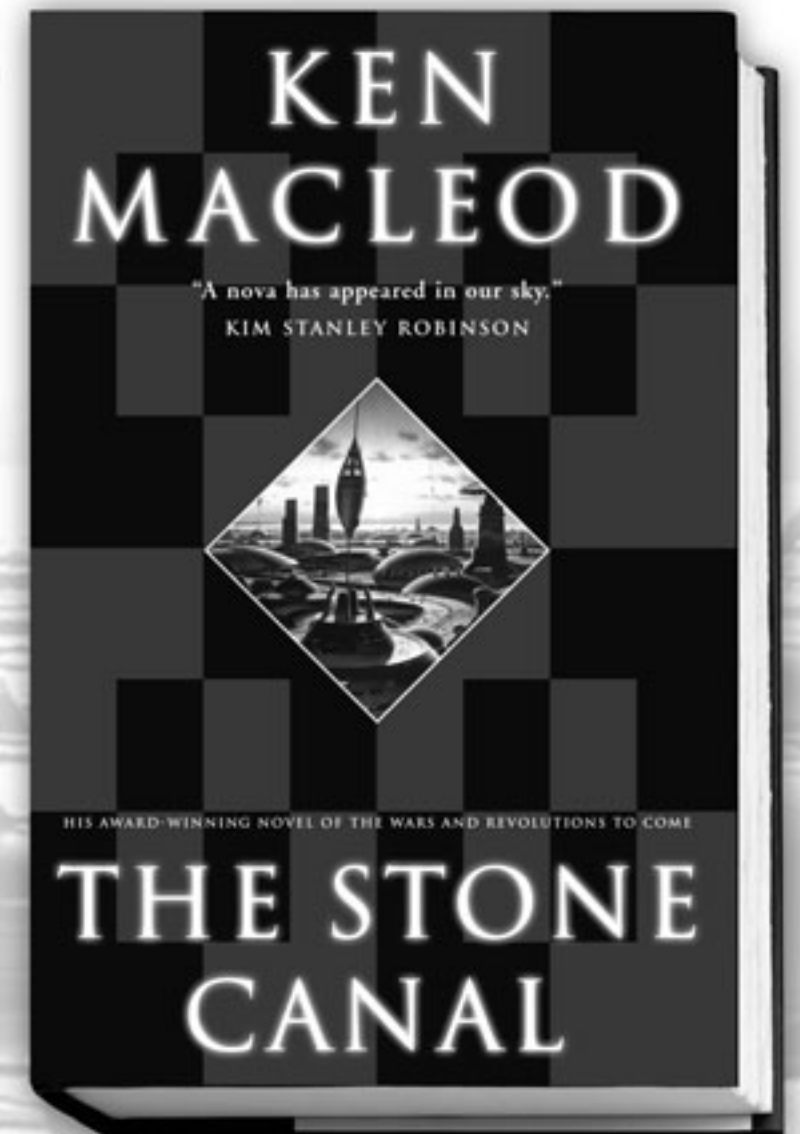
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—*Publishers Weekly*

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The Ubiquitous Unreliable Narrator

BY MAUREEN F. MCHUGH

I've been thinking a lot about point of view (POV) and the unreliable narrator. It's a pretty writerly thing to be thinking about, which means it has about all the conversational pizazz of an engineer discussing chrome plating techniques or the difference between ABS and glass-filled ABS plastic. But imagine this were a trade journal, which it is. And I were a trade journalist, which I'm not.

In some sense all narrators are unreliable.

The classic unreliable narrator is someone like Nick in *The Great Gatsby*, whose hero worship blinds him to things about Gatsby that the reader can see. An unreliable narrator has to report things that tell the reader information that the narrator doesn't deduce. A bad unreliable narrator is stupid. A bad unreliable narrator figures things out a long time after the reader does for no other reason than if the narrator figures out that the weird guy who lives upstairs, never talks to anybody, keeps a large gun and knife collection, and always pays his rent in small unmarked bills is the one who is killing all the coeds, there will be no story. The only time a narrator should be stupid is if the narrator is someone like Benjy from Faulkner's *The Sound And The Fury*, who really is stupid—Benjy is retarded and is institutionalized in the course of the book—his narrative is without understanding. It's also difficult on the reader, who must sort out what is important to the story from what is important to Benjy. (It took me forever to figure out that he was watching two men play golf.) A bad unreliable narrator is unbelievable because the reader can't understand why the narrator hasn't figured out what the reader has.

A good unreliable narrator is a fine piece of work. The narrator must be presented to

the reader as someone who is working out of the context of their own personality, and who misses things that the reader can pick up because of the narrator's naivete, or prejudice, or prejudgment. Like Huck Finn, who doesn't realize that the two guys that he and Jim are traveling with are con men because he is a child and has never seen a con, but his description of them is sufficient for the reader to realize. There's a tension created with an unreliable narrator—they are unaware of something important that the reader is aware of. Will it get them in trouble?

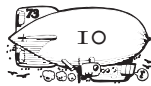
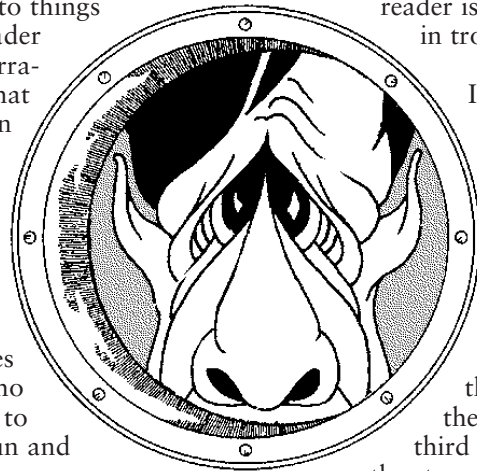
Every book has a narrator. In first person books, the narrator is the *I* of the book. "Call me Ishmael," and Ishmael goes on to narrate *Moby Dick*.

David Copperfield narrates *David Copperfield*. But there's a narrator in third person books too.

The more limited the POV the harder it is to pick out the narrator. But even in a third person limited POV where the story reports only what the

characters see and think and feel and experience, someone is selecting those experiences, and the cumulative selections suggest a personality at work, a narrator. This gives the book a certain tone, a certain voice.

All narrators are in some sense unreliable because as writers we are all fallible. A book is going to reveal the unconscious assumptions about culture and ethics of the writer. When I write, the things I assume and the way I see the world are going to stand revealed in ways that I don't anticipate or intend and in the end, I think this is one of the values of fiction. All these voices of authors, talking back and forth across the pages and now, the bits and bytes, and trying to say, *this is what the world is*. We are all blind. We are all trying to describe the elephant.



MORE LENNY HERE

to read it. Can't you dumb it down a little?" "I can't let your students take our computers apart. What if they break something?"

I don't know for sure, but I expect that some of you also experience these kinds of frustrations when you try to engage in creative work. "Let's be safe. Just do it the way I told you to and collect your check."

I'm not always smarter than my bosses and you may not be, either. It pays to listen and think about what we're told when we get our brilliant brainflashes about how things might be Different (and even Better). You get those ideas, too, right? You're a science fiction fan. But watch out (I'm telling you along with Neal Stephenson) for people who want you to forget all your ideas in favor of pre-printed boilerplate instructions passed on to them in three-ring binders. Dealing with that on a day-to-day basis can have an energy-damping, soul-deadening effect. Which is why we're lucky to have Minicon to kick out the jams.

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– Jerry Garcia & Robert Hunter

*I've been up; I've been down.
I've been walking 'round this town
And people want to take me on that Ride.
Temptation and a big door open wide;
I'm thinking 'bout the things I might
have tried
Till I can sit with my true love by my side.*

*People move so sure and fast
Hoping to escape the past.
Consequences cannot be denied.
Remember save a place for us to hide.
I'm thinking 'bout that empty place
inside
Till we can sit with our true loves
side-by-side.*

– LB, roughly to the tune
of Bob Dylan's
"Buckets of Rain"

*Kathy Routliffe's essay on Minicon 35 GoH
Lenny Bailes was printed in PR#2. Copies
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The Evil Stepmother

BY MAUREEN F. MCHUGH

My nine-year-old stepson Adam and I were coming home from Kung Fu. "Maureen," Adam said—he calls me 'Maureen' because he was seven when Bob and I got married and that was what he had called me before. "Maureen," Adam said, "are we going to have a Christmas tree?"

"Yeah," I said, "of course." After thinking a moment. "Adam, why didn't you think we were going to have a Christmas tree?"

"Because of the new house," he said, rather matter-of-fact. "I thought you might not let us."

It is strange to find that you have become the kind of person who might ban Christmas Trees.

We joke about me being the evil stepmother. In fact, the joke is that I am the Nazi Evil Stepmother From Hell. It dispels tension to say it out loud. Actually, Adam and I do pretty good together. But the truth is that all stepmothers are evil. It is the nature of the relationship. It is, as far as I can tell, an unavoidable fact of step relationships.

We enter into all major relationships with no real clue of where we are going; marriage, birth, friendship. We carry maps we believe are true; our parent's relationship, what it says in the baby book, the landscape of our own childhood. These maps are approximate at best, dangerously misleading at worst.

Dysfunctional families breed dysfunctional families. Abuse is handed down from generation to generation. That it's all the stuff of Twelve Step programs and talk shows doesn't make it any less true or any less profound.

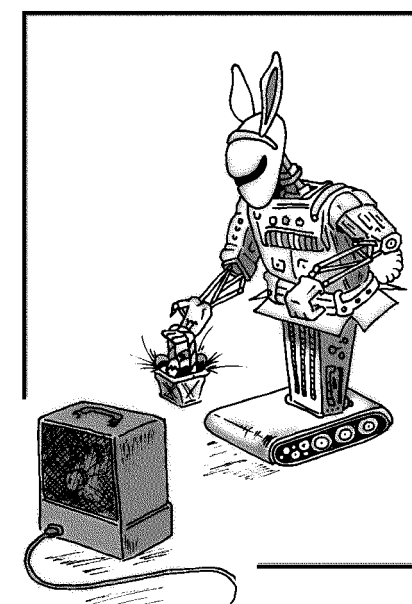
The map of stepparenting is one of the worst, because it is based on a lie. The lie is that you will be Mom or you will be Dad. If you've got custody of the child, you're going to raise it. You'll be there, or you won't. Either I mother Adam and pack his lunches, go over his homework with him, drive him to and from Boy Scouts, and tell him to eat his carrots, or I'm neglecting him. After all, Adam needs to eat his carrots. He needs someone to take his homework seriously. He needs to be told to get his shoes on, it's time for the bus. He needs to be told not to say "shit" in front of his grandmother and his teachers.

But he already has a mother, and I'm not

his mother, and no matter how deserving or undeserving she is or I am, I never will be. He knows it, I know it. Stepmothers don't represent good things for children. When I married Adam's father it meant that Adam could not have his father and mother back together without somehow getting me out of the picture. It meant that he would have to accept a stranger who he didn't know and maybe wouldn't really like into his home. It meant he was nearly powerless. It doesn't really matter that Adam's father and mother weren't going to get back together, because Adam wanted to see his mom, and he wanted to be with his dad, and the way that it was easiest for him to get both those things was for his parents to be together.

It's something most stepparents aren't prepared for because children often court the future stepparent. You're dating, and it's exciting. Adam was excited that his father was going to marry me. He wanted us to do things together. But a week before the wedding, he also wanted to know if his mother and father could get back together. It wasn't that he didn't understand that the two things were mutually exclusive, it was more that they were unrelated for him. When I came over I was company, it was fun. But real life was Mom and Dad.

MORE EVIL ON THE NEXT PAGE ➔



AND SPEAKING OF HOLIDAYS...

The Mark Time Awards

BY JERRY STEARNS

The winners of the fourth annual Mark Time Awards this year at Minicon come from very near and very far. We are pleased to be able to present these awards for the best science fiction and fantasy audio productions of the year.

The Gold Mark Time goes to "407 Arachne," a hard science story in classic style. Three astronauts returning from a six-month expedition to Mars make amazing discoveries and must struggle to survive in space. The judges especially liked the rich and believable soundscape design. Written by Canadian Brian d'Eon, the program was produced in Minneapolis for the SoundStories: Audio Theater Company by Jerry Stearns, and directed by Jennifer Arave. For more information see <<http://www.mtn.org/~jstearns/ss/arachne.html>>.

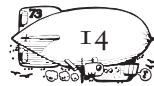
The Silver Mark Time goes to "Time Out For Bill Lizard," which was first broadcast last year on Irish National Radio. The work was written and produced by Roger Gregg, an American living in Dublin, Ireland. He also performed *all* the voices. In this first adventure of a proposed series, Bill Lizard encounters a strange mobile phone that randomly plunges Lizard into parallel worlds each time it rings. The judges were impressed with the high energy of the performances and the production.

Minicon is also pleased to present the second annual Ogle Award for the best fantasy/horror audio production of the year. The award is named after Charles Ogle, who played the monster in Thomas Edison's 1910 film of *Frankenstein*.

The Gold Ogle is given this year to "Back To Frankenstein", produced for the student radio station at the University of California at Davis. Les Light is the writer and producer of this lighthearted story of a college student who borrows a time machine to go back and talk to Mary Shelley about her book "Frankenstein" in order to do a book report for her classes. She meets not only the author, but also Dr. Frankenstein and the monster. It is a fast-moving and ambitious production.

And finally, Minicon is very proud to present the third Grand Master Award for lifetime contribution to SF&F audio to Yuri Rasovsky. Yuri has done dozens of science fiction and fantasy works in his 30 years producing audio drama. The first one I heard was an adaptation of Heinlein's "By His Bootstraps" done in 1984 with Richard Dreyfus as nearly everybody. In 1999 he released a very scary production of "The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari." Currently Mr. Rasovsky is producing "Beyond 2000," an anthology series of 26 hour-long classic SF stories for NPR. You can see more about the series at <<http://www.irasov.com/future.htm>>.

Congratulations to these winners and thanks to all those who entered their work. We encourage all Minicon attendees to listen to science fiction and fantasy audio theater—a medium where almost everything is left to the imagination.



Jerry Stearns' introduction of Mark Time Award Presenters Orson and David Ossman was printed in PR#2. Copies are available on the Minicon Bridge.

EVIL IS HERE

Marriage stopped that. That is the first evil thing I did.

The second evil thing that stepparents do is take part of a parent away. Imagine this, you're married, and your spouse suddenly decides to bring someone else into the household, without asking you. You're forced to accommodate. Your spouse pays attention to the Other, and while they are paying attention to the Other, they are not paying attention to you. Imagine the Other was able to

make rules. In marriages it's called bigamy, and it's illegal.

What's worse for the child is that they have already lost most of one parent. Now someone else is laying claim on the remaining parent. The weapons of the stepchild are the weapons of the apparently powerless, the weapons of the guerilla. Subterfuge. Sabotage. The artless report of the hurtful things his real mother said about you. Disliking the way you set the table, not wanting you to move the furniture. And stepchildren—even

EVEN MORE EVIL ON PAGE 17 ➤

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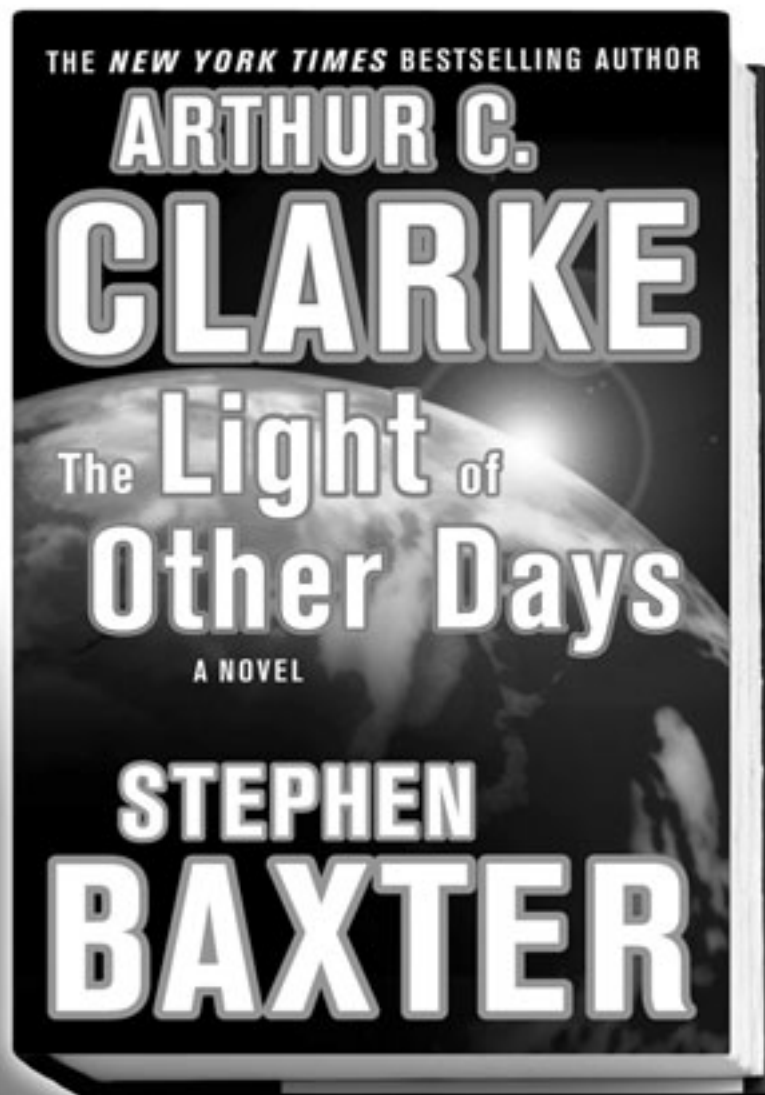
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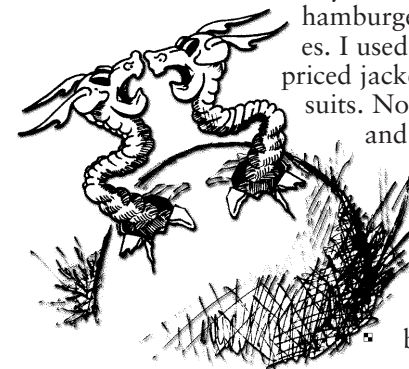
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EVEN MORE EVIL

more than children in non-step relationships—are hyperalert to division between parent and stepparent.

I was thirty-three when I married. I had no children of my own and never wanted any. I'm a book person, so before I got married I went out and bought books about being a stepmother. I asked that we all do some family counseling before and during the time we were getting married. The books painted a dismal picture. Women got depressed. Women felt like maids. Women got sick. There were lots of rules—the child needs to spend some time alone with their natural parent and some time alone with their stepparent in a sort of round robin of quality time; a stepmother should have something of her own that gives her a feeling of her own identity; don't move into their house, start a new house together if you possibly can.

I liked that there were rules so I followed them and they helped a lot (even though I suspect that, like theories of child raising, our theories of step relationships are a fad and the advice in the books will all be different fifty years from now). But I was still evil, and that was the most disheartening thing of all. I felt trapped in role not of my own choosing. Becoming a stepmother redefined who I am, and nothing I did could resist that inexorable redefining. I suppose motherhood redefines who you are, too. Part of the redefinition of me has been just that—sitting on the bench with the row of anxious mothers at the little league game or at martial arts. Going to school and being Adam's mother. Being Adam's Mom. It has made me suddenly feel middle-aged in funny ways. I used to go through the grocery line and buy funky things like endive, a dozen doughnuts, a bottle of champagne and two tuna steaks. Now



I buy carts full of cereal and hamburger and juice boxes. I used to buy overpriced jackets and expensive suits. Now I go to Sears and buy four sweatshirts and two packages of socks in the boys department.

When I bought endive

and champagne, the checkout clerk used to ask me what I was making. But no one asks you what you are making when you buy cereal and hamburger.

Beyond all this loomed the specter of Adam at sixteen. The rebellious teenage boy from the broken home, hulking about the house, always in trouble, always resentful. Like many stepchildren, Adam came with an enormous amount of behavioral baggage. He acted out the tensions of his extended family. He was sullen, tearful, resentful of me and equally resentful of his mother. I knew that Adam was the victim in all this, but when you're up to your ass in alligators, it is hard to remember that your original intention is to drain the swamp. I had read that I would be resentful, but nothing prepared me for a marriage that was about this alien child. I didn't marry Adam, he didn't marry me, and yet that is what my marriage came down to. By the time Adam was dealt with, my husband and I were too exhausted to be married.

My relationship with Adam was good, better than the relationships described in all those books. He was a happier, healthier, more behaved child than he was when I married Bob—after all, it is easier to parent when there are two of you. People complimented me on what a fine job I had done. I was the only one who suspected that there was a coldness in the center of our relationship that Adam and I felt. I could console myself that he was better off than he was before I married Bob, and he was. But I knew that something was a lie.

One day Adam said angrily that I treated the dog better than I treated him. Of course, I liked the dog, the dog adored me, and Adam, well Adam and I had something of a truce. The kind of relationship a child would have with an adult who might ban Christmas trees from the house. So the accusation struck home.

I started to deal with my stepson the way I deal with my dog. Quite literally. A boy and a stepmother have a strange tension in a physical relationship. I hug Adam and I kiss him on the forehead, on the nose, anywhere but on the mouth. I am careful about how I touch him. I suspect that the call from Child Protective Services is the nightmare of every stepparent. But after that comment I began to ruffle his hair the way I ruffle the dog's ears. I rubbed Adam's back. I petted him. I occasionally gave Adam a treat, the way I occasionally give the dog one. At first it was

STILL MORE EVIL ON PAGE 18 ➤



THE END OF EVIL

all calculated, but within a very short time, it was natural to reassure Adam.

It has made all the difference.

Adam is almost twelve, and the specter of delinquent teenager in the dysfunctional family still haunts me, but it doesn't seem so likely at the moment. As Adam grows older, my husband and I have more time to be married.

Speaking from the land of the stepparent, I tell you, this business of being evil is hard. It is very hard. Being a stepparent is the hardest thing I have ever done. And what rewards there are, are small. No one pats me on the head for having given up the pleasures of endive and champagne and tuna steaks for spaghetti sauce and hamburger. That's what mothers do. Except, of course, they get to be the mom.

The Maureen F. McHugh Bibliography

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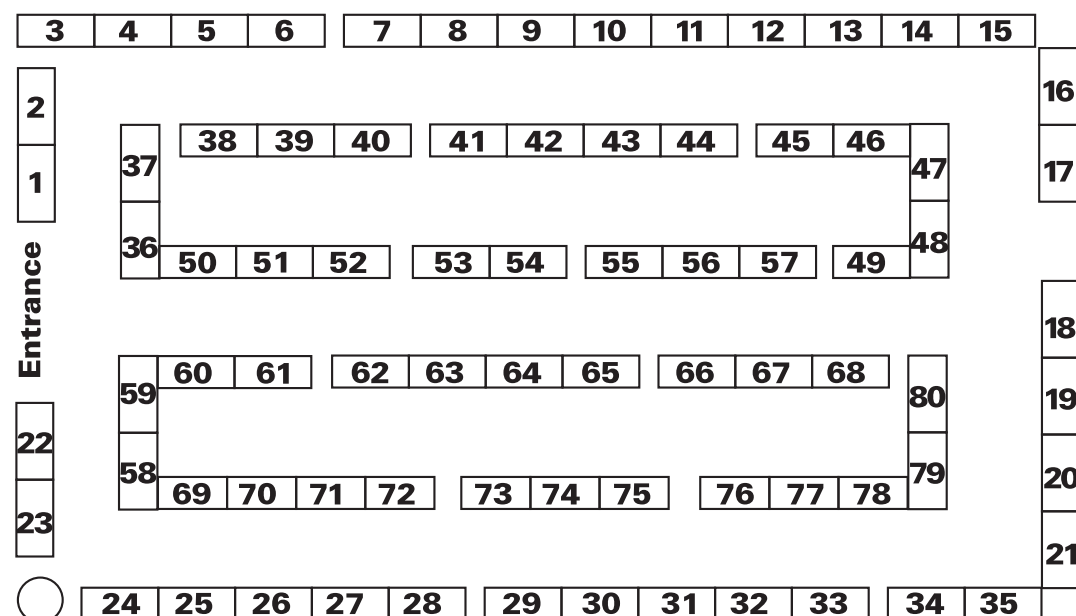
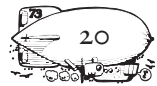
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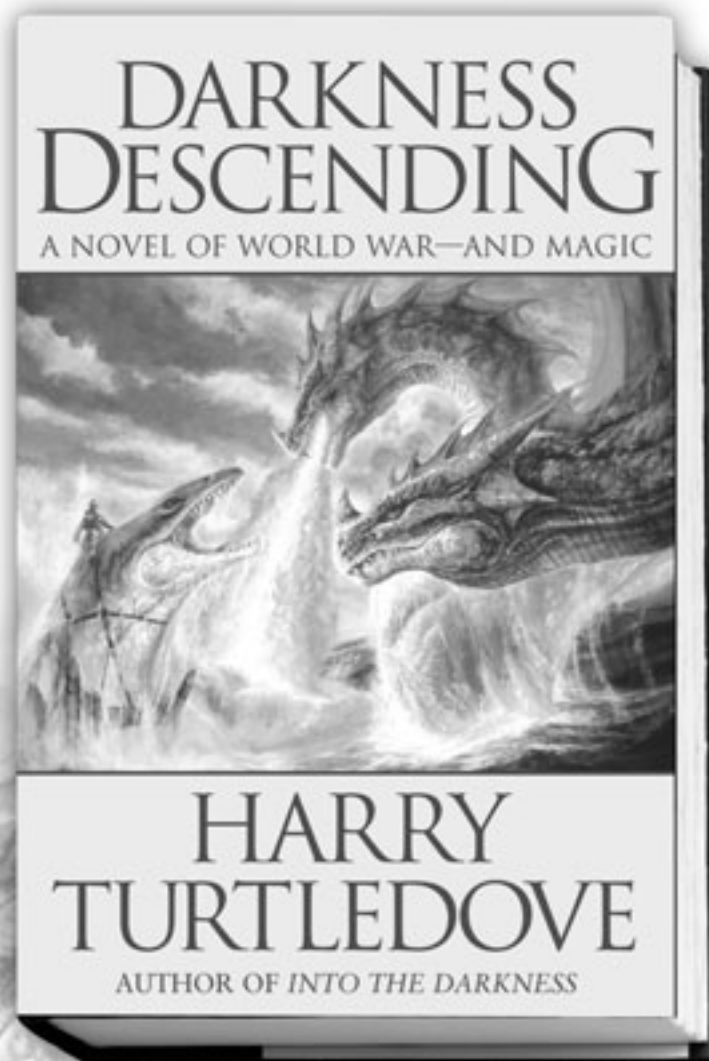
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