



**THE
NON-
FICTION**

“The World’s Narration”

Overview

Lafferty argues that Science Fiction is not just a literary genre but the central, royal form of “Story” that explains the world. He begins by situating readers in a “royal place” that stands for the authentic version of the “World” and proceeds to contrast Science Fiction with so-called “Main-Stream Fiction.” Through examples—ranging from Hard Science Fiction to High Fantasy—Lafferty proposes that all these subcategories share core symptoms, such as the thrill of discovery and the unmasking of reality. He counters criticisms that Science Fiction is either a mere symptom of a deeper “disease” or an escapist substitute for genuine belief. Instead, it is upheld as the timeless “Story,” a practice as old as the first campfire, where imagination and speculation thrive. Lafferty champions Science Fiction as a sacred and holistic form of narration that continually renews itself.

Summary

The essay opens with the line, “Just where are we as we begin this explication?” and immediately answers that we are in a “royal place,” one of the most authentic versions of the World. “Science Fiction is a group of symptoms and not a disease,” a view originally shared by a failed medical student. That student likened Science Fiction to “the old disease hydropsy” that doctors once treated without realizing it was merely a collection of symptoms pointing to deeper causes.

Lafferty then describes the “symptoms” of Science Fiction: a hunger for particular kinds of reading material, an uneasiness or excitement that tinges all of life, “itchy ears” for new ideas, and a feeling that “the ‘World We Live In’ is somehow masked and needs to be unmasked.” These symptoms are said to indicate either a strange disease with many names—such as “Hard Science Fiction,” “Soft Science Fiction,” “High Fantasy,” and others—or, paradoxically, they might point to “a perpetually new kind of health.”

Continuing, Lafferty variations under the same umbrella: “Biological Fiction,” “Ontological Fiction,” “Eschatological Fiction,” “Theological Fiction,” and even “Psychological or Philosophical or Technological or Geological or Historical Fiction.” A mention of Teilhard arises in the discussion of Eschatological Fiction, with the essay wondering if he realized he was writing in that mode. All these forms, Lafferty asserts, ultimately share a single essence: they are “Story,” now widely identified as “Science Fiction.”

The essay insists that all these so-called different “diseases” remain actually one disease or, more positively, a single abiding health. Their oldest name is “Story,” and their newest name is “Science Fiction.” What unites them, Lafferty explains, are the “fine edges of pleasure” found in invention and discovery, the tension of danger coupled with refuge, and the fascination with “the unrolling of the future.”

The essay then exalts “Story” or “Science Fiction” as “of the true royal line,” calling it “a pampered prince,” “the lost Dauphin,” and “King Melchisedech from the Beginning.” It declares that all sciences, arts, speculations, and innovations are embedded in it. By referencing ancient campfires and the earliest narratives, the essay depicts Science Fiction as “the valid masquerade of the World,” a parable explaining existence—a “low Scripture,” yet always sacred.

Turning to “Main-Stream Fiction,” Lafferty calls it an “invalid masquerade of the world” because it imitates reality too closely, wearing masks that look exactly like the faces beneath them. In contrast, truly masterful works called “main-stream” are, in Lafferty’s view, really “Science Fiction” or “Story” at their core. Lafferty also contends that Science Fiction can support any number of argumentative stances: “It can have arguments as many ways as it wants them.”

The essay explores the idea of “shooting arrows” into the sky, drawn from an American Indian tale shared by a failed seminary student who criticizes Science Fiction as a substitute for genuine faith. The seminary student’s allegory suggests that only arrows that never come back down are “accepted,” making their archers “True Believers,” while those whose arrows return are “impotent.” Refuting this, Lafferty asserts that most people shoot these speculative arrows because it is pleasurable in itself, and some may remain stuck in the sky (bringing belief), but many come whistling down—leading to a continual process of new attempts.

Lafferty warns that placing all faith in a single arrow that appears to stick in the sky can end in disillusionment if it eventually falls. Instead, the essay endorses a flexible approach: having “half a hundred arrows in the high air all the time” so that the fall of one arrow causes no final devastation. Lafferty quotes a “post-archer” who says, “I walk on wonders, and I raise my bow to magic,” tying this back to the pleasurable realm of speculation that Science Fiction inhabits.

Near its conclusion, the essay declares this realm “no Mean Kingdom” but a familiar place: the seat of one of life’s greatest joys, the “Narration of the World.” It describes the hydra-like nature of Science Fiction, referencing that hydras can be good as well as bad, and identifies this genre with a regenerative creative force. Lafferty promises to review only worthy books in this domain and to puncture “balloons” filled with false claims. The essay ends with a lighthearted caution, describing “Holy Ground” that is perhaps only somewhat holy, and is dated “May 18, 1979.”

(American Indian), (Biological Fiction), (Cave), (Cave Paintings), (Dauphin), (Eschatological Fiction), (Geological Fiction), (Graphic Kingdom of the World), (Hard Science Fiction), (High Fantasy), (Historical Fiction), (King Melchisedech), (Low Fantasy), (Main-Stream Fiction), (Mean Kingdom), (Narration of the World), (Non-Conforming Adventure Fiction), (Ontological Fiction), (Philosophical), (Pleasant and Endowed People), (Psychological), (Realm), (Science Fiction), (Scripture), (Soft Science Fiction), (Story), (Teilhard), (The World's Narration), (Theological Fiction), (World Fortress), (World We Live In)

I. Introduction

1. Opening Statement

- A. "The World's Narration"¹
- B. Question of location and beginning: "Just where are we as we begin this explication?"²
- C. Assertion of a royal place: "We are in a royal place: we are in one of the most authentic versions of the World."³

II. Science Fiction as 'Symptoms'

1. The Medical Student's Analogy

- A. Quoted claim: "Science Fiction is a group of symptoms and not a disease," from a failed medical student⁴
- B. Status note: (failed) clarifies the student's background
- C. Further analogy: "It's like the old disease hydropsy...only a collection of symptoms..."⁵
- D. Multiple possible causes: "...sometimes for a heart disease...liver...kidney...or septic throat."

2. Listing the 'Symptoms' of SF

- A. Prowling avidity for "certain occult texts"
- B. Uneasiness or excitement pervading daily life
- C. The 'itchy ears' (Scripture reference) seeking "new things"⁶
- D. Falcon-like hunting or questing; sudden tuneful encounters
- E. Euphorias and buoyancies: urge to hoard and to share simultaneously
- F. Feeling the "World We Live In" is masked and must be unmasked
- G. Conclusion: indicates a strange disease or a perpetually new health

3. Identifying Multiple 'Diseases' by Name

- A. "Tracing the symptoms back" reveals multiple forms
- B. Hard SF, Soft SF, High Fantasy, Low Fantasy, Non-Conforming Adventure Fiction
- C. Non-consensus names: Biological, Ontological, Eschatological Fiction (question about Teilhard)⁷

¹ Suggests that the act of storytelling is embedded in the world's very structure, fitting with Lafferty's theme that stories are not just representations of reality but constitutive of it.

² Both a literal and a metaphysical question, similar to the way Lafferty likes to position his fictional narratives in a space of epistemological uncertainty before grounding them in firm assertion.

³ Plays on the idea that the setting of the discussion (whether physical or conceptual) is not just significant but authoritative: Science Fiction is the authentic storytelling tradition.

⁴ Implies SF is a signifier of deeper cultural or intellectual movements rather than a singular pathology.

⁵ Hydropsy (edema) was believed to have multiple causes. The analogy implies that Science Fiction is not a single entity but a syndrome, arising from different cultural, psychological, and philosophical impulses.

⁶ Refers to 2 Timothy 4:3, which warns about people rejecting sound doctrine in favor of novelty. Here, it's applied with a positive connotation—SF readers are those drawn to new knowledge and perspectives.

⁷ SF's thematic explorations of evolution, metaphysics, and end-times scenarios fit with his vision of an evolving cosmos moving toward an Omega Point.

- D. Further branches: Theological, Psychological, Philosophical, Technological, Geological, Historical Fiction
- E. All share one complex of symptoms
- 4. The Medical Student was Mistaken
 - A. Warning not to be led astray
 - B. All these forms are one disease or “one abiding health”
 - C. The old name was “Story” and the new name is “Science Fiction”

III. Core Elements of “Story” / “Science Fiction”

1. Common Edges of Pleasure
 - A. “Invention” and “Discovery”
 - B. Strong expectation, excitement of danger/challenge plus a safe refuge
 - C. Fascination with the unrolling future (“what-will-come-the-next-moment motif”)
2. The Royal Nature of Story
 - A. “Story” / “Science Fiction” as true royal line: pampered prince, lost Dauphin,⁸ King Melchisedech⁹
 - B. Natural as animals run/swim/climb, people narrate “Story”
 - C. Contains all sciences, arts, speculations, innovations
 - D. The “Story” told at the first campfire
 - E. The “Story” that discovered or invented the fire for that campfire
 - F. A valid masquerade of the World¹⁰
 - G. A parable that explains the World, always holy
 - H. At least “low Scripture”
3. Contrasting “Main-Stream Fiction”
 - A. Short term interlopers do not share the essence of Story
 - B. “Main-Stream Fiction” as invalid masquerade
 - C. Wearing masks identical to faces, costumes identical to real clothes
 - D. Enclosing ‘world sets’ in identical ‘theatrical sets’
 - E. “What kind of masquerade is that which does not mask?”
4. Acknowledging Masterworks

⁸ The lost dauphin motif originates from the disputed fate of Louis XVII, inspiring narratives of hidden royalty and restoration. Mark Twain’s *Huckleberry Finn* satirizes it through conmen falsely claiming royal descent.

⁹ King Melchisedech, appearing in Genesis 14:18–20, is the priest-king of Salem who blesses Abraham and offers bread and wine, prefiguring Christ in Christian typology. Identified in Psalm 110:4 as a priest “forever,” he becomes central to the Epistle to the Hebrews, where he represents an eternal, non-Levitical priesthood superior to the Aaronic order. Later Jewish and Christian traditions speculate on his origins, with some associating him with Shem or viewing him as a divine or angelic figure. His mysterious genealogy and dual role as king and priest make him a key figure in theological discussions on kingship, priesthood, and Christological fulfillment.

- A. Does not challenge the excellence of certain “Main-Stream Fiction” works¹¹
- B. If they are truly masterworks, they are actually “Story” or “Science Fiction”
- C. “Oh certainly we can have the argument both ways!”
- D. SF can argue in as many ways as it wishes

IV. Defining Fiction and Science; SF as Central Narrative

1. Key Definitions
 - A. “Fiction” = “making” or “creation”
 - B. “Science” = “knowledge,” “power,” “Illumination”
 - C. “Science Fiction is the central narrative of the World”
 - D. SF is “King in the Graphic Kingdom”
 - E. Sometimes it falls onto “skinny times”
2. Fantasy as Refuge in Skinny Times
 - A. Fantasy elements represent the “skinny times” for Narration
 - B. Retreating into the “World Fortress” (a cave) for safety
 - C. Cave Paintings as early cover illustrations for “Stories”
 - D. The “Cave” is always accessible

V. The Seminary Student’s Critique and the American Indian Tale

1. The Critique
 - A. “Science Fiction is a sop...” says a former Seminary Student (failed)
 - B. “It is a very inferior sop...only by persons too small-minded...”
 - C. He then provides an American Indian illustration
2. The Tale of Arrows¹²
 - A. People shoot arrows upward each morning
 - B. Most arrows come whistling down (danger)
 - C. A few arrows do not return
 - D. These arrows are “accepted” or “stick in the sky”
 - E. A person blessed by a Strong Belief if his arrow doesn’t return
 - F. Acceptance of the arrow confers potency

¹¹ The concept of mainstream fiction emerges in the mid-20th century as a market distinction separating literary fiction and genre fiction from works perceived as broadly accessible and commercially viable. Rooted in the rise of mass-market publishing, it reflects a shift toward narratives with broad social, psychological, and cultural themes, often contrasted with the structural conventions of genre

¹² Native American myths involving shooting arrows into the sky often symbolize ascension or connection between realms. In a Chinook tale, Coyote creates a ladder to the sky by shooting arrows that stick together, allowing him and others to climb upward. Similarly, in a Carrier story, a boy shoots arrows into the air, forming a chain reaching the sky, which he climbs to ascend.

- G. Such a person is a “True Believer”¹³
- 3. The “Impotent” and Their Effete Arrows
 - A. The “impotent” must continue shooting arrows that always fall
 - B. The student labels those who fail as addicted to SF and other “silly addictions”

VI. Rebuttal: Multiplicity of Arrows and the Joy of Speculation

- 1. The Failed Student’s Error
 - A. The seminary student was wrong
 - B. Used an SF-like story to slur SF
 - C. Most people shoot arrows because speculation is enjoyable
 - D. If an arrow “sticks,” that is a bonus
 - E. Shooting itself is already fun
- 2. Warning About Singular Faith
 - A. Advises caution when one arrow appears to have “hit the mark”
 - B. Many years later, the arrow might fall
 - C. “There’ll be no shooting that arrow again...”
 - D. The person becomes shattered
 - E. Common mid-life crisis scenario
- 3. The Resilient Many-Arrows Approach
 - A. Alternate reaction: “Which one fell? I have many in the air.”
 - B. Keeping “half a hundred arrows” flying
 - C. Shooting two more for every one that falls
- 4. Post-Archer’s Line
 - A. “I walk on wonders, and I raise my bow to magic.”

VII. Returning to the Realm of Science Fiction

- 1. Not Mere Esoterica
 - A. Not “entirely esoteric meandering”
 - B. This concerns “ourselves, the Pleasant and Endowed People”
 - C. Speaks of our “Realm, no Mean Kingdom”
 - D. An old, familiar place to return to

¹³ The phrase “true believer” predates its use in fandom and has several antecedents in political, religious, and ideological contexts. Eric Hoffer’s 1951 book *The True Believer* examined the psychology of mass movements, describing unwavering ideological commitment, though without the later fannish connotation. In earlier Christian rhetoric, the term referred to devout followers of faith, reinforcing its association with loyalty and conviction. Pulp fiction and early science fiction fandom also embraced similar language to distinguish committed fans from casual readers, though no direct equivalent to Stan Lee’s usage was widespread before the 1960s. Lee repurposed the term with a playful, self-referential tone, making it a badge of honor for Marvel readers while echoing its historical meanings of devotion and exclusivity

E. One of life's central pleasures: the "Narration of the World"

F. This hydra-headed creature named Science Fiction

2. Lafferty's Approach

A. Intends to review only good books

B. Will puncture only hollow "swamp gas" balloons

C. Plans to keep everything in proportion

D. Joke about "Holy Ground": "Take off your shoes..." then "maybe just one..."¹⁴

E. Conclusion of the humorous aside

3. Closing Date

A. "May 18, 1979"

SYLLOGISM NAME	PREMISE 1	PREMISE 2	CONCLUSION
S1: BEGINNING IN A 'ROYAL PLACE'	Lafferty declares, "We are in a royal place ... an authentic version of the World," indicating something lofty or essential about the subject matter.	This "authentic version" is the domain of the "Narration of the World," i.e., genuine storytelling, which he views as "royal" or exalted.	Therefore, entering into this discussion means standing in the true seat of creative or mythic authority—the vantage of genuine "Story."
S2: SF AS A GROUP OF SYMPTOMS	A medical student (failed) likens Science Fiction to "hydropsy," once treated as a disease but later understood as a set of symptoms with differing underlying causes (heart, liver, kidney, etc.).	By analogy, SF might be only "symptoms" (e.g., "itchy ears," avid reading, excitement) pointing to multiple root conditions (Hard SF, Soft SF, Fantasy, etc.).	Hence, some see SF not as one thing but as many distinct pathologies—a mere bundle of signs with no single "disease."
S3: THE MISTAKEN MEDICAL STUDENT	The student's view implies SF is multiple diseases (Hard SF, High Fantasy, etc.)	Lafferty counters: "All these diseases are a single disease or abiding health," with an old name "Story"	Thus, what looks like many separate ailments is actually one fundamental

¹⁴ In Exodus 3:5, God commands Moses at the burning bush, "Do not come any closer. Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground." A similar command is given to Joshua in Joshua 5:15, when the commander of the Lord's army tells him, "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy."

	and not one unified phenomenon.	and a new name “Science Fiction.”	condition—a universal drive to “Story.”
S4: SF’S SHARED ‘SYMPTOMS’	SF (or Story) exhibits consistent signs: a hunger for new texts, an eagerness to unmask the world, a sense of euphoria and discovery, an excitement about future possibilities.	These traits may appear “diseased” or “odd” to an outsider but could also indicate “a perpetually new kind of health.”	Therefore, the questing, imaginative mindset is not illness but an abiding vitality—the hallmark of real storytelling.
S5: ‘STORY’ AS THE TRUE ROYAL LINE	Lafferty calls “Story” (or “Science Fiction”) the “lost Dauphin,” “King Melchisedech,” the “pampered prince” from the beginning.	From humanity’s first campfire tales to present, “Story” has reigned as the primal narrative form—“it is at least low Scripture.”	Conclusion: True storytelling is a timeless, almost sacred tradition—the heart of human expression.
S6: MAINSTREAM FICTION AS ‘INVALID MASQUERADE’	Lafferty contrasts “Story” with “Main-Stream Fiction,” calling the latter “an invalid masquerade of the world” that wears a mask identical to its real face—thus no actual disguise.	A real masquerade transforms appearances, but mainstream fiction “does not mask” the world, providing no new vantage.	Hence, Lafferty judges “mainstream” as a lesser or stagnant form—if a mainstream work is truly excellent, it must actually be “Story” in disguise.
S7: MASTERWORKS ARE ACTUALLY “STORY”	He concedes that certain “masterworks” exist under the label “main-stream.”	Yet if they are genuine masterpieces, they cannot be mere mainstream illusions—they must contain the “invention/discovery” hallmark of SF/Story.	Therefore, any true masterpiece is, at heart, “Story” (i.e., science-fictional or mythic), regardless of labeling.
S8: “SCIENCE” AND “FICTION”	Lafferty defines “Fiction” simply as “making” or “creation,” while “Science” is “knowledge,”	Combining them yields “Science Fiction,” the “central narrative of the World,” metaphorical King in the “Graphic Kingdom.”	Thus, SF fuses knowledge and creation—the oldest, highest form of narrating or explaining reality.

	“power,” or “illumination.”		
S9: THE ‘SKINNY TIMES’ AND RETREAT INTO FANTASY	Sometimes the “Narration” (SF/Story) falls on “skinny times,” retreating into a cave or fortress—these are the eras of pure fantasy.	The cave drawings are akin to “cover illustrations” for these more guarded fantasies.	Hence, fantasy arises when “Story” is driven underground—an older, protective mode for imagination.
S10: SF AS SOP VS. TRUE BELIEF (ARROW STORY)	A former seminary student (failed) says SF is a “sop” for people who can’t have real faith, comparing it to archers who shoot arrows skyward but never have them “accepted” by the sky.	Lafferty rebuts that most people shoot arrows (i.e., speculations, stories) for the sheer wonder and joy of it, not because they fail to commit to a single arrow.	Conclusion: SF is not a poor substitute for belief; it is an ongoing, pleasurable act of imaginative speculation, unconcerned with the arrow’s permanent success.
S11: DANGER OF BANKING ON ONE ARROW	If someone’s single arrow (their sole faith or worldview) remains in the sky, they feel validated as “True Believers.”	But if it eventually falls, they are shattered. Whereas the multi-arrow shooter remains unfazed if one arrow drops because they keep sending more arrows up.	Thus, Lafferty celebrates many speculative arrows (stories), better than a single unshakeable belief that might fail—the continuous “arrow-shooting” is a healthy posture of wonder.
S12: THE REALM OF THE PLEASANT AND ENDOWED PEOPLE	Lafferty describes “ourselves” as dwellers in a “No Mean Kingdom,” returning to the old, familiar place of “Narration of the World”—Science Fiction.	He warns he’ll “review good books” and “puncture balloons of swamp gas,” suggesting a critique of lesser illusions but cherishing real wonders.	Therefore, the communal domain of SF-lovers is a place of both “holy ground” and playful irreverence—we remove one shoe, for it’s not “all that holy,” but it remains a realm of genuine delight.

“The Ten Thousand Masks of the World”

Overview

Lafferty views “Science Fiction” as a collection of competing subgenres, with “High Fantasy” (often labeled “Sword and Sorcery” or “S and S”) facing the most contention. The essay examines how High Fantasy, laden with dreamlike atmospheres and masked worlds, differs from standard Science Fiction in its anonymous, folk-tale feel. An anthology called *Heroic Fantasy* (edited by Gerald Page and Hank Reinhardt) serves as a prime example, showing new stories that illustrate the fresh yet sometimes fractured quality of these narratives. Lafferty provides concise summaries of several tales from this collection—their incognito heroes, magical elements, and disguised realms—before noting that more famous authors included in the book do not fully capture the elusive essence of the genre. The essay suggests that genuine Heroic Fantasy’s unique “flavor” often emerges most strongly in imperfect, dreamlike works.

Summary

Lafferty says that “Science Fiction is a collection of guerrilla bands each challenging the rights of the others to belong to the centrality,” and notes that the most challenged “band” is “high fantasy,” frequently called “Sword and Sorcery” or “S and S.” It acknowledges pervasive sneering at “S and S,” then contrasts strict Science Fiction, whose authors are typically well-identified, with High Fantasy, which carries an air of anonymity reminiscent of folk tales.

Next, Lafferty describes High Fantasy as a “dream material” rich in atmosphere. The notion of an entirely new world appears in every High Fantasy story, whereas “Low Fantasy” reuses the familiar one. The essay emphasizes the presence of magic, pointing out that it generally requires multiple stories to accumulate enough “magic” to be truly noticeable. High Fantasy, Lafferty explains, includes incognito characters and realms often suspected of being the “World Itself” in disguise, each version representing one of the “Ten Thousand Masks of the World” and voiced by one of the “Ten Thousand Tongues of Elsewhere.”

The essay identifies Heroic Fantasy as a stylized form of dream—one of the “Games People Play”—where each fantasy world resembles a game board for those who look carefully. Lafferty introduces *Heroic Fantasy*, an anthology edited by Gerald Page and Hank Reinhardt and published by DAW Books in 1979. Unlike many other fantasy anthologies mixing reprints with new works, this one features all-new stories, including six by various “tongues of Elsewhere.”

The first story, *The Valley of the Sorrows* by Galad Elflandsson, involves half-ghostly, claw-handed monsters rising from the ground and a mountain lake. Two sea pirates on a desolate land confront these creatures, lose the heroic fight, and highlight that not all heroes prevail. The second, *Ghoul’s*

Head by Don Walsh, takes place in Medieval Japan, featuring a Samurai Warrior, an Assassin Wizard, and ghouls. Its violent setting includes flying heads, ice-breathing maidens, and grisly duels; Lafferty jokingly suggests that every story should end with the line “— the sun was gone now, and from a ways away came a single strangling scream.”

Charles R. Saunders’s *Death in Jukun* shifts to Medieval African Kingdoms, weaving intrigue around a buried-alive rich man, a swordsman-hero, and a frightening hyena-ape. The monstrous battle scene is praised as the story’s highlight. In *The Hero Who Returned*, Gerald W. Page writes of the ferryman Dunsan, who unknowingly takes on the role of Charon in a netherworld setting while saving the mighty hero Faulk and slaying the deadly ghost-warrior Kershenlee. The essay underscores Dunsan’s accidental heroism in a place strongly reminiscent of Hades.

In Hank Reinhardt’s *The Age of the Warrior*, the central figure Asgalt, an aging but still formidable duke, deliberately meets a glorious death rather than follow his band across a chasm, symbolizing a bittersweet acceptance of his mortality. The fifth tale, *The Mistaken Oracle* by A.E. Silas, centers on a giant-slaying confrontation. A child-sized sorcerer claims the magic sword from the fire and defeats the giant, revealing he has been many powerful personae throughout his incarnations—even taking on the role of the very giant he must slay.

Summarizing these tales, Lafferty notes that they lose some of their compelling qualities when stripped of the “masking atmosphere.” They are described as “flawed gems” whose fractures let in a special kind of light. Other, more renowned writers such as Andre Norton, E.C. Tubb, Tanith Lee, H. Warner Munn, and Manly Wade Wellman also contribute to the anthology, but Lafferty believes the purest flavor of Heroic Fantasy often appears only in fleeting, imperfect works. The essay ends with the date “June 6, 1979” and a promise to analyze at some point why rare, essential elements of heroic fantasy surface in smaller, fractured pieces.

(A.E. Silas), (Amdemon), (Andre Norton), (Asgalt), (Charles R. Saunders), (DAW Books 1979), (Death in Jukun), (Don Walsh), (E.C. Tubb), (Faulk), (Games People Play), (Galad Elflandsson), (Gerald Page), (Gerald W. Page), (Ghoul’s Head), (H. Warner Munn), (Hank Reinhardt), (Heroic Fantasy), (High Fantasy), (June 6, 1979), (Kershenlee), (Low Fantasy), (Manly Wade Wellman), (Medieval African Kingdoms), (Medieval Japan), (S and S), (Samurai Warrior), (Science Fiction), (Shang), (Sword and Sorcery), (Tanith Lee), (Ten Thousand Masks of the World), (Ten Thousand Tongues of Elsewhere), (The Age of the Warrior), (The Hero Who Returned), (The Mistaken Oracle), (The Ten Thousand Masks Of The World), (The Valley of the Sorrows), (World Itself)

I. Introduction

1. “The Ten Thousand Masks Of The World”
2. The Guerrilla Bands of Science Fiction
 - A. “Science Fiction is a collection of guerrilla bands...”

- B. The band most challenged: 'high fantasy' or 'Sword and Sorcery'
- C. "There is a lot of stylized sneering at 'S and S:'"

II. Defining High Fantasy vs. Science Fiction

1. Names and Anonymity

- A. One key difference: SF writers are named; Fantasy feels anonymous
- B. "Oh, there will be names...but Fantasy stories still have the aroma of anonymous folk tales..."
- C. Even well-known fantasy authors carry this sense of folklore

2. The Dream Material of Fantasy

- A. Fantasy Stories as "a sort of dream material" with heavy atmosphere
- B. Each High Fantasy story presents a new world
- C. (Low Fantasy uses the old world)
- D. More irrational/emotional than rational
- E. The ubiquitous "touch of magic" in heroic fantasy
- F. Several stories together may accumulate enough magic to be seen
- G. Ever-freshness (distinct from originality)
- H. Linked to the youthful spirit of the genre

3. Incognito Characters and Worlds

- A. Almost every Heroic Fantasy character is incognito
- B. Fantasy worlds similarly incognito, possibly "the World Itself"
- C. Atmosphere and masquerade are central
- D. Each story: "one of the 'Ten Thousand Masks of the World'"
- E. Each version told by one of the "Ten Thousand Tongues of Elsewhere"

4. Stylized Dream and "Games People Play"

- A. All is very stylized dream material (analysts never say so)
- B. Heroic Fantasy as a "Game," with visible lines on its "board"
- C. To be noticed by those who look closely

III. The Anthology (DAW Books, 1979)

1. Key Features

- A. Titled "Heroic Fantasy," edited by Gerald Page & Hank Reinhardt¹⁵
- B. All new and original stories

¹⁵ Page, Gerald W., and Hank Reinhardt, eds. *Heroic Fantasy*. New York: DAW Books, 1979.

- C. Other anthologies often half reprints
- D. Introducing six stories from six of the "Ten Thousand Tongues of Elsewhere"
- 2. Story 1: "The Valley of the Sorrows" by Galad Elflandsson¹⁶
 - A. Title/Author mention; "suspect name"
 - B. Half-ghostly claw-handed man-monsters rising from rocky earth & lake
 - C. Two sea pirates, stranded in stormy wasteland, offer heroic battle
 - D. Pirates lose, monsters win—heroes do not always triumph
- 3. Story 2: "Ghoul's Head" by Don Walsh
 - A. Medieval Japan setting: Samurai Warrior, Assassin Wizard, bandits
 - B. A world of "corpse-devouring ghouls...icy death"
 - C. Five headless bodies; heads fly off for nightly pleasures
 - D. Death duels: brawn, wit, swordsmanship, magic
 - E. Dramatic line: "— the sun was gone now...a single strangling scream."
- 4. Perfect Ending Statement
 - A. "Every story of every sort should end with that sentence..."
- 5. Story 3: "Death in Jukun" by Charles R. Saunders¹⁷
 - A. Medieval African Kingdoms, intrigue, murder
 - B. A rich man buried alive in a failed stratagem
 - C. Giant swordsman-hero, wizened magician, monstrous hyena-ape
 - D. Battle between swordsman & beast is worth the price of admission
- 6. Story 4: "The Hero Who Returned" by Gerald W. Page¹⁸

¹⁶ Galad Elflandsson (born 1951) is a Canadian fantasy writer known for his horror novel *The Black Wolf*, first published in hardcover by Donald M. Grant, Publisher, Inc. in 1979 and later reprinted in paperback by Centaur Books in 1980. In 2018, he released the collection *Tales of Carcosa*. His short stories have appeared in various anthologies and magazines.

¹⁷ Charles R. Saunders (July 12, 1946 – May 2020) was an African-American author and journalist, recognized as a pioneer of the "sword and soul" subgenre, which blends African history, culture, and mythology with sword and sorcery themes. Born in Elizabeth, Pennsylvania, he graduated from Lincoln University in 1968 with a degree in psychology. In 1969, he moved to Canada, residing in various cities before settling in Nova Scotia in 1985, where he worked as a journalist for the *Halifax Daily News* until its closure in 2008. Saunders is best known for his *Imaro* series, beginning with *Imaro* (1981), set in the mythical African continent of Nyumbani. He also authored the *Dossouye* series, featuring a female warrior inspired by the women warriors of the Dahomey Kingdom. In addition to fiction, he wrote non-fiction works on Black history in Nova Scotia, including *Spirit of Africville* (1992) and *Black & Bluenose: The Contemporary History of a Community* (2002).

¹⁸ Gerald W. Page (born August 12, 1939, in Chattanooga, Tennessee) is an American writer and editor specializing in fantasy, science fiction, mystery, and horror. His writing career began with the short story "The Happy Man," published in *Analog* in 1963. In 1969, he acquired and edited the magazine *Coven 13*, renaming it *Witchcraft and Sorcery*, which lasted for six issues. He later joined the editorial staff of *TV Guide*. From 1976 to

- A. Ferryman Dunsan crosses heroes over the river Amdemon
 - B. The ghost-warrior Kershenlee kills every hero, including Faulk
 - C. Non-heroic Dunsan saves Faulk, slays Kershenlee
 - D. Reflection: heroism can come to anyone
 - E. Dunsan is effectively Charon, on the shore of Hades
7. Story 5: "The Age of the Warrior" by Hank Reinhardt¹⁹
- A. Unreal aspects of aging and death in fantasy
 - B. Gray-beards often appear glued on, wizards centuries old
 - C. The great duke Asgalt confronts his aging
 - D. He sends his band across a bridge, then destroys it
 - E. Sacrifices himself rather than fleeing, meets the enemy alone
 - F. His heroic (though needless) final stand
8. Story 6: "The Mistaken Oracle" by A.E. Silas²⁰
- A. Standard heroic fantasy pair: huge warrior & child-sized sorcerer
 - B. The oracle summons them to fight a ravaging giant
 - C. The small sorcerer retrieves a magic sword from fire unharmed
 - D. He kills the giant—he has lived many heroic lives
 - E. He is simultaneously the giant and the hero
 - F. A "complex sorcerer" indeed

IV. Concluding Remarks

1. Flawed Gems

- A. Question if these six pieces seem compelling
- B. They lack their full dreamlike masking here
- C. "These are six flawed gems. I've always liked such."

1979, he edited DAW Books' anthology series *The Year's Best Horror Stories*. He also edited *Nameless Places*, published by Arkham House in 1975.

¹⁹ Julius Henry "Hank" Reinhardt (January 18, 1934 – October 30, 2007) was an American author, editor, and authority on medieval weaponry. Born and raised in Atlanta, Georgia, he developed an early interest in knives and swords, which he furthered during his U.S. Army service in Europe in the 1950s by studying museum collections. In the 1980s, Reinhardt co-founded Museum Replicas Ltd. with Bill Adams, producing accurate reproductions of medieval weapons and armor. He was known for personally testing these replicas to dispel myths about historical weaponry.

²⁰ A. E. Silas is the author of the science fantasy novel *The Panorama Egg*, published in 1978 by DAW Books. The story follows a protagonist who collects panorama eggs—hollowed-out eggs with interior vistas—and discovers one that serves as a portal to another dimension, leading to a series of fantastical experiences.

D. Flaws “catch and fracture the light” differently

E. “Bigger on the inside than on the outside”

2. Other Authors in the Anthology

A. Andre Norton, E.C. Tubb, Tanith Lee, H. Warner Munn, Manly Wade Wellman²¹

B. But they do not capture the rare flavor of heroic fantasy here

3. Future Analysis

A. The elusive flavor is found in small, imperfect works

4. Closing Date

A. “June 6, 1979”

SYLLOGISM NAME	PREMISE 1	PREMISE 2	CONCLUSION
S1: HIGH FANTASY AS “MOST CHALLENGED”	Within SF, there are “guerrilla bands” each questioning the others’ right to belong in the core.	The band “most challenged” by the others is High Fantasy (“Sword and Sorcery”), which receives “a lot of stylized sneering.”	Hence, High Fantasy stands as an oft-disputed sub-genre of speculative fiction, singled out for skepticism by other SF factions.
S2: FANTASY WRITERS AS NAMELESS	Science Fiction writers typically have recognizable names or brand identities.	Fantasy stories, by contrast, retain a “folk-tale” feel, so their authors seem almost anonymous—even if names are printed, the stories project an “aroma” of origin in folklore and communal myth.	Thus, High Fantasy exudes a timeless, authorless quality reminiscent of old anonymous tales, despite featuring modern bylines.

²¹ Andre Norton (1912–2005) was an American science fiction and fantasy writer, best known for her *Witch World* series. She was one of the first women to gain prominence in the genre, often writing young adult and planetary romance. E. C. Tubb (1919–2010) was a British science fiction author, primarily known for his long-running *Dumarest of Terra* series, which combined pulp adventure with existential themes. Tanith Lee (1947–2015) was a British writer of fantasy, horror, and science fiction, recognized for her poetic prose, gothic themes, and mythic storytelling, with major works including *The Birthgrave* and *The Flat-Earth Cycle*. H. Warner Munn (1903–1981) was an American pulp fantasy writer known for his *Merlin’s Godson* series and werewolf tales, blending historical settings with supernatural elements under the influence of H. P. Lovecraft. Manly Wade Wellman (1903–1986) was an American writer of fantasy, horror, and regional folklore, best known for his *Silver John* stories, which incorporate Appalachian folklore, music, and supernatural encounters while exploring American mythic traditions.

S3: WORLD-BUILDING AND “EVER-FRESHNESS”	High Fantasy foregrounds “atmosphere,” presenting a wholly new world (“the background troposphere”), whereas “Low Fantasy” reuses the old, familiar world.	Magic permeates these heroic fantasy tales, but it’s often subtle and cumulative—“it usually takes several stories” to reveal visible magic.	Therefore, High Fantasy’s hallmark is crafting an entirely different realm with dreamlike novelty, while only gradually unveiling its magical element.
S4: INCOGNITO CHARACTERS AND WORLDS	In Heroic Fantasy, “almost every character is incognito” and each new setting might be the “World Itself” but disguised or half-dazed.	Such “masquerade” is central: each story reveals one of the “Ten Thousand Masks of the World,” suggesting myriad possible facets of reality beneath the disguise.	Conclusion: The essence of High Fantasy is the notion that our real world is perpetually masked in alternative guises, and each fantasy tale unmask a different aspect.
S5: DREAM MATERIAL AND STYLIZATION	Lafferty notes that “all genuine dream material is very stylized,” though analysts seldom mention this overtly.	Heroic Fantasy is a “Game People Play,” with “game boards” visible if you look closely, indicating deliberate stylization of world-rules.	Hence, High Fantasy is “dreamlike” in its stylized logic: it consciously operates by pattern and game-like structure rather than strict realism.
S6: A NEW ANTHOLOGY “HEROIC FANTASY”	Gerald Page and Hank Reinhardt’s anthology (DAW, 1979) collects newly written Sword & Sorcery tales, not just reprints.	Lafferty spotlights six stories by lesser-known authors, calling them “six of the ‘Ten Thousand Tongues of Elsewhere.’”	Therefore, the anthology stands out for original content and for featuring less famous voices that exemplify core S&S traits.
S7: EXEMPLARY STORIES SUMMARIZED	Lafferty briefly describes each of the six: (1) “The Valley of the Sorrows,” (2) “Ghoul’s Head,” (3) “Death in Jukun,” (4) “The Hero Who Returned,” (5) “The Age of the Warrior,”	They exhibit standard heroic fantasy tropes: monstrous foes, ghostly castles, wizards, disguised underworlds, heroism mingled with real or ambiguous defeat.	Hence, these tales illustrate the varied flavor of High Fantasy—featuring incognito heroes, ancient magic, masked worlds, and stylized combat.

	(6) "The Mistaken Oracle."		
S8: "FRACTURED GEMS" AND RARE FLAVOR	Lafferty deems these six stories "flawed gems" that "catch and fracture the light" in unique ways.	Larger, better-known authors (Norton, Tubb, Tanith Lee, etc.) in the collection do not capture the "rare flavor" of heroic fantasy quite as purely.	Therefore, the intangible "essence" of Sword & Sorcery often appears most vividly in short, imperfect tales by lesser-known writers, yielding an elusive magic mainstream authors sometimes miss.
S9: ESSENTIAL FLAVOR IN IMPERFECT WORKS	Lafferty argues that "the elusive essential flavor is found only in small amounts and in fractured, imperfect pieces."	These flawed or less-polished stories have a "dreamlike," unorthoclastic structure, making them "bigger on the inside than on the outside."	Conclusion: True S&S spirit thrives best in smaller, irregular narratives, which preserve the intangible strangeness of heroic fantasy.
S10: FUTURE ANALYSIS OF "WHY?"	Lafferty hints he will eventually "analyze the reason" that the essential S&S flavor resides in such fractured or incomplete works.	This deeper explanation awaits a future exploration, implying a complex interplay of form, style, and imaginative resonance.	Hence, the ultimate cause behind High Fantasy's best qualities is still an open puzzle for Lafferty, left for later elaboration.

A.E. Silas: Author featured in the *Heroic Fantasy* (1979) anthology, contributing the story "The Mistaken Oracle."

Andre Norton: (1912–2005) A prolific American fantasy and science fiction writer, known for the *Witch World* series and her contributions to heroic fantasy.

Charles R. Saunders: (1946–2020) An African-American writer and journalist best known for creating *Imaro*, a pioneering work of *Sword and Soul*, a subgenre blending heroic fantasy with African history and mythology.

DAW Books 1979: A publishing imprint founded by Donald A. Wollheim, notable for releasing *Heroic Fantasy* (1979) and other works in the fantasy and science fiction genres.

"Death in Jukun": A short story by Charles R. Saunders, featured in *Heroic Fantasy* (1979), likely drawing from African history and mythology.

Don Walsh: A contributor to *Heroic Fantasy* (1979) with the story "Ghoul's Head."

E.C. Tubb: (1919–2010) A British science fiction and fantasy writer, best known for the *Dumarest of Terra* series and his contributions to pulp-style speculative fiction.

Galad Elflandsson: A fantasy writer, best known for "*The Valley of the Sorrows*," included in *Heroic Fantasy* (1979).

Gerald Page: Likely a reference to Gerald W. Page, an editor and author involved in *Heroic Fantasy*.

Gerald W. Page: An American editor and writer, co-editor of *Heroic Fantasy* (1979) alongside Hank Reinhardt, with contributions to horror and fantasy anthologies.

"Ghoul's Head": A short story by Donald J. Walsh Jr., included in *Heroic Fantasy* (1979), likely featuring horror or dark fantasy elements.

H. Warner Munn: (1903–1981) An American pulp writer, known for *The Werewolf of Ponkert* series and historical fantasy fiction. His story "*The De Pertriche Ring*" appeared in *Heroic Fantasy* (1979).

Hank Reinhardt: (1934–2007) A weapons expert and fantasy enthusiast, co-editor of *Heroic Fantasy* (1979), contributing essays on swords, armor, and heroism.

Manly Wade Wellman: (1903–1986) An American fantasy and horror writer, known for his *Silver John* stories, blending Appalachian folklore with supernatural themes.

Medieval African Kingdoms: The historical states of Africa, such as Mali, Ghana, and Songhai, often serving as inspiration for Charles R. Saunders' *Sword and Soul* fiction.

Tanith Lee: (1947–2015) A British fantasy and science fiction author, known for her *Flat Earth* series and contributions to dark fantasy and gothic storytelling.

"The Age of the Warrior": A story or concept emphasizing martial values and heroic ideals, possibly related to Hank Reinhardt's contributions to *Heroic Fantasy* (1979).

"The Hero Who Returned": A story by Gerald W. Page, featured in *Heroic Fantasy* (1979).

"The Mistaken Oracle": A story by A.E. Silas, included in *Heroic Fantasy* (1979).

"The Valley of the Sorrows": A story by Galad Elflandsson, included in *Heroic Fantasy* (1979).

“Great Awkward Gold”

Overview

Lafferty likens Golden Ages in the arts to sudden dawns with little traceable origin, suggesting that the earliest works—such as those by Jules Verne and H.G. Wells for Science Fiction—often seem both complete and revolutionary. The essay emphasizes the initial “binary” emergence of these two foundational authors, presenting their novels and stories as effectively perfect from the outset. It also highlights a collection of lesser-known contemporaries, or “rivals,” whose awkward yet fertile stories provided imaginative range and new directions for the genre. Through examples ranging from catastrophic tales set in London to bizarre voyages and bizarre monsters, Lafferty argues that these imperfect works contribute invaluable variety. The essay argues that truly “perfect” stories can be stifling, while the rougher, “great awkward” ones continue to enrich Science Fiction’s evolution.

Summary

Lafferty comments on how “golden ages” in various arts—exemplified by the *Homeric Epics*, *Cave Paintings*, Greek philosophies, and megalithic constructions—appear to arrive fully formed, much like “Renaissance Florence” or “Elizabethan London,” for which at least some roots can be traced. Lafferty then draws a parallel to Science Fiction, cautioning that any discussion of it must be “extravagant,” noting how its own golden age seemed to dawn quickly.

Next, the essay introduces the “binary” or double sun that heralded Science Fiction’s sunrise: “Alpha Star Jules Verne” and “Beta Star H.G. Wells.” It lists Jules Verne’s many “voyage” novels—*Five Weeks in a Balloon* (1863), *A Journey to the Centre of the Earth* (1864), *From The Earth To The Moon* (1865), *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under The Sea* (1870), *Around the World In Eighty Days* (1874)—and praises them as pleasant, comedic, and laced with technology and magic. Turning to H.G. Wells, the essay enumerates his core Science Fiction works—*The Time Machine* (1895), *The Island of Doctor Moreau* (1897), *The Invisible Man* (1897), *The War of the Worlds* (1898), *The First Men In The Moon* (1901), *The Food of the Gods* (1904)—alongside his short story collections *The Stolen Bacillus And Other Stories* (1895), *The Plattner Story* (1897), and *Tales of Space and Time* (1899), asserting that these short stories encapsulate every major concept in Science Fiction.

The essay then addresses the notion of perfection, suggesting that once everything is done so completely, there can be nowhere new to explore. While Jules Verne never quite attained such a prohibitive pinnacle, Wells nearly did; one more perfect Science Fiction tale from him, the essay humorously warns, would have merited dire consequences. The essay underscores how ongoing creativity needs fresh horizons and even flawed or “bad” stories to spark further ideas—“great awkward stories” that breed offshoots, unlike perfect ones that might stifle innovation.

Following this, Lafferty introduces a large anthology titled *Science Fiction By The Rivals of H.G. Wells*, published by Castle Books in Secaucus, New Jersey (1979). The essay provides the names of Wells’s so-called “rivals,” highlighting that many appeared in top magazines of the 1890s—*Strand Magazine*,

Windsor Magazine, *Pearson's Magazine*, *Cassell's Magazine*, and *Harnsworth Magazine*. These writers, such as W.L. Alden, Grant Allen, L.J. Beeston, Frank T. Bullen, Warden Allan Curtis, and others, sometimes received higher payment rates than Wells himself.

Several thematic threads run through these rival stories: apocalyptic dangers to London, submarine voyages, hollow-earth expeditions, and fantastical miscalculations like Dr. Ginochio Gyves's mistaken lunar landing in Mexico. One standout tale is *The Monster of Lake LaMetrie* by Warden Allan Curtis, involving a "dinosaur" creature whose severed head is fitted with a human brain. The result—a man-brained monster descending into madness—typifies the anthology's "awkward gold" approach: wild in ideas, uneven in execution, yet undeniably fertile in imaginative power.

These stories also feature dramatic titles—*The Purple Death*, *The Wheels of Dr. Ginochio Gyves*, *The Raid of Le Vengeur*, *The Lady Automaton*, *The Black Shadow*, *The Man Who Meddled With Eternity*, *The Last Days of Earth*, *The Green Spider*, *The Master of Octopus*, and *The Invisible Force*. They are labeled "mega-tales," preceding more polished pieces and still resonant in the ongoing development of Science Fiction. The essay closes on the date "July 12, 1979," emphasizing the enduring vitality of these imperfect pioneers.

(A Journey to the Centre of the Earth (1864)), (A. Sarsfield Ward), (Alpha Star Jules Verne), (Around the World In Eighty Days (1874)), (Beta Star H.G. Wells), (Cassell's Magazine), (Castle Books), (Cave Paintings), (City of London), (Conan Doyle), (Cutcliffe Hyne), (Dr. Ginochio Gyves), (Dr. Jekyll), (Doctor McLennegan), (Edward Olin Weeks), (Elizabethan London), (Ellsworth Douglas), (E. Tickner-Edwards), (Framingham), (Frank T. Bullen), (Fred M. White), (Five Weeks in a Balloon (1863)), (From The Earth To The Moon (1865)), (George C. Wallis), (George Griffith), (Grant Allen), (Great Awkward Gold), (Greek), (H.G. Wells), (Harnsworth Magazine), (Homeric Epics), (Jack London), (July 12, 1979), (Jules Verne), (L.J. Beeston), (Lake LaMetrie), (Lilla Zaide), (Loch Ness Monster), (London), (Mark Twain), (Mr. Hyde), (New Jersey), (Owen Oliver), (Pearson's Magazine), (Renaissance Florence), (Rollo Lenox), (Rudolph de Cordova), (Science Fiction By The Rivals of H.G. Wells), (Secaucus), (Secaucus, New Jersey), (Sherlock Holmes), (South-East Asia), (Strand Magazine), (Tales of Space and Time (1899)), (The Black Shadow), (The First Men In The Moon (1901)), (The Food of the Gods (1904)), (The Green Spider), (The Invisible Force), (The Invisible Man (1897)), (The Island of Doctor Moreau (1897)), (The Lady Automaton), (The Last Days of Earth), (The Last of the Decapods), (The Man Who Meddled With Eternity), (The Master of Octopus), (The Monster of Lake LaMetrie), (The Plattner Story (1897)), (The Purple Death), (The Raid of Le Vengeur), (The Stolen Bacillus And Other Stories (1895)), (The Time Machine (1895)), (The War of the Worlds (1898)), (Twenty Thousand Leagues Under The Sea (1870)), (W.L. Alden), (Warden Allan Curtis), (Windsor Magazine).

I. Golden Ages and Awkward Beginnings

1. Sudden Appearance of Golden Ages

- A. "Golden ages seem to appear full-formed and with no more roots than a hen has teeth."
- B. Early works of art (Homeric Epics, Cave Paintings, Greek philosophies, etc.) often the best
- C. Megaliths²² ascribed to gods (aside: "not a bad guess, perhaps")
- D. Jungle-encrusted temples in South-East Asia
- E. In Renaissance Florence and Elizabethan London, a few real roots can be seen
- F. "Exciting but awkward and badly-formed gold" at the beginning

II. The Dawn and Extravagance of a Golden Age

- 1. Suddenness of Each Golden Age
 - A. "But the sun of each Golden Age dawns suddenly..."
- 2. Considering a Golden Age for Science Fiction
 - A. "Would it be extravagant...for Science Fiction?"
 - B. Affirmation: "Certainly it would be."
 - C. Necessity of extravagance to speak of SF at all

III. The Binary Suns: Jules Verne and H.G. Wells

- 1. Double-Sun Metaphor
 - A. SF's "quick-appearing sun" was actually two: a binary star
 - B. Alpha Star Jules Verne and Beta Star H.G. Wells²³
 - C. "Odd names for suns, are they not?"
- 2. Jules Verne (Alpha)²⁴
 - A. A blaze of "voyage" novels: *Five Weeks in a Balloon*, *Journey to the Centre of the Earth*, etc.

²² Emerging in the Neolithic, megaliths appeared independently across regions, likely serving ritual, funerary, or astronomical functions. Their construction reflects early agricultural societies' social organization and evolving religious practices, with diffusion theories suggesting both local innovation and cultural exchange.

²³ Binary star systems, where two stars orbit a common center of mass, are common in the galaxy. These systems vary in separation and interaction, influencing stellar evolution, planetary formation, and habitability. Some binaries exchange mass, leading to phenomena like novae or X-ray binaries, while others remain stable pairs.

²⁴ Verne's major science fiction works appeared between 1863 and 1905. *Paris in the Twentieth Century* (written 1863) was unpublished until 1994. *Five Weeks in a Balloon* (1863) launched his Voyages Extraordinaires series, followed by *Journey to the Center of the Earth* (1864), *From the Earth to the Moon* (1865), *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea* (1869–70), and *The Mysterious Island* (1874). Later works include *Robur the Conqueror* (1886) and *The Master of the World* (1904). His final novel, *The Lighthouse at the End of the World* (1905), appeared posthumously.

- B. Verne's works had genial comedy; at least equal to Mark Twain
- C. Technology "for the times" plus a touch of science
- D. The magical freight of Verne's "voyages" was not immediately recognized as a true sun
- 3. H.G. Wells (Beta)
 - A. Landmark SF novels: *The Time Machine*, *The Island of Doctor Moreau*, *The Invisible Man*, *The War of the Worlds*, etc.²⁵
 - B. Major SF short stories collected in *The Stolen Bacillus...*, *The Plattner Story*, *Tales of Space and Time*
 - C. Short stories more important than his novels—indeed more important than anything else in SF
 - D. Contained all the great SF ideas at their origin
- 4. Verne and Wells as Complete SF
 - A. Together, they are "the beginning and the end" of Science Fiction

IV. Perfection and Its Limits

- 1. The Problem with Having It All
 - A. If everything is already "complete and perfect," where can one go next?
 - B. Perfection might be self-limiting
 - C. Even "copious perfection" can eventually cloy
- 2. Wells's Near-Overreach
 - A. Verne was never so perfect as to frustrate further creativity
 - B. Wells "barely stopped in time"—one more perfect story and dire (humorous) punishment awaited

V. The Need for Imperfection

- 1. Frustration of Exhaustion
 - A. "When one wants to go on a voyage...must be somewhere else beyond that everywhere."
 - B. It is stifling to hear "You've already been everywhere."

²⁵ Wells's seminal science fiction novels were published between 1895 and 1914. His first major work, *The Time Machine*, appeared in 1895, followed by *The Island of Doctor Moreau* (1896), *The Invisible Man* (1897), and *The War of the Worlds* (1898). He continued with *When the Sleeper Wakes* (1899), later revised as *The Sleeper Awakes* (1910), *The First Men in the Moon* (1901), *The Food of the Gods and How It Came to Earth* (1904), *In the Days of the Comet* (1906), *The War in the Air* (1908), and *The World Set Free* (1914).

2. The "Grotesque Requirement" for Bad SF
 - A. Some SF stories must be "quite bad" by rational standards
 - B. This does not apply to other genres—only SF
 - C. Awkward stories are fertile, producing new offshoots, whereas perfect ones are sterile

VI. "Science Fiction by The Rivals of H.G. Wells"

1. The Anthology Introduced
 - A. A large 1979 book with thirty short stories and one novel
 - B. Lists of "Rivals": W.L. Alden, Grant Allen, Warden Allan Curtis, Jack London, etc.
 - C. Originally published 1895–1906 in various magazines (Strand, Windsor, Pearson's, etc.)
 - D. Some earned higher rates than Wells himself
2. Not Merely Imitators
 - A. Many "rivals" preceded Wells's similar ideas
 - B. Best writers among them: George Griffith, Cutcliffe Hyne, Fred M. White²⁶
 - C. The "best-worst" story: "The Monster of Lake LaMetrie"²⁷

VII. "The Monster of Lake LaMetrie"²⁸ and Other Disasters

²⁶ George Griffith (1857–1906), born George Chetwynd Griffith-Jones, was a British science fiction writer and journalist who gained prominence in the late 19th and early 20th centuries for his speculative fiction, notably *The Angel of the Revolution* (1893), which depicted advanced aerial warfare and global conflict. His works often explored themes of technological advancement, imperialism, and social upheaval. Charles John Cutcliffe Wright Hyne (1866–1944), known as Cutcliffe Hyne, was a British adventure and science fiction writer best known for *The Lost Continent: The Story of Atlantis* (1899), a novel about the mythical Atlantis's rise and fall. He also created the character Captain Kettle, a tough sea captain featured in a series of popular stories known for their action and adventure elements. Fred Merrick White (1859–1935) was a British author who contributed extensively to early science fiction and mystery literature, most notably with his "Doom of London" series in the early 1900s, which depicted catastrophic events such as plagues, extreme weather, and other disasters striking London. His work combined elements of suspense, adventure, and speculative fiction, reflecting anxieties about urban vulnerability and technological change.

²⁷ a science fiction short story by Warden Allan Curtis, first published in the September 1899 issue of *Pearson's Magazine*. The story is presented as a series of diary entries written by Dr. James McLennegan, who, while conducting research at Lake LaMetrie in Wyoming, transplants the brain of his dying companion into the body of an Elasmosaurus. The narrative blends speculative science with elements of horror and adventure, reflecting the era's fascination with scientific experimentation and the unknown. The story has been reprinted in anthologies such as *Science Fiction by Gaslight*, edited by Sam Moskowitz, and *England Invaded*, edited by Michael Moorcock.

²⁸ The title alludes to Julien Offray de La Mettrie (1709–1751) was a French physician and materialist philosopher best known for *L'Homme Machine* (1747), which argues that humans are purely mechanistic

1. Lake LaMetrie's Dinosaur-Dragon
 - A. Creature akin to Loch Ness Monster
 - B. Dr. McLennegan and Framingham collecting specimens
 - C. Monster attacked; top of its head removed
 - D. Framingham's brain inserted into monster's body
 - E. Psychotic meltdown: half man, half dinosaur leads to tragic end
 - F. "Sheer gold" material, but flawed execution
2. Catastrophe in London
 - A. Many tales revolve around disasters in London (epidemic, fire, fog, cold)
3. Other Wild Adventures
 - A. Submarine-boat tales, hollow-earth journeys, monstrous threats, space voyages
 - B. Dr. Ginochio Gyves aims for the moon, ends in Mexico by mistake ("I always get those two places confused")
 - C. Rollo Lenox and Lilla Zaide truly do voyage to Moon, Mars, Venus, Jupiter, Saturn, with grand exploits

VIII. Clumsy Magic Titles and Fertile Giants

1. Memorable Story Titles
 - A. Examples: "The Purple Death," "The Last of the Decapods," "The Wheels of Dr. Ginochio Gyves"...²⁹
 - B. Continuing list: "The Lady Automaton," "The Black Shadow," "The Man Who Meddled With Eternity," etc.
2. Mega-Tales from the Beginning
 - A. "Awkward giants" that predate smaller, more perfect works
 - B. Still generative across time

IX. Closing

beings governed by physical laws. His radical rejection of dualism and emphasis on physiological determinism positioned him as a precursor to later scientific materialism, though his views were widely condemned in his time.

²⁹ "The Purple Death," "The Last Stand of the Decapods," "The Wheels of Dr. Ginochio Gyves": **These** late 19th-century science fiction stories were authored by W. L. Alden (1895), Frank T. Bullen (1901), and the duo Ellsworth Douglass and Edwin Pallander (1899), respectively. See *Science Fiction by the Rivals of H.G. Wells* (1979), edited by Alan K. Russell, which compiles 31 tales originally published between 1895 and 1906.

1. Date

A. "July 12, 1979"

SYLLOGISM NAME	PREMISE 1	PREMISE 2	CONCLUSION
S1: SUDDENNESS OF GOLDEN AGES	Golden Ages “seem to appear full-formed” without apparent roots, as with the Homeric epics, ancient cave paintings, Greek thought, and megalithic structures.	Only in some recent periods (Renaissance Florence, Elizabethan London) do we see a few “awkward” precursors before the sudden dawn.	Hence, Golden Ages erupt abruptly, with minimal visible buildup—like a sudden sunrise.
S2: SF’S DAWN AS A ‘GOLDEN AGE’?	Lafferty asks if it is “extravagant” to speak of a “Golden Age” and “quick-dawning Sun” for Science Fiction.	He answers: “Yes, it is extravagant,” but SF demands extravagance in any valid discussion.	Conclusion: Describing SF’s early flourishing requires bold, extravagant language, akin to proclaiming a sudden Golden Age.
S3: THE BINARY SUNS OF SF	The “quick-appearing sun of Science Fiction” is actually two suns: Alpha Star Jules Verne and Beta Star H.G. Wells.	They emerged in the late 19th century with blazing, foundational works—Verne’s “voyage” novels and Wells’s SF novels/short stories.	Therefore, modern SF’s initial brilliance comes from two primary creators—Verne and Wells—who shaped the entire genre.
S4: JULES VERNE’S SIGNIFICANCE	Verne’s “voyage” novels (e.g., <i>Five Weeks in a Balloon</i> , <i>Journey to the Centre of the Earth</i> , <i>From the Earth to the Moon</i> , <i>20,000 Leagues Under the Sea</i>) are “genial, pleasant, original,” mixing comedy and early technology.	Readers did not initially recognize him as an “authentic sun,” but he indeed was one of the twin shining lights that birthed SF.	Hence, Verne’s imaginative travel stories formed a key half of SF’s golden dawn, though the world was slow to grasp his importance.
S5: H.G. WELLS’S ACHIEVEMENTS	Wells produced the “great SF novels” (<i>The</i>	Lafferty says Wells’s SF short stories “are	Therefore, Wells is arguably the ultimate

	<i>Time Machine, The Island of Doctor Moreau, The Invisible Man, The War of the Worlds</i> , etc.) and influential short story collections (<i>The Stolen Bacillus, The Plattner Story</i> , etc.).	more important than anything else ever written in SF,” containing “all the great SF ideas in original form.”	wellspring of central SF themes—his short stories anchor the entire genre’s conceptual foundation.
S6: PERFECTION’S RISK OF STAGNATION	Verne and Wells’s works appear “so complete and perfect” that there seems “nowhere further to go”—perfection can be “self-limiting.”	If Wells had produced “one more perfect SF story,” it might have stifled the entire genre, leaving no space to roam.	Conclusion: Excessive perfection early on risks halting new explorations—the genre needs rough edges to expand.
S7: THE NEED FOR “GREAT AWKWARD STORIES”	Lafferty posits that SF requires a certain number of “bad” or clumsy stories—“exuberant, wide-spectrum” pieces that violate normal standards of quality.	Only these awkward giants can “have offspring,” i.e., spawn new possibilities; by contrast, perfect works do not generate further developments.	Thus, creative fertility in SF thrives on “imperfect” or “clumsy” stories, ensuring ongoing evolution of the field.
S8: ‘SCIENCE FICTION BY THE RIVALS OF H.G. WELLS’	A large anthology from Castle Books (1979) collects 30 short stories + 1 novel from writers publishing in England between 1895–1906 (Strand, Windsor, Pearson’s, etc.).	The authors (Alden, Allen, Beeston, Bullen, Curtis, de Cordova, Douglas, Griffith, Hyne, London, Oliver, etc.) were not necessarily “imitating” Wells—some had ideas predating Wells’s own famous stories.	Therefore, these “Rivals” wrote a significant body of SF that stands as a separate, fertile substrate of early speculation—“awkward” but influential.
S9: THE MONSTER OF LAKE LAMETRIE	Lafferty highlights Warden Allan Curtis’s story as “the best-worst”—it features a dinosaur-like creature whose brain is replaced by a dead	The result is bizarre, half-heroic, half-psychotic, culminating in a tragic demise. The raw idea is “sheer gold,” though executed with “wavering and	Hence, “Lake LaMetrie” epitomizes the awkward giant—strange, flawed, yet pregnant with compelling, “golden” possibility.

	friend's brain, creating a man-brained monster.	impossible" workmanship.	
S10: CATASTROPHE TALES OF LONDON	Many collected stories revolve around disasters (epidemics, fire, fog, or cold) threatening London—"London was the World" to these 1890s magazine writers.	They also feature submarine voyages, hollow-earth settings, giant monsters, mistaken lunar landings (actually Mexico), and journeys to Mars, Venus, Jupiter, etc.	Conclusion: These "mega-tales" were large in scope and imagination**, anticipating core SF tropes: cosmic voyages, cataclysmic events, bizarre inventions—"awkward giants" sowing seeds for the genre's future.
S11: CLUMSY MAGIC IN TITLES	The anthology includes story titles like <i>The Purple Death</i> , <i>The Last of the Decapods</i> , <i>The Wheels of Dr. Ginochio Gyves</i> , <i>The Lady Automaton</i> , <i>The Black Shadow</i> , etc.	Lafferty calls them "clumsy magic," embodying the "awkward giant" spirit—grand, bizarre, unpolished, but fertile with possibilities.	Hence, these odd titles mirror the stories' raw imaginative power, not refined but rich in speculative potential.
S12: FERTILE GIANTS OF SF	These early, flawed stories predate the smaller, "more perfect" SF pieces that came after Verne and Wells.	Their "clumsiness" gave rise to countless new ideas and subgenres—descendants "still with us."	Thus, "the awkward giants" from this era laid the foundation for ongoing SF evolution, demonstrating how imperfection can yield enduring influence.

"Something New Under the Black Sun"

Overview

In "Something New Under The Black Suns," Lafferty explores the concept of black holes—or "black suns"—to see if truly original Science Fiction ideas can emerge outside the realm of conventional physics. By contrasting two similar books on the subject, Lafferty shows that while black holes open a realm of wild speculation about singularities, time travel, and inverted space-time, the resulting fiction has often been surprisingly unoriginal. The essay discusses the theories of collapse, "event horizons," and "singularities," noting that these concepts have caused scientists and writers alike to

produce work that is mathematically and narratively awkward. Lafferty concludes that genuine novelty requires multiple cycles of refinement before ideas become both original and elegant, underscoring that most current black-hole-based stories and speculations are still in a formative, rough state.

Summary

Lafferty begins with a proverb stating that there is “nothing new under the Sun,” then a speaker asks the “M9 Model Oracle” whether new Science Fiction ideas are possible. The Oracle replies that under ordinary suns, no new ideas remain; everything has been discovered by “H.G. Wells and Zena of Elea.” However, under a “black sun,” there could be new ideas, albeit grotesque ones.

Lafferty then receives a book entitled *Black Holes*, edited by Jerry Pournelle (co-author of *Lucifer's Hammer*), wondering if it contains truly innovative science or fiction. Lafferty explains that a “black sun” or black hole is formed when a star's matter collapses to an extremely dense point, creating gravity so strong that light cannot escape. This collapsing process leads to “singularities,” where usual mathematical laws break down, and “event horizons,” beyond which no communication is possible. Editor Pournelle cites the theory that a black hole can have a radius of zero and thus may not be in “our universe” at all.

Next, Lafferty recounts Pournelle's experience hearing Professor Stephen Hawking speak, referencing Hawking's idea that singularities might emit matter randomly and could, in theory, emit any person present in the lecture hall. Lafferty calls this an example of “New Pomposity,” pointing out that while black holes do open new territory for speculation, the science can sound bizarre or incomplete.

Turning to the anthology's fiction, Lafferty notes contributions from well-known writers like Jerry Pournelle, Larry Niven, Poul Anderson, and Mildred Broxon but finds them surprisingly stale rather than fresh. Lafferty argues that real originality grows over time through repeated reworking of ideas and that at present, neither the scientific nor the fictional attempts at black-hole narratives show full elegance or uniqueness.

Lafferty then learns from the Oracle that there was a mix-up, returning the first book and receiving a second one, *Black-Holes* by John G. Taylor, praised by *The Washington Post*. This nonfiction book also discusses event horizons, reversed time, and paradoxical notions like traveling faster than light and creating “naked singularities” that would upend all science. Lafferty highlights statements about the “ergosphere,” in which time is said to stand still, and the possibility that one could traverse inside a black hole and manipulate time. Such scenarios, Lafferty suggests, often lead to jumbled reasoning where the mathematics must be stretched, though elegance remains the litmus test for true theoretical breakthroughs.

The essay concludes with the assertion that current black-hole-based fiction and science share a roughness and lack of originality. Lafferty insists that until these ideas become more refined, they

cannot be deemed truly innovative or mathematically graceful, and Lafferty is dated “August 10, 1979.”

(Black Holes), (Einstein), (H.G. Wells), (Jerry Pournelle), (John G. Taylor), (Larry Niven), (Lucifer's Hammer), (M9 Model Oracle), (Mildred Broxon), (Newton), (Poul Anderson), (Professor Stephen Hawking), (Something New Under The Black Suns), (The Washington Post), (ZenO of Elea)

I. Introduction: The Proverb and the Title

1. "Something New Under The Black Suns"

B. Citing the proverb: “There is nothing new under the Sun”

II. Questioning the Oracle about New Ideas

1. Lafferty's Inquiry

A. “But is there any way around this proverb?... May there not be some new ideas under the sun?”

2. Oracle's Response (Ordinary Suns)

A. “Not under an ordinary sun... H.G. Wells and Zena of Elea have already discovered all Science Fiction ideas...”

3. Oracle's Suggestion (Black Suns)

A. “But under a black sun there just may be a few new Science Fiction ideas... They'd be grotesque...”

4. Lafferty's Interest

A. “Yes I would... How can I investigate this further?”

III. The First Book: Black Holes (Edited by Jerry Pournelle)

1. Receiving the Book

A. The Oracle hands over “*Black Holes*, Edited by Jerry Pournelle...”³⁰

2. Basic Explanation of Black Holes

A. A collapsing star so dense light cannot escape

³⁰ Pournelle, Jerry, ed. *Black Holes*. New York: Random House, 1978.

- B. Becomes invisible, laws of math/science break down
- C. "Singularity" and "event horizon"
- 3. Pournelle's Notes on Collapse
 - A. Theory of piling matter → infinite collapse
 - B. Radius shrinks to zero; implies "not really in this universe"
 - C. Schwarzschild singularity: space so curved it closes in on itself
- 4. Hawking's Ideas (via Pournelle)
 - A. Editor attends Stephen Hawking's lecture
 - B. Singularity can emit matter/energy, all configurations possible
- 5. Skeptical Amusement
 - A. "Morning wine" remark, drollness of random emission
 - B. Hawking suggests it could emit any person eventually
 - C. Narrator compares odds to a goldfish bowl
 - D. Mentions the "New Pomposity"

IV. New Country of Speculation

- 1. Collapse of Old Rules
 - A. "We do have a new country here..." but mathematics collapses
 - B. Possibility of almost anything
- 2. The Fiction in Pournelle's Anthology
 - A. Several black-hole-themed stories
 - B. Surprising poor quality despite notable authors
 - C. Lack of originality; "incomparable staleness"
- 3. Growth of Real Originality
 - A. True originality takes multiple cycles
 - B. Raw new ideas lack elegance as well

V. The Oracle's Correction: The Wrong Book

- 1. Disappointment & Oracle's Message
 - A. "So much for that new book... interesting in spots..."
 - B. Oracle summons: "A slight error has been made."
 - C. Narrator hurries back
 - D. Oracle confesses to giving the wrong book

2. The Correct Book: Black-Holes by John G. Taylor³¹
 - A. Returned first book to Oracle
 - B. Received “Black-Holes” (Taylor); science and speculation
 - C. Similar content to Pournelle’s work
3. Excerpts from Taylor
 - A. Ergosphere³²: star surface “frozen” near event horizon
 - B. Inside horizon, space/time reversed, possible backward time travel
 - C. Time travel → possible faster-than-light paradox
 - D. Abandoning usual “before and after,” jumping through superspace
 - E. Naked singularity = scenario that breaks all science
4. Further Reflection
 - A. “Why does contemplating a black sun turn the brains to putty?”

VI. Cornucopia Universes and Absolutes

1. Shape of the Universe
 - A. If black hole concept is valid, universe is a “horn of plenty”
 - B. Closed universes might exist everywhere
 - C. Numberless total universes, each containing all space/time
 - D. Not the same “all,” but each self-contained
 - E. Even one total black universe excludes anything outside
 - F. Possibly innumerable “one-and-only Gods”
2. Faith’s Survival
 - A. “Nothing shakes a one-and-only Faith”
 - B. We only seem to be saying these jumbled things
3. Extend the Mathematics
 - A. If current math doesn’t fit black holes, we adjust math
 - B. Better than “smashing all the worlds”

VII. Unoriginality and Elegance

³¹ Black Holes: The End of the Universe? John G. Taylor’s 1973 book, first published by Random House, provides a non-technical overview of black holes, but its conclusions are outdated due to advances in general relativity and observational astronomy. A paperback edition followed in 1974 through HarperCollins.

³² The region outside a rotating black hole where spacetime is dragged by the black hole’s rotation, allowing energy extraction via the Penrose process. It lies between the event horizon and the stationary limit surface, enabling matter to gain energy before escaping.

1. Science and Fiction Both Stutter
 - A. Both are unoriginal regarding black hole speculation
 - B. Lacking in originality and elegance
 - C. "Elegance" is indeed a test of mathematical truth
2. "How Do We Know Any of This Is So?"
 - A. We question black hole claims
 - B. Truly elegant ideas don't provoke such doubts

VIII. Conclusion

1. Date
 - A. "August 10, 1979"

SYLLOGISM NAME	PREMISE 1	PREMISE 2	CONCLUSION
1. PROVERB VS. THE SEARCH FOR NEW IDEAS	A popular proverb states, "There is nothing new under the Sun."	Lafferty asks his "M9 Model Oracle" if a genuinely new SF idea could still exist "under the sun," challenging the proverb.	Hence, the essay opens with the question whether any truly original SF idea remains possible within our normal cosmic framework.
2. NO NEW SF IDEAS UNDER ORDINARY SUNS	The Oracle replies: "Not under an ordinary sun. H.G. Wells and Zena of Elea have discovered all SF ideas possible under ordinary suns."	This suggests that all standard or classic SF concepts fit under "Wellsian" territory—no ground left for novelty in normal conditions.	Therefore, any truly 'new' SF concept must lie outside the typical realm, prompting Lafferty to seek "something else"—i.e., a "black sun."
3. BLACK SUNS MAY OFFER GROTESQUE NEWNESS	The Oracle clarifies: "But under a black sun (i.e., black hole), there just may be a few new SF ideas... They'd be grotesque."	Lafferty insists he would welcome them anyway, despite their bizarre nature.	Hence, black holes become a potential frontier for "really new" SF concepts—though such ideas might be unsettling or outlandish.
4. DEFINING A BLACK HOLE	A black hole is a collapsing star whose	In this regime, normal science/math "cease to	Conclusion: Black holes are physically "off-

	matter becomes so dense that the “escape velocity” exceeds light speed, making it invisible.	operate,” giving rise to “irrational” phenomena called the singularity.	limits” beyond the event horizon, so they represent an “impossible region” with unique potential for weird speculation.
5. POURNELLE'S SUMMARIES AND THE ZERO-RADIUS PARADOX	In <i>Black Holes</i> (ed. Jerry Pournelle), the text cites how a massive object can theoretically “collapse” to zero radius—i.e., vanish from our universe.	Schwarzschild’s “singularity” is said to be mass with zero volume, leading to the notion that the black hole “is not really in this universe at all.”	Conclusion: The idea of an object with finite mass but zero radius appears “absurd,” thus reinforcing black holes as beyond normal physics—perfect for radical SF musings.
6. HAWKING'S CLAIM OF BLACK HOLES EMITTING “ANYTHING”	Pournelle reports on Stephen Hawking’s idea that a singularity can “emit matter and energy” in “all possible configurations,” potentially re-creating people or objects at random.	Lafferty finds this outlandish—“somebody has been into the morning wine”—and nicknames it the “New Pomposity,” given the extreme improbability that a black hole might spit out a current-day human.	Hence, though black holes might allow bizarre phenomena, Lafferty mocks the notion that a hole “must eventually emit” any person here, labeling it grandiose speculation.
7. A “NEW COUNTRY” FOR SPECULATION	Despite skepticism over Hawking’s extremes, Lafferty admits black holes open “a new country in which to set our speculations,” since old math and physics may collapse.	Anything “could” happen beyond the event horizon where “the old rules go blind.”	Therefore, black holes present fresh imaginative space for SF, at least in principle.
8. BLACK-HOLE FICTION FOUND LACKING	The anthology’s fiction pieces (by Pournelle, Larry Niven, Poul Anderson, etc.) disappoint Lafferty: they’re “not very good” or original.	This is surprising given the top-tier authors and the seemingly fertile “new area” black holes might offer.	Conclusion: Merely adopting black holes as a theme fails to guarantee creative “newness”; the stories remain stale and derivative.

9. THE GROWTH OF REAL ORIGINALITY	Lafferty posits, “Real originality grows,” requiring multiple cycles of reworking to discard stale elements and achieve elegance.	Because black-hole SF concepts have barely begun, they still feel clumsy and unoriginal—like first drafts of truly new ideas.	Hence, truly new black-hole SF will take time to mature, implying these initial attempts can’t yet display authentic creativity.
10. THE ORACLE’S “WRONG BOOK” MIX-UP	The M9 Oracle confesses it first gave Lafferty the <i>wrong</i> volume. Lafferty returns <i>Black Holes</i> (ed. Pournelle) and receives <i>Black-Holes</i> by John G. Taylor instead.	But Lafferty finds the second book essentially covers the same outlandish claims (event horizon “freezing,” time reversal, FTL paradoxes), though labeled as “serious speculation” rather than SF.	Conclusion: Even “solid science” on black holes matches the same extreme speculation** found in the Pournelle anthology—just absent a fiction label.
11. TIME REVERSAL, FTL, MEETING OURSELVES	Taylor’s book describes how at/inside the event horizon, time and space might swap roles, enabling traveling backward in time or “moving around” in time.	This leads to paradoxes like surpassing light speed or “meeting ourselves,” which would overturn standard science.	Therefore, black-hole discourse (both SF and scientific) is rife with mind-bending paradoxes, tempting speculation that normal causality breaks down.
12. BRAIN-TURNS-TO-PUTTY & UNIVERSE CORNUCOPIA	Lafferty wonders why “contemplating a black sun turns brains to putty,” as it leads to the notion of an endlessly fruitful “cornucopia” universe with infinite closed sub-universes.	Some even posit “one-and-only Gods” in separate self-contained cosmoses. Yet Lafferty notes none of this necessarily overturns a “one-and-only Faith,” because we might be misreading incomplete data.	Hence, black-hole speculation can yield mind-numbing extremes—but fundamental faith or worldview need not be destroyed by these partial, chaotic visions.
13. BETTER TO EXTEND MATH THAN SMASH WORLDS	If current math can’t handle black holes, Lafferty says we should “extend it a trifle,” rather than “smashing and exploding all the worlds.”	In other words, new frameworks can incorporate black-hole paradoxes without discarding everything else.	Conclusion: The proper response to black-hole riddles is not total upheaval** but careful refinement of theories, preserving rational continuity.

14. UNORIGINAL FICTIONS & SCIENCE BOTH LACK "ELEGANCE"	Lafferty deems the black-hole stories (in Pournelle's book) "unoriginal," and the stuttering "new science" similarly so. Both fail to show a certain "elegance" that signals genuine, coherent truth.	He calls "elegance" the ultimate test: truly elegant ideas do not invite the question "Is any of this so?" because they convey inherent plausibility.	Thus, neither black-hole fiction nor current black-hole science is yet "elegant or original." The very fact we doubt them proves they aren't in a final or truly new state.
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Black Holes: Regions of spacetime where gravity prevents anything, including light, from escaping, predicted by Einstein's general relativity.

Einstein: (1879–1955) Theoretical physicist who developed special and general relativity, fundamentally shaping modern physics.

H.G. Wells: (1866–1946) British science fiction writer, author of *The Time Machine* (1895) and *The War of the Worlds* (1898), a pioneer of the genre.

Jerry Pournelle: (1933–2017) American science fiction writer, co-author of *Lucifer's Hammer* (1977) with Larry Niven, known for military and hard science fiction.

John G. Taylor: British physicist and author of *Black Holes: The End of the Universe?* (1973), a popular science book on black holes.

Larry Niven: (b. 1938) American science fiction writer, best known for *Ringworld* (1970) and collaborations with Jerry Pournelle, including *Lucifer's Hammer* (1977).

Lucifer's Hammer. A 1977 novel by Larry Niven and Jerry Pournelle, depicting a catastrophic comet impact and its aftermath.

Mildred Broxon: Science fiction and fantasy writer, author of *Too Long a Sacrifice* (1981).

Newton: (1643–1727) Isaac Newton, physicist and mathematician, formulated the laws of motion and universal gravitation.

Poul Anderson: (1926–2001) American science fiction and fantasy writer, known for *Tau Zero* (1970) and *The High Crusade* (1960).

Professor Stephen Hawking: (1942–2018) British theoretical physicist, known for black hole thermodynamics and *A Brief History of Time* (1988).

The Washington Post: American newspaper, founded in 1877, known for investigative journalism and political coverage.

Zeno of Elea: (c. 490–430 BCE) Greek philosopher known for paradoxes exploring the nature of motion and infinity.

“More Worlds Than One”

Overview

In “More Worlds Than One?” Lafferty questions whether multiple inhabited worlds can exist—let alone multiple universes—while suggesting that Earth’s life-friendly conditions might be uniquely orchestrated. Lafferty analyzes the extraordinary fine-tuning of numerous planetary parameters, from orbit eccentricity to atmospheric composition, arguing that even with billions of planets, no other world might replicate Earth’s delicate balance. Lafferty takes issue with scientists like Isaac Asimov and Carl Sagan, who assume abundant extraterrestrial civilizations, labeling their stance as “Advocacy Science.” Concluding with a dramatic image of an angry crowd punishing dissent, the essay insists that the uniqueness of Earth’s life is both highly plausible and fiercely opposed by those who champion a universe brimming with aliens.

Summary

Lafferty begins with the question, “May there be more inhabited worlds than one?” and warns of the hostility awaiting anyone who answers “no.” It then raises the broader possibility of multiple universes, speculating that such universes might lack familiar concepts like space or time. Lafferty suggests that neither atoms nor suns, nor even gods or people, could detect such other universes if they exist—and notes that some individuals discourage invoking “God” in the argument.

Focusing on our own universe, Lafferty asks if life as found on Earth is unique, explaining that Earth’s precise conditions may be unrepeatable. A hypothetical “demiurge” might miss our narrowly defined temperature range for life by sampling it too coarsely. Lafferty details Earth’s special features: the right distance from the Sun, an appropriate orbit, seasons provided by a tilted axis, and the Moon’s gravitational influence, among others. Each factor—atmospheric composition, planet size, and cosmic cycles—must interlock precisely to support carbon-based life. Temperatures too cold or too hot over most of the cosmic scale would make life impossible, further emphasizing Earth’s rare fit.

Lafferty underscores that even if a planet meets the correct conditions, life does not spontaneously arise without “somebody” breathing life into it. It criticizes Isaac Asimov and Carl Sagan for suggesting that tens of thousands or millions of civilizations inevitably follow from the bare possibility of suitable planets. Such claims, Lafferty argues, arise from a “secular-liberal-agnostic-relativistic”

insistence on non-uniqueness. The essay also notes that Science Fiction has a vested interest in multiple inhabited worlds, but it is only fictional speculation.

As the conclusion nears, the writer imagines facing a murderous crowd angered by the assertion that Earth's life is likely singular. The onlookers prepare to stone Lafferty, break bones, and blind him, refusing his defense that Earth's life might be the only one of its kind. Lafferty ends with a grim appeal for "soft rocks," dated "October 18, 1979."

(Carl Sagan), (Demiurge), (Earth), (Establishment), (God), (Isaac Asimov), (More Worlds Than One?), (October 18, 1979), (Science Fiction)

I. The Opening Questions

1. Title and Primary Inquiry

- A. "Here: More Worlds Than One?"
- B. "May there be more inhabited worlds than one?"

II. Challenges to the Accepted Affirmative

1. Potential Hostility

- A. "Whet not your knives at me... You thought the question was answered..."
- B. Threat of punishment if one dissents from the affirmative

2. Extending the Question

- A. "May there be more Universes than one?"
- B. Our own Universe appears uniform, with consistent elements and math
- C. Queries whether other universes might have entirely different categories
- D. Unknowable realms—only "God" might know

3. Mysteries of Space and Knowledge

- A. Where would other universes be, if ours extends forever?
- B. Possibly no "place" if they lack space/time
- C. No earthly being (man or god) would detect them
- D. Comic aside: "Yes, I would know it," God says, but we cannot

4. The Establishment Interjection

- A. "Keep that guy (God) out of this," say the knife-whetters
- B. Concludes this is unresolvable, creates uncertainty for all that follows

III. Earth's Uniqueness and Life's Specificity

1. Is Earth's "life affair" singular?
 - A. Are conditions repeated? Or is Earth's setup unique?
 - B. Might Earth's environment be an impossible-to-duplicate juggling act?
2. Temperature Constraints
 - A. Temperature scale from 0 to 100 million degrees
 - B. Only a tiny fraction near the bottom can host carbon-cycle life
 - C. Above that sliver, it is all too hot for such life
3. The Demiurge³³ Thought Experiment
 - A. Hypothetical alien test would skip the crucial narrow range
 - B. Concluding "No life" if not tested precisely
4. Planet-Centric Need
 - A. Only a planet can maintain that tight temperature window
 - B. Earth is "very, very, very special"
5. Earth's Delicate Balances
 - A. Seasonal tilt (25° 27'), day/night rotation, slightly eccentric orbit
 - B. Right distance from sun, correct atmosphere, suitable solar output
6. Further Essential Motions
 - A. "Five other motions" of Earth plus moon's influence
 - B. Other planets have negligible effect
7. Cycles and Atmospheric Selection
 - A. Various cycles (sun-spots, ice-ages) also crucial
 - B. Right planet mass → correct gravity → selective atmosphere
 - C. Oceans + crustal development fundamental for life
8. Complexity of Requirements
 - A. Hundreds of factors for carbon-cycle life
 - B. The entire "possibility equation" has 200–700 variables
 - C. Looks like Earth is made for life, or life made for Earth

IV. Probability and Arguments on Other Worlds

³³ Originating in Plato's *Timaeus*, the Demiurge is depicted as a divine craftsman shaping the cosmos from pre-existing chaos. Later, Middle Platonists and Gnostics reinterpreted the concept, with Gnosticism often portraying the Demiurge as an ignorant or malevolent creator distinct from the true transcendent God. Neoplatonism, particularly in Plotinus, subordinated the Demiurge to higher metaphysical principles, influencing Christian and medieval thought.

1. Rarity of Another Fit
 - A. “Conditions fit the Earth” but is that repeated among “billion billion billion” planets?
 - B. Life’s spark not inevitable; requires “somebody” to breathe life into conditions
 - C. Emergence of life not guaranteed by mere chemistry
2. Sagan and Asimov’s Position³⁴
 - A. They assert thousands or millions of candidate planets
 - B. Critique: they leap from possibility to inevitability, “crooked gambler” approach
3. Multiplicity of Civilizations
 - A. They posit huge numbers of alien societies, many surpassing Earth’s
4. Advocacy Science
 - A. A “powerful lobby” insists on numerous superior civilizations
 - B. “Secular-liberal-agnostic-relativistic” scientists reject uniqueness
 - C. They cannot let Earth/humanity be singular; it would kill their worldview

V. The Role of Science Fiction and the Violent Reaction

1. Sci-Fi’s Vested Interest
 - A. SF depends on multiple inhabited worlds
 - B. People presumably won’t defend fiction as fiercely as core beliefs
2. Opposition to Uniqueness
 - A. Narrator claims Earth, human species are likely unique
 - B. Audience reacts with violence: stoning, cutting muscles, knives
 - C. Sarcastic remarks about blindfold cost
3. Final Plea
 - A. Lafferty’s “last request”: throw only soft rocks
 - B. “Those hard rocks hurt”
 - B. “October 18, 1979”

SYLLOGISM NAME	PREMISE 1	PREMISE 2	CONCLUSION
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³⁴ Isaac Asimov (1920–1992) and Carl Sagan (1934–1996) were influential science communicators and advocates for rational inquiry. Sagan, an astrophysicist, popularized cosmology through *Cosmos* (1980) and SETI advocacy, while Asimov, a prolific science fiction writer and polymath, integrated scientific concepts into his fiction and essays.

1. THE CENTRAL QUESTION: "MORE INHABITED WORLDS?"	Lafferty raises the question: "May there be more inhabited worlds than one?"	He notes that modern opinion (the "Establishment") generally answers yes and punishes dissent.	Hence, he sets out to challenge the common belief in multiple inhabited worlds, risking condemnation.
2. POSSIBILITY OF MULTIPLE UNIVERSES	Lafferty asks if there might be more universes than one, each with different categories (not necessarily space, time, or matter).	If so, these other universes are undetectable by us—no atom, planet, or god (in <i>our</i> universe) would perceive them.	Therefore, we can't rule them out nor confirm them, leaving a "large and undecided point" overshadowing further discussion.
3. OUR UNIVERSE'S CONSISTENCY	In our single universe, hydrogen is hydrogen everywhere, the same mathematics prevails, and known categories (space, time, gravity, etc.) "infuse" the cosmos.	This uniformity suggests an "overall pattern or characteristic" that extends across galaxies and clusters, implying that any place in <i>this</i> universe is subject to similar cosmic laws.	Hence, any question of other inhabited worlds must consider that the entire known universe shares certain fundamental constraints.
4. THE EARTH'S UNIQUENESS FOR LIFE	Lafferty underscores that Earth's "life affair" depends on highly specific temperature constraints, orbital eccentricities, seasonal tilts, and more.	Even a slight variation in gravity or distance from the Sun could ruin these conditions. Earth's atmosphere, oceans, rotation, moon-influence, etc., are all "very, very, very special."	Conclusion: Earth's conditions are extremely fine-tuned—"like a juggler's act" balancing many local factors to allow carbon-cycle life.
5. NARROW WINDOW FOR CARBON-BASED LIFE	Temperatures in our universe range from 0 to 100 million degrees.	Only a minuscule band (some fraction of 1 millionth of that range) supports carbon-cycle life, if also accompanied by "a hundred other conditions."	Therefore, the chance of replicating Earth's temperature band on another planet is extremely small, even before considering the other 200+ variables.
6. RARITY VS. INEVITABLE LIFE	Lafferty notes the miraculous nature of life's origin, requiring "somebody to breathe	Asimov and Sagan assume that if tens of thousands of planets fulfill the conditions for life, then life "must"	Hence, Lafferty calls it a "deceptive step" from "life is possible" to "life is inevitable," implying that simple possibility does

	life” into the correct chemical conditions.	appear automatically, leading to countless civilizations.	not guarantee life’s spontaneous generation.
7. THE “SECULAR-LIBERAL” ADVOCACY SCIENCE	Certain secular-liberal-agnostic-relativistic scientists vigorously advocate the existence of many inhabited worlds.	They cannot allow Earth, Life, or Humanity to be unique; that would contradict their worldview and “kill” them to admit a special case.	Conclusion: The push for multiple advanced civilizations partly stems from ideological or “advocacy” motives, not purely neutral science.
8. SCIENCE FICTION’S VESTED INTEREST	Lafferty notes SF as a genre thrives on stories about many inhabited worlds and alien civilizations.	If Earth were unique, large swaths of SF would lose a core premise—hence SF writers/readers strongly favor the “plurality of worlds” stance.	Hence, SF’s imaginary scenarios also reinforce the belief in many civilizations—but SF is, by nature, “only a fiction.”
9. STONING THE HERETIC	Lafferty ironically laments that stating Earth is “very likely unique,” with human life “absolutely unique,” enrages mainstream believers in cosmic pluralism.	He depicts them “cutting his hamstrings” and “putting out his eyes” for such heresy, mocking the hostility of fans/scientists who refuse “Earth’s uniqueness.”	Therefore, the final comedic image: Lafferty is metaphorically stoned for defying dogma about many inhabited worlds—highlighting the vehemence with which many defend the standard viewpoint.
10. CONCLUSION: EARTH’S LIKELY UNIQUENESS	Lafferty explicitly states his own belief: Earth is “the only life there is,” carbon-based life is “almost certainly unique” in our universe, and humankind is “absolutely unique” among material creation.	This runs against the widespread assumption of multiple advanced civilizations.	Hence, Lafferty’s final stance: Despite hostility, he holds that our planet alone hosts life, and “there is no equal to humanity” in all the billions of planets.
11. A WIDER COSMIC UNCERTAINTY	The text ends with a comedic petition: “throw only soft rocks” as they stone	Lafferty’s entire argument is couched in disclaimers about multiple universes or	Conclusion: Lafferty admits cosmic uncertainty but remains unwavering in the face

	him, referencing the unstoppable dogmatism he faces.	possible unknowns, but for our known universe, Earth's life is likely unique.	of mainstream fervor, he contends Earth/Human life stands alone.
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“For a Litte Bit of Gold”

Overview

Lafferty compares reading Science Fiction to panning for gold in the mountains—hinting that, despite an often small yield of true “gold,” the search remains enticing. He opens with a personal anecdote about prospecting in New Guinea, drawing a parallel to the quest for worthwhile stories within the genre. Several recent books are surveyed, revealing only scattered moments of genuine brilliance, often overshadowed by less remarkable material. Lafferty acknowledges that older, once-prized works can also seem dull upon revisiting, but remains hopeful that future readings will uncover brighter literary gems.

Summary

The essay begins by remarking that some of the best “fiction” by Science Fiction and Fantasy writers appears in their own biographical notes, which often exaggerate past occupations. Lafferty confesses being tempted to claim he was a “Gold Prospector and Miner in the Mountain Wildness of New Guinea,” noting that it is technically true in a small, short-lived sense. He recounts his time in the U.S. Army during World War II, stationed in Milne Bay, New Guinea, where Australian prospectors had previously discovered gold. Off-duty soldiers tried panning for leftover gold dust in mountain torrents. While a few secured several ounces, Lafferty found only “small flecks,” alongside fool’s gold and other deceptive minerals, likening this experience to the difficulty of finding real value in Science Fiction.

He extends the metaphor to his recent reading of seven Science Fiction books, emphasizing that the actual “gold” is often minimal. First, he reviews *The Fountains of Paradise* by Arthur C. Clarke, describing it as a novel built around an orbital structure (“Sky Hook” or “Jacob’s Ladder”) but lacking the depth or originality found in Clarke’s earlier works like *Childhood’s End* or *Rendezvous With Rama*. He concludes that despite Clarke’s record of excellence, this book provides no real gold.

Second is *Stardance* by Spider and Jeanne Robinson, which originally contained a Nebula- and Hugo-winning novella. The narrative focuses on a dancer who fails on Earth due to her body type but succeeds in zero gravity. Though the plot about alien sparkles threatening Earth is weak, the dance element carries a surprising power, yielding unexpected “gol” in its artistic dimension.

Third, *The Very Slow Time Machine* by Ian Watson is said to contain no gold but plenty of British “Sterling Silver,” reflecting Watson’s unique comic and grotesque style. Fourth, in *Cautionary Tales* by Chelsea Quinn Yarbro, Lafferty finds no gold, only polished or loud brass, although three out of thirteen stories prove reasonably good.

Finally, three anthology-style works are considered together: *Galactic Empires (Vol. One)* edited by Brian Aldiss, *The Hugo Winners (Vol. 3, Book 2)* edited by Isaac Asimov, and *The Road to Science Fiction #3, From Heinlein to Here* edited by James Gunn. These collections contain award-winning tales, including one by Lafferty, theoretically “solid gold.” Yet much of this older material has lost some of its shine upon re-reading—like old fairy-tale hoards turned to ash. Even Lafferty’s own story seems less luminous than he remembered, though it still holds some charm as “novelty-grown-old.”

Lafferty ends with optimism that genuine new gold might be found in forthcoming works, reminding readers that some reading weeks simply offer fewer treasures than others. It is dated “February 12, 1980.”

(Arthur C. Clarke), (Australian), (Brian Aldiss), (Cautionary Tales), (Chelsea Quinn Yarbro), (Childhood's End), (Fantasy), (February 12, 1980), (Fools-gold), (For A Little Bit Of Gold), (Galactic Empires), (Ian Watson), (Jacob's Ladder), (James Gunn), (Jeanne Robinson), (Milne Bay), (Nebula), (New Guinea), (Prince Albert Period), (Queen Anne Period), (Rendezvous With Rama), (Sky Hook), (Spider Robinson), (Stardance), (Stardancers), (Starseed), (Tales From The White Hart), (The Fountains of Paradise), (The Hugo Winners), (The Road to Science Fiction #3, From Heinlein to Here), (The Very Slow Time Machine), (U.S. Army), (World War II)

I. Introduction

1. Writers' Biographical “Fiction”

- A. Many SF/F authors create glamorous backstories
- B. These notes are adventurous but largely fictional
- C. Lafferty is tempted to claim “Gold Prospector in New Guinea”
- D. Technically true, but only briefly

II. The WWII Gold Prospecting Experience

1. Milne Bay, New Guinea

- A. Stationed there during World War II
- B. Australians had found gold decades earlier
- C. Potential leftover gold undiscovered

2. Searching the Mountains

- A. Soldiers climbed “new-looking” mountains to placer-mine
- B. Some got several ounces over three months
- C. Others (including narrator) found only flecks
- D. Abundance of “fools-gold” and minimal real gold

III. The SF Reading Analogy

- 1. Low “Gold” Yield in Science Fiction
 - A. “Percentage of real gold” is small
 - B. SF is tall, fresh, with many “almost gold” metals
- 2. Seven Books Reviewed
 - A. Lafferty has finished seven SF books at once

IV. Detailed Book Assessments

- 1. The Fountains of Paradise (Arthur C. Clarke)
 - A. Clarke usually provides “real gold” in works like Childhood’s End, Rama
 - B. Here, “the gold almost fails”—centered on a Sky Hook concept
 - C. Rushing from crisis to crisis with trivial solutions
 - D. Deemed a “bad one,” no gold found
- 2. Stardance (Spider & Jeanne Robinson)
 - A. Contrasts with Clarke’s track record
 - B. Premise: a plus-sized dancer excels in zero-G, becomes a sensation
 - C. Sparkling alien threat, dancer “communicates” via dance, then dies
 - D. Storyline weak, but pockets of “pure gold” in the dance portrayal
 - E. Jeanne Robinson’s choreography likely key to the magical effect
 - F. Later novellas less successful, but “unexpected gold” emerged
- 3. The Very Slow Time Machine (Ian Watson)
 - A. “No gold,” but strong “British Sterling Silver”
 - B. British comedic/grotesque “silver-smithing”
 - C. Four of thirteen stories are “very good”
- 4. Cautionary Tales (Chelsea Quinn Yarbro)
 - A. Again, “no gold,” only “brass”
 - B. Personal aside: her hair color changed
 - C. Three of thirteen tales are good, but no gold

5. Galactic Empires, Vol. One (Ed. Brian Aldiss)
6. The Hugo Winners, Vol. 3, Book 2 (Ed. Isaac Asimov)
7. The Road to Science Fiction #3 (Ed. James Gunn)
 - A. These anthologies gather “certified gold” from 1943–1976
 - B. Each includes one of Lafferty’s own stories
 - C. Expected a “treasure of gold,” but found it dimmed
 - D. Old classics can feel like “fairy-tale gold turned to ashes”
 - E. Even Lafferty’s older stories lost some shine

V. Concluding Reflection

1. Remembered vs. Revisited Gold
 - A. Old gold is duller upon rereading
 - B. Some wonders remain: “spaciousness” and “novelty”
2. Hope in Future Discoveries
 - A. True brightness of gold “must be in the future”
 - B. The “Science Fiction Mountains” still hold potential new treasures
3. Uneven Yield
 - A. Some reading weeks yield less gold than others
 - B. “February 12, 1980”

SYLLOGISM NAME	PREMISE 1	PREMISE 2	CONCLUSION
1. FICTIONAL BIOGRAPHIES BY SF WRITERS	Many SF and Fantasy authors produce “glamorous accounts” of past occupations in their short bio notes, often highly adventurous and romantic.	Lafferty claims these accounts “are largely fictional,” making them some of the best “fiction” they write.	Hence, SF writers sometimes create mythic self-portraits, embellishing real facts with imaginative details to amuse or intrigue readers.
2. LAFFERTY’S OWN ‘GOLD PROSPECTOR’ TALE	Lafferty himself “technically” once mined gold in New Guinea (WWII service, U.S. Army) for a short	He and other soldiers panned in mountain pools; some got multiple ounces, others only tiny flecks.	Conclusion: Lafferty can truthfully call himself a “Gold Prospector,” yet in practice he gleaned only specks—an apt

	time on Milne Bay peninsula, where Australians had found gold earlier.	Lafferty ended with “almost microscopic amounts” of real gold plus “fools-gold” (iron pyrites, etc.).	metaphor for gleaning small bits of precious content from a large deposit.
3. SEARCHING SF FOR RARE GOLD	Just as those fresh New Guinea mountains yielded much “almost gold” but few real grains, reading SF yields mostly lesser metals (tin, brass, babbitt alloy) and occasional true gold.	SF is “tall and spacious and new,” but the actual ratio of genuine excellence to lesser content is small.	Hence, Lafferty likens reading SF to prospecting: one must sift through a lot of “fools-gold” to find those precious flakes or nuggets.
4. CLARKE'S “FOUNTAINS OF PARADISE”: NO GOLD FOUND	Lafferty examines Clarke's new novel, having expected at least some gold, for Clarke wrote many good books (e.g., <i>Childhood's End</i> , <i>Rendezvous with Rama</i>).	Instead, <i>Fountains of Paradise</i> rehashes an old “sky elevator” concept, full of trivial solutions to crises—thus it's a “bad one” with no gold gleaned.	Therefore, even proven authors like Clarke sometimes yield no valuable content in new works, disappointing the hopeful “prospector.”
5. ROBINSONS' “STARDANCE”: SURPRISING GOLD	<i>Stardance</i> 's premise—dancing in zero gravity, cosmic fireflies that threaten Earth, the dancer's heroic contact—appears contrived.	Yet Lafferty finds “sparkles and dazzles of pure gold” in how it conveys the “power of dance,” crediting Jeanne Robinson's choreographic insight for an “unexpectedly superior performance.”	Conclusion: Despite a weak storyline, artistic brilliance (the dance element) infuses “unexpected gold,” proving that some weak SF can still hold bursts of genuine excellence.
6. WATSON'S “THE VERY SLOW TIME MACHINE”: BRITISH SILVER	Ian Watson's short stories contain “no gold” but do exhibit a distinctive verbal craftsmanship akin to British silver-smithing.	Four of the thirteen stories are “very good,” so the collection has a high success ratio, but still lacks gold—just sterling silver.	Thus, not all valuable SF is gold-level; “solid silver” can still be enjoyable and skillful—an intermediate tier of quality.
7. YARBRO'S “CAUTIONARY	Chelsea Quinn Yarbrow's story	Three of thirteen tales stand out, but again	Conclusion: Another example** of decent SF

TALES": BRIGHT BRASS	collection glitters "like brass," sometimes polished or loud, but never actual gold.	none is golden—only "brass."	that falls short of the "gold" standard, offering an entertaining metallic shine but lacking deeper value.
8. THREE ANTHOLOGIES OF "CERTIFIED" GOLD	(a) <i>Galactic Empires</i> , Vol. One (ed. Aldiss), (b) <i>The Hugo Winners</i> , Vol. 3, Book 2 (ed. Asimov), (c) <i>The Road to SF #3</i> (ed. Gunn) reprint top-tier old stories from 1943–1976, all "Best of the Best," including one Lafferty story each.	One would presume these anthologies overflow with "solid gold," representing the classics.	Hence, great expectation: if any books promise guaranteed gold, it's these "best-of" collections—especially with Lafferty's own stories inside.
9. THE DULLING OF REVISITED GOLD	Yet Lafferty notices that re-reading these "old golden" stories feels like finding a "golden hoard" turned to cinders—some "dimness" or tarnish creeps in.	Even his own reprinted stories don't shine as brightly as memory suggested. The novelty factor has aged, losing some sparkle.	Conclusion: Classic SF can lose its luster over time—the "remembered gold" is not as radiant on revisiting, though it retains some charm and wonder.
10. THE FUTURE: WHERE GOLD GLITTERS AGAIN	Despite older classics seeming duller, Lafferty insists SF remains the "freshest mountains" with "sharp colors just invented," always offering potential for "new gold."	He warns, though, that "some weeks' readings" yield fewer treasures than others—prospecting continues.	Therefore, Lafferty's final note: the best, brightest gold may lie in future SF yet to be written, reminding readers to keep searching the "pleasant and ever-cheating" SF mountains for fresh discoveries.

Arthur C. Clarke: British science fiction writer (1917–2008), known for *Rendezvous with Rama* (1973) and *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968), blending scientific speculation with visionary storytelling.

Brian Aldiss: British science fiction writer (1925–2017), known for *Hothouse* (1962) and *Helliconia* (1982–1985), influential in the New Wave movement.

Cautionary Tales: Stories warning against specific behaviors or societal trajectories, often found in dystopian and science fiction literature.

Chelsea Quinn Yarbro: American author (b. 1942), best known for the *Saint-Germain* series, blending historical fiction and horror.

Childhood's End: Arthur C. Clarke's 1953 novel exploring human evolution, alien intervention, and transcendence, considered a classic of science fiction.

Fantasy: A literary genre featuring supernatural elements, mythic themes, and imaginative worlds, distinct from but often overlapping with science fiction.

Galactic Empires: A common science fiction trope involving large interstellar civilizations, exemplified in Isaac Asimov's *Foundation* series.

Ian Watson: British science fiction writer (b. 1943), known for *The Embedding* (1973) and his work on *The Books of the Black Current*.

Jacob's Ladder: A biblical reference often used metaphorically in literature and science fiction to signify ascension, transcendence, or connection between realms.

James Gunn: American science fiction writer and scholar (1923–2020), known for *The Listeners* (1972) and *The Road to Science Fiction* anthology series.

Jeanne Robinson: American-born Canadian writer (1948–2010), co-author of *Stardance* (1977) with her husband Spider Robinson, blending dance and space exploration.

Milne Bay: A province in Papua New Guinea, historically significant for the Battle of Milne Bay (1942) during World War II.

Nebula: A prestigious science fiction and fantasy award, first presented in 1966 by the Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America (SFWA).

Prince Albert Period: A term used in antique furniture and design, corresponding to the mid-Victorian era (circa 1850s–1860s) under Prince Albert's influence.

Queen Anne Period: A stylistic period in architecture and furniture (early 18th century) associated with Queen Anne of England (reigned 1702–1714).

Rendezvous with Rama: Arthur C. Clarke's 1973 novel about first contact with an enigmatic alien spacecraft, a cornerstone of hard science fiction.

Sky Hook: A hypothetical or fictional space elevator concept, often appearing in science fiction as a means of orbit-to-ground transport.

Spider Robinson: American-born Canadian science fiction writer (b. 1948), known for the *Callahan's Crosstime Saloon* series and *Stardance* (1977).

***Stardance*:** A 1977 novel by Spider and Jeanne Robinson, depicting a zero-gravity dance form and human evolution in space.

Stardancers: The plural form referring to the beings or characters in *Stardance*, embodying the novel's themes of artistic transcendence and space adaptation.

***Starseed*:** A concept in speculative fiction involving cosmic ancestry or genetic enhancement, explored in works like *Starseed* (1982) by Spider and Jeanne Robinson.

***Tales from the White Hart*:** A 1957 collection of humorous science fiction stories by Arthur C. Clarke, set in a fictional London pub frequented by eccentric storytellers.

The Fountains of Paradise: A 1979 novel by Arthur C. Clarke, popularizing the modern concept of a space elevator based on theoretical physics.

The Hugo Winners: An anthology series compiling Hugo Award-winning stories, originally edited by Isaac Asimov.

***The Road to Science Fiction #3, From Heinlein to Here*:** A 1979 anthology edited by James Gunn, tracing key works in science fiction from mid-century to contemporary authors.

***The Very Slow Time Machine*:** A 1979 short story collection by Ian Watson, featuring innovative and metafictional science fiction narratives.

U.S. Army: The land service branch of the United States Armed Forces, significant in both historical conflicts and speculative fiction settings.

“Riddle-Writers of the Isthmus”

Overview

In “Riddle-Writers Of The Isthmus,” Lafferty cites Alexander Pope’s *An Essay on Man* to illustrate humanity’s paradoxical status as both grand and flawed. Lafferty explores the idea of a “Fall” that situates humans on a narrow isthmus, restricting once-magical abilities. Through references to various science fiction and fantasy tropes—such as “After the Catastrophe” scenarios, sword-and-

sorcery narratives, and uncanny or supernatural tales—Lafferty suggests that these stories echo an older, forgotten reality. The essay proposes that reawakening these latent powers hinges on solving riddles about our true nature, culminating in a question—“What is your own name?”—that, if answered, grants a return to our original state of mastery.

Summary

Lafferty begins by referencing Alexander Pope’s lines from *An Essay on Man*, describing humans as “darkly wise and rudely great,” a “jest and riddle of the world.” Lafferty notes that, while we are not the sole judges of truth nor endlessly erring, the rest of Pope’s depiction applies to humanity. The essay introduces the concept of reading humanity’s riddle, acknowledging science, intuition, and other approaches as partial solutions.

It states that all riddle-writers in many fields—science fiction included—are effectively recalling a grand “History of the World” in fragments, theorizing who humans really are and how we fell from a higher state. Lafferty mentions “After the Fall” themes common in modern science fiction, calling them “After the Catastrophe” or “Love in the Ruins” stories, placing the “Fall” at various points in time. It suggests that most people retain only amnesia about this event, with some denying it outright. However, Lafferty insists that anthropology and “competent historians” recognize a real “Fall of Man” separating pre-history from history.

Next, the essay acknowledges a modern reluctance to delve into “religion” within science fiction. Yet it maintains that the Fall theme underpins High Fantasy, sword-and-sorcery, and tales about animals merging with humanity—citing references to *Tarzan*, *Planet-of-the-Apes*, and *Island-of-Doctor-Moreau*. Lafferty also links the fascination with ghostly and supernatural stories to an era when humans supposedly contained these spiritual dimensions. Meanwhile, space travel fantasies reflect memories of once-instant cosmic movement, ecological utopias recall a time when animals coexisted peacefully, and invention stories hint at a lost power to create by mere thought.

Lafferty then lists grand abilities humans once had, including freezing time, walking on water or through walls, and performing instant transmutations like the “Midas Touch.” All such feats, it states, became inhibited upon entering the isthmus of the current human condition. According to Lafferty, solving the riddle of who we truly are would free us from these limits, for we have already left the isthmus in some deeper sense.

Concluding, Lafferty frames these ideas as “The Only True History of the World and of the Lords of the World,” though it may sound like a “very poor Science Fiction story.” A final anecdote describes a hero who answers ten thousand riddles but fails to answer the last one, “What is your own name?” That riddle, if resolved, would lead to regaining all lost capabilities. Lafferty is dated “March 21 , 1980.”

(After the Catastrophe), (Alexander Pope), (An Essay on Man), (Fall of Man), (High Fantasy), (Island-of-Doctor-Moreau), (Love in the Ruins), (March 21 , 1980), (Midas Touch), (Planet-of-the-Apes),

(Religion), (Riddle-Writers Of The Isthmus), (Sword-and-sorcery), (Tarzan), (Tales-of-the-Mysterious-and-Macabre), (Tales-of-the-Uncanny-and-Supernatural), (The Only True History of the World and of the Lords of the World), (Weird Tales)

I. Opening Reference: Pope's Lines and the Isthmus

1. Title and Source
 - A. "Riddle-Writers Of The Isthmus"
 - B. Alexander Pope's *An Essay on Man* quotation
 - a. "Placed on this isthmus of a middle state..."
 - b. Humanity described as "darkly wise and rudely great... the glory, jest, and riddle of the world"
2. Introductory Commentary
 - a. Notes that humans are not truly the "Sole judge of truth"
 - b. Argues we are "beings darkly wise and rudely great," with spotted glory but real capacity
3. The Human Riddle
 - A. Idea that we must read "the riddle of the world and of ourselves"
 - B. Mentions "one of the tall labors assigned to us" is solving this riddle
 - C. Positions the essay as a reflection on that riddle

II. Multi-Sided Riddle and the Role of Riddle-Writers

1. Science, Intuition, and Other Sides
 - A. "One side ... named 'science,' another side is 'intuition'"
 - B. A many-sided riddle, some sides are bright, others dark
 - C. "We lack even a clear statement of the riddle..."
2. Mirrors and "Garbled Remembrances"
 - A. "Various obscure mirrors held up by riddle-writers"
 - B. They reflect an "authentic history of the world" in partial or scrambled forms
 - C. Their works are "garbled 'Remembrances of Great Things Past'"
3. Consensus on a Fall
 - A. Riddle-writers "spin theories" of humanity's purpose, plight, true appearance
 - B. All essentially agree "there was a Fall from a higher and more pleasant place"
 - C. Some place the Fall at humanity's beginning; others place it in near future or present

III. After the Fall: Amnesia and Catastrophe Themes

1. "After the Catastrophe" SF Stories
 - A. Called "After the Fall" or "Love in the Ruins" type stories
 - B. Many depict ruin or collapse reflecting the primal Fall

2. Collective Amnesia about the Fall
 - A. "Most agree ... it has been forced out of conventional memory"
 - B. "It is the most enigmatic part of the life riddle"
 - C. Some deny it outright; others see it in "inherited folk impressions"
3. The Fall in History and Anthropology
 - A. "Any competent practitioner ... knows man is 'The Fallen Creature'"
 - B. Possibly divides "history from pre-history"
 - C. Hints that it shapes all major mythic or psychological accounts

IV. Religion as a Taboo in Modern SF

1. The Outcry: "Hold! Go no further!"
 - A. "You are coming too near ... 'religion!'"
 - B. Suggests "Religion" is taboo in conventional SF circles
2. Narrowness of SF's Allowed Speculation
 - A. Likens it to how science was 100 years ago
 - B. "SF stands ... not far enough to see we have passed the isthmus"
 - C. Notes many SF creators still avoid actual religious themes

V. The Fall's Echoes in Science Fiction and Fantasy Tropes

1. High Fantasy and Memory of Magic
 - A. "Breath of life of High Fantasy" is the memory of a lost magical era
 - B. Sword-and-sorcery's "memory of Magic"
 - C. "Dark grandeur" of the Fall
2. Animals Within Humanity
 - A. Tarzan, Planet of the Apes, Island of Dr. Moreau
 - a. "Time when animals were somehow contained in mankind"
3. Spirit World in Ghostly Tales
 - A. Tales-of-the-Uncanny-and-Supernatural, Great-Ghost-Stories-of-the-Gas-Light-Era
 - B. Implies once we had direct access to a "supernatural and preternatural world"
4. Space Travel and Designing New Worlds
 - A. Reflects an age "when we really could travel through deep space effortlessly"
 - B. "When our own world was new ... a million different aspects, changing every minute"
5. Inventions and Ecological Fantasies
 - A. "Fascination of new inventions" → once "to think was to invent"
 - B. "The lion really did lie down with the lamb ... a mist rose from the Earth..."

VI. Lost Powers of Humanity

1. Powers Once Held
 - A. "Once time stood still when we ordered it to do so"
 - B. "Once we had the Midas Touch ... walk through walls ... move mountains"
 - C. These remain "normal but occluded powers," inhibited in the "middle state"
2. The Isthmus of the Middle State
 - A. "Humankind came to an abnormal situation and place"
 - B. "We solve the riddles ... or accept the solutions that stand ready ... and we discover we are off the isthmus"
 - C. Looking back turns us into "pillars of salt," but once we could "turn into anything ... then turn back again"

VII. "The Only True History of the World"

1. Synopsis of the Grand Claim
 - A. "Once we were indeed Lords of the World because we were at one with it"
 - B. "We can still do all those things, half-forgotten though they are"
 - C. Repeats the notion: "We can still move mountains" and "walk through walls"
2. The Skeptic's Caveat
 - A. "When you've walked through one wall, you've walked through them all"
 - B. Brief comedic aside about the futility or radical nature of the power

VIII. The Unwritten SF Story of the Hero-Adventurer

1. Ten Thousand Riddles Solved Except One
 - A. The protagonist answered each riddle in turn, each more difficult
 - B. Final riddle, "which had also been the one before the first one," is: "What is your own name?"
2. The Ultimate Prize
 - A. "If he can answer it, he can win all the prizes there are"
 - B. Poses the question: "Why does he hesitate when it is so easy?"
 - C. Ties self-identity to the Fall and regained powers

IX. Conclusion and Date

1. Brief Final Reflection
 - A. Suggests the entire essay may be "a very poor Science Fiction story in the guise of an article"
 - B. Emphasizes these lost powers and the final unanswered question of identity
2. Time Stamp
 - A. "March 21, 1980" as the ending note
 - B. Leaves the question open-ended about "Who are we?"

SYLLOGISM NAME	PREMISE 1	PREMISE 2	CONCLUSION
1. HUMANITY ON POPE'S "MIDDLE ISTHMUS"	Lafferty quotes Pope's <i>Essay on Man</i> : humans are "darkly wise and rudely great," "the glory, jest, and riddle of the world," placed on an "isthmus of a middle state."	Lafferty concedes we aren't literally "sole judge of truth" or in "endless" error, but the rest applies: we are puzzling beings assigned to solve the world's riddle.	Hence, we occupy a transitional position—powerful but fallible—entrusted with reading or unraveling the cosmic puzzle.
2. RIDDLE-SOLVING HAS MANY ASPECTS	One side of the world's riddle is "science," another "intuition," but it also has "several other sides" both bright and dark.	The riddle lacks a single clear shape or statement, so different "obscure mirrors" reflect partial glimpses of "authentic history," leading to disagreements.	Conclusion: No single approach (science alone or intuition alone) can solve humanity's enigma—multiple vantage points are essential to grasp a riddle so multi-sided.
3. RIDDLE-WRITERS & THE UNIVERSAL "FALL"	Lafferty says all "riddle-writers"—in science, SF, or myth—present "garbled Remembrances of Great Things Past," implying a prime event or condition.	They "essentially agree" that humanity fell from a "higher, more pleasant place" to a "lower, less pleasant" one—even if some try to deny it at times.	Hence, a lost original grandeur or "Fall" unites these various authors/fields, forming the foundation of "The Only True History."
4. "AFTER THE CATASTROPHE" = "AFTER THE FALL"	A common SF trope is the post-apocalyptic scenario ("After the Catastrophe," "Love in the Ruins").	Lafferty correlates these with the "Fall" motif: some place it early in human history, others in the near or far future, but it's the same underlying downfall.	Therefore, typical post-apocalyptic SF replays humanity's "Fall," either as a repressed memory of the past or projected catastrophe in the future.
5. AMNESIA ABOUT THE FALL	"Forced amnesia" buries the memory of the Fall, making it "the most enigmatic part" of the human life riddle.	Yet signs of it linger in "psychology, inherited folk impressions, clouded memory,"	Hence, humans half-remember a primal downfall, which accounts for much of our existential

		revealing “dark grandeur” still at work.	confusion in myth and literature.
6. THE FALL AS HISTORY'S GREAT DIVIDE	Lafferty argues that any competent historian sees the Fall as the event dividing “history” from “pre-history,” and any decent anthropologist must define man as the “Fallen Creature.”	This acknowledges a break point: man was once something more, then fell into the narrower isthmus.	Conclusion: Recognizing a primal collapse or loss of original status is crucial** to historical or anthropological understanding** of humanity.
7. RELIGION TABOO IN MODERN SF	Lafferty notes: “Go no further!” is the outcry if one nears “religion,” a forbidden topic in mainstream SF.	Writers/scholars can discuss every speculation except genuine religion, thus limiting the “selective speculation” SF allows.	Hence, SF ironically remains narrower than it claims, rarely allowing overt religious or spiritual exploration, stifling deeper riddle-solving about the Fall.
8. THE FALL UNDERLIES ALL FANTASY/SF TROPES	Despite that taboo, the Fall remains the “breath of life” in High Fantasy, the “memory of Magic” in sword-and-sorcery, behind <i>Tarzan</i> , <i>Planet of the Apes</i> , <i>Doctor Moreau</i> spinoffs, ghostly/horror fiction, etc.	In these works, mankind once had dominion, could travel cosmic space freely, shape nature at will—a “lost normal power” overshadowed by the current diminished state.	Therefore, SF/Fantasy's best-known motifs (magical dominion, anthropoid merges, supernatural worlds) reflect partial recollections** of the time before we fell** from full authority.
9. HUMANS' FORGOTTEN POWERS	Lafferty lists “time stood still at our command, Midas touch, walking on water, moving mountains”—once “normal but occluded powers.”	Now we exist in an “abnormal situation,” the “middle isthmus,” inhibiting these abilities—but they remain “true attributes of mankind.”	Conclusion: Humanity's inherent capacity is far greater** than we experience; the so-called “miracles” are our rightful domain, stifled by the Fall.
10. THE KEY TO LEAVING THE ISTHMUS	Lafferty insists that the answer to the riddle is “readily available,” but SF characters repeatedly fail to grasp it.	“Accept the solutions that stand ready,” and you realize you've already left the isthmus—yet we “look back,” turning to pillars of salt.	Hence, the only real barrier is our refusal to accept the known remedy**—once recognized, the isthmus' limitations disappear.

11. THIS ESSAY AS "POOR SF STORY / REAL HISTORY"	Lafferty acknowledges: "What I've written may be a very poor SF story" under guise of an article.	Yet he calls it "the synopsis of 'The Only True History of the World and of the Lords of the World'," i.e., the statement that humans once truly reigned.	Therefore, the piece is part whimsical SF, part earnest claim** that we once were "Lords of the World," still possessing hidden powers.
12. THE FINAL RIDDLE: "YOUR OWN NAME?"	Lafferty imagines an unwritten SF tale: a hero solves 10,000 riddles except the last (which was also the first), "What is your own name?"	If he can answer that final query, he wins all prizes. But he hesitates—despite its seeming simplicity.	Conclusion: The ultimate puzzle** is self-knowledge**, the rediscovery of who we actually are—the real key to reclaiming our dormant powers and stepping off the isthmus.

Alexander Pope: (1688–1744) English poet known for his satirical verse and philosophical poetry, including *An Essay on Man* (1733–1734).

An Essay on Man. A philosophical poem by Alexander Pope (1733–1734), exploring human nature and the idea of a rational, ordered universe.

Fall of Man: A theological concept in Christianity referring to humanity's original sin and expulsion from Eden, often explored in literature and philosophy.

High Fantasy: A subgenre of fantasy featuring epic world-building, mythic themes, and a struggle between good and evil, exemplified by *The Lord of the Rings*.

The Island of Doctor Moreau. An 1896 novel by H.G. Wells, depicting a mad scientist who creates human-animal hybrids, exploring themes of ethics and identity.

Love in the Ruins. A 1971 novel by Walker Percy, a satirical dystopia exploring societal decline and existential themes.

March 21, 1980: A date of potential literary or cultural significance, though further context is needed.

Midas Touch: A mythological reference to King Midas, whose touch turned objects to gold, often used metaphorically for wealth and unintended consequences.

Planet of the Apes: A 1963 novel by Pierre Boulle, adapted into a major film franchise, depicting a dystopian world ruled by intelligent apes.

Religion: A system of beliefs and practices centered on the divine, often a theme in speculative fiction exploring faith, morality, and metaphysics.

"Riddle-Writers of the Isthmus": No verifiable information available.

Sword and Sorcery: A fantasy subgenre emphasizing heroic warriors, personal quests, and dark magic, often action-driven and morally ambiguous.

Tarzan: A fictional character created by Edgar Rice Burroughs in *Tarzan of the Apes* (1912), a jungle hero raised by apes.

Tales of the Mysterious and Macabre: A 1957 horror story collection by Algernon Blackwood, featuring supernatural and psychological horror themes.

Tales of the Uncanny and Supernatural: A 1949 collection by Algernon Blackwood, showcasing his ghost stories and weird fiction.

The Only True History of the World and of the Lords of the World: No verifiable information available.

Weird Tales: A pulp magazine (1923–1954, with revivals), known for publishing early works by H.P. Lovecraft, Robert E. Howard, and Clark Ashton Smith.

Through The Red Fire

or

The Hidden Truths About Story-Tellers Dredged Up From The Unconscious Of One Of Them

Overview

Lafferty describes the decline of authentic storytelling since the Ice Ages. He connects this loss to environmental changes, such as the disappearance of the “Woolly Rhinoceros Meat” and dire wolf populations, as well as to the destruction of natural settings where stories once thrived. The essay contends that true story-tellers belong to an “Old People” with red bones, often unaware of their own ancient heritage, and that these narrative gifts originated from animals like bears and cave-cats. It concludes by warning that modern humanity may lose its last storytellers if it does not foster the conditions that once allowed tales to flourish, offering the alternative of leaving for places like Ganymede, which still enjoy an Ice Age setting.

Summary

Lafferty begins by posing two questions: why story-tellers are “so funny-looking” and why the art of storytelling has declined. He asserts that the decline has been occurring for about twelve thousand years, attributing it to missing dietary components—specifically “Wooly Rhinoceros Meat” and “Dire Wolf Meat”—and to the disappearance of caves as the perfect sites for telling stories.

He states that story-tellers are born, belonging to the “Old People” with red bones, and notes that they do not belong to the same race as those who listen to their stories. The original setting for storytelling was a cave warmed by a “good red fire,” where around twenty-three people would gather after supper to hear a story for an hour before sleep arrived “through the red fire.” In this scenario, the presence of the “Old People” guaranteed a high quality of storytelling.

After environmental shifts and societal changes, Lafferty explains, storytelling moved into artificial caves—cottages, manors, castles, or campfires—often relying on “red-bone minstrels.” Although the stories were still decent, their quality deteriorated further when salons displaced them with gossip, and establishments like taverns and pubs replaced live storytellers with music machines. Lafferty notes that the advent of printing also transformed all storytelling into “secondary” storytelling.

He laments modern practices like writers reading their own works out loud at trivial gatherings, describing it as “the unfunny caricature.” To restore genuine storytelling, he calls for the return of true caves, Ice Ages, and the “Old People.” He points out that back in the Ice Ages, people devoted themselves to arts, including storytelling, during the long winters.

The narrative then focuses on the “Neanderthal Men,” also referred to as the “Old People,” “Red-Boned People,” or “The People of the Moon.” These individuals originally understood the speech of animals, while the “New People,” identified as Cro-Magnons, did not. According to Lafferty, animals were the first to tell real original stories—bears, cave-cats, geese that migrated through deep space, and “golden weasels” from the moon. Thus, Neanderthals acquired an extensive library of Space-Travel, Time-Travel, and supernatural tales.

As time passed, the original stock of stories eroded, and authentic storytelling declined. Still, Lafferty contends that present-day storytellers are remnants of these “Old People,” even if they do not consciously know it. They only require caves, a red fire, and suitable meat to keep their art alive. The essay proposes that Ganymede, currently in the midst of an Ice Age, has an abundance of caves and giant creatures that could fulfill these needs, cautioning that modern humanity—“New People”—may lose the storytellers if conditions do not improve. Lafferty ends by asserting that this account, dredged from the unconscious of a storyteller, is more honest than the “dismal lies” told by the “New People,” dated “May 19, 1980.”

(Brindled Cave-Cats), (Cro-Magnons), (Dire Wolf Meat), (Ganymede), (Golden Weasels), (May 19, 1980), (Neanderthal Men), (New People), (Old People), (Red-Boned People), (The People From the Moon), (The People Who Were Before the People), (Through The Red Fire or The Hidden

Truths About Story-Tellers Dredged Up From The Unconscious Of One Of Them), (Wooly Rhinoceros Meat)

I. Introduction and the Two Questions

1. Title / Alternative Title
 - A. "Here: Through The Red Fire"
 - B. "or The Hidden Truths About Story-Tellers Dredged Up..."
2. Purpose: Two Questions
 - A. Announcement of addressing questions
 - B. "Why are all story-tellers so funny-looking?"
 - C. "Why has the art of story-telling declined so abysmally?"

II. Decline of Story-Telling

1. Timeframe and Causes
 - A. Only declining for about twelve thousand years
 - B. Dietary deficiency: scarcity of Wooly Rhinoceros & Dire Wolf meat
 - C. Loss of good storytelling venues
2. Nature of Story-Tellers
 - A. "Story-tellers are born, not made," for a thousand generations
 - B. They appear "funny-looking," clumsy, with red bones ("Old People")
 - C. They never truly belonged to the audience's race
3. The Original Cave Setting
 - A. Cave with red fire, ~23 people, nighttime, finishing supper
 - B. People wrapped in bear skins, awaiting Sleep through the fire
 - C. "No way that a story could not be good" in this setting
 - D. Genuine setting replaced by artificial ones
4. Artificial Caves and Fireplaces
 - A. Cottages, manors, castles, or open campfires
 - B. "Red-bone minstrels" (Old People) still present
 - C. Stories remain decent, though less perfect
5. Rise of Salons and Gossip
 - A. Salons replace stories with gossip
 - B. Red-bones not needed for gossip
 - C. Stories endure in taverns, clubs, prisons, ships, plantations

6. Final Destruction of Story Places
 - A. Taverns/pubs ruined by "music-boxes"
 - B. Homes replaced by political discussions, radio, TV
 - C. Printing causes "secondary story-telling," removing originals
7. The Unfunny Caricature
 - A. Writers reading aloud their own text seems wrong
8. Frustration and the Big Question
 - A. "What to do about it?" repeated

III. Call to Return to Ice Age Conditions

1. Restore the Old Settings
 - A. "Bring back the caves! Bring back the Ice Ages!"
 - B. The ice's departure took half the stories with it
2. The Role of the Ice Ages
 - A. 30-thousand-year winter fosters arts (stories, cave painting, etc.)
3. Neanderthals as "Old People"
 - A. They are "red-boned," often stumble-tongued, distinct from "New People"
4. Animal Speech
 - A. Animals spoke with Neanderthals, but not with Cro-Magnons
5. Original Animal Stories
 - A. Bears, deep-space geese, cave-cats, weasels from the moon
6. Rich Genre Origins
 - A. Space-travel, time-travel, out-of-body, ghost stories, etc.
7. From Animals to Neanderthals
 - A. Neanderthals become story-tellers, but the art erodes

IV. Present-Day Story-Tellers

1. Red-Bone Descendants
 - A. Modern story-tellers are partial Old People
 - B. We only want caves, red fires, and some woolly rhino or dire wolf meat
2. Possible Migration to Ganymede
 - A. Ganymede is in a fine Ice Age with big caves, giant beasts
 - B. They lost their story-tellers in a horrifying event

C. "You New People could lose us too"

3. "Hidden Truth" from the Unconscious

A. This account is the dredged truth about story-tellers

B. "Is it true?" – it's more truthful than the "dismal lies" of the New People

4. Date

A. "May 19, 1980"

SYLLOGISM NAME	PREMISE 1	PREMISE 2	CONCLUSION
1. TWO QUESTIONS ON STORY-TELLERS	Lafferty poses two questions: (1) "Why are story-tellers so funny-looking?" and (2) "Why has the art of story-telling declined so abysmally?"	He maintains these questions deserve direct explanation, revealing hidden truths about the nature of story-tellers and the lost conditions for telling great tales.	Hence, the essay sets out to solve both the peculiar appearance of storytellers and the drastic decline in story-telling over ~12,000 years.
2. DECLINE OF STORY-TELLING: TWO CORE REASONS	Lafferty insists the art of story-telling hasn't always declined—it's only been in decline for around "twelve thousand years."	This decline arises from: (a) dietary deficiency (scarcity of Woolly Rhinoceros and Dire Wolf meat), and (b) the disappearance of ideal places (like caves with red fires) where good stories used to be told.	Conclusion: The fall of story-telling** is historically recent**, tied to changes in food sources and physical settings that once supported high-quality narratives.
3. "OLD PEOPLE" VS. "NEW PEOPLE": STORY-TELLERS BORN, NOT MADE	Lafferty notes that "story-tellers are not made; they are born," over thousands of generations. They look "funny" because they're "of the 'Old People'" — Neanderthals or "Red-Boned People," not belonging to the	These red-boned minstrels are clumsy, "stumble-tongued" at first, bearing big heads reminiscent of archaic humans; they do not entirely fit in with "regular" folks.	Hence, story-tellers differ genetically/culturally from their audiences—this explains the "funny-looking" trait. They hail from an older lineage that carried forward the storytelling craft.

	same race they entertain.		
4. ORIGINAL PERFECT SETTING: CAVE + RED FIRE + ~23 PEOPLE	In the Ice Age, the ideal story hour took place in a real cave: about 23 people just after supper, the red fire at the entrance, a short one-hour narrative time before “Sleep” arrived.	With the story-teller a member of the Old People, “there was no way a story could not be a good one” in that environment.	Conclusion: Under these primeval conditions**, storytelling thrived**— “it couldn’t fail” with the synergy of communal warmth, darkness, and the Old People’s narrating gift.
5. SHIFT TO ARTIFICIAL CAVES & GRADUAL DEGRADATION	When genuine caves gave way to cottages, manors, castles—these were “artificial caves.” The red-bone minstrels still told stories by hearths or campfires, so the tales remained “not-quite-so-good but not bad at all.”	Later came “salons,” focusing on gossip, not stories. The red-bones weren’t needed, so storytelling declined.	Hence, as society’s living spaces evolved, the original story atmosphere diluted**, lowering story quality** from the near-perfect old days.
6. DESTRUCTION OF SECOND-GEN STORY PLACES	Even the secondary homes of storytelling—taverns, pubs, coffee houses, clubs, poorhouses, prisons (once featuring big common rooms), ships’ galleys, slave plantations—were eventually ruined by modern changes.	Music-boxes, radio, and television invaded these communal spaces; printing turned stories into “secondary storytelling.” The “live” environment was lost.	Conclusion: The final blow** came from technology** (mechanized music, radio, TV) and the shift to print, pushing original oral story-telling into obsolescence.
7. ICE AGE CONTEXT: ARTS & STORY AT THE CORE OF LIFE	Lafferty highlights that in a 30,000-year-long winter, the only real activities were “begetting children and telling stories,” plus painting cave	“Never since then have the arts played so large a part in life,” with story-telling “the central art” of those Ice Ages.	Therefore, the Ice Ages formed a unique golden era** for the arts, especially for the “central art” of story-telling**— leading to a

	walls, whittling ornaments, or making bird-bone whistles.		sophistication we no longer match.
8. NEANDERTHALS SPOKE WITH ANIMALS: SOURCE OF ALL ORIGINAL TALES	These “Old People” or “red-bone” Neanderthals learned stories directly from talking animals (bears, deep-space geese, cave-cats, seals, weasels from the moon, etc.), who told space-travel tales, time-travel tales, ghost stories, under-ocean stories, robot-buffalo stories, etc.	The animals only “pretend” speechlessness around the “New People” (Cro-Magnons) but remain eloquent with Neanderthals. The best stories originated from these animals.	Hence, the earliest, richest story stock came from cross-species exchange**. The Old People** then retold them—the ultimate source of all major SF/Fantasy genres.
9. DECLINE YET SURVIVAL OF THE “RED-BONE” MINSTRELS	Lafferty says the “good original stock of stories” got eroded. The “Old People” remain, but often mixed-blood, still “funny-looking,” and they only want minimal payment—they want caves, red fires, and good meat (like wooly rhino or dire wolf).	They’ve received other offers, e.g., Ganymede is in a prime Ice Age now with “thousands of fine caves,” dire wolves 4m tall, 3-horned wooly rhinos, etc. But Ganymede “lost their own storytellers in some gruesome horror event.”	Conclusion: The Old People could easily relocate** if Earth’s “New People” continue neglecting them; Earth stands to lose** its last vestige of the genuine story tradition.
10. “HIDDEN TRUTHS” FROM THE TELLER’S UNCONSCIOUS	Lafferty calls this entire account “the hidden truth about story-tellers dredged up from one of them,” i.e., from his unconscious.	He anticipates objections about whether any of it’s factual, retorting that compared to the “dismal lies” of the New People, this is “Shining Truth itself.”	Hence, the piece is half-mythic “unconscious revelation,” which Lafferty defends as more authentic than conventional “truths” the modern world peddles.

“Tell It Funny, Og”

Overview

In “Tell It Funny, Og,” Lafferty highlights how the earliest stories were humorous, good-natured narratives born in an ancient time of ogres, friendly animals, and alien creatures. He credits ogre-like storytellers—embodied by characters such as Og the Ogre—with naturally keen senses that enabled them to gather and share tales brimming with joviality. Over time, he argues, outside forces like pomposity and pride seeped into the art of storytelling, dulling its original humor. Citing examples from myth, scripture, and early science fiction authors, the essay warns that this shrinking sense of fun threatens to erode the vitality of the only art form—Science Fiction—that remains flexible and alive. It calls for ridding the field of “bad-humored” influences so that true, joyous storytelling might once again thrive.

Summary

The essay opens by asserting that the world began in a “good-humored, good-natured” state, and that its earliest tales reflect this upbeat tone. Lafferty cites personal “researches” suggesting that the first stories could be described as “shaggy ogre” stories, with Og the Ogre—“the seventh son of the seventh son of Adam”—being one of the earliest named storytellers. Storytellers, Lafferty says, are inherently “funny-looking,” possessing bulging eyes for panoramic vision and large, oddly shaped ears for eavesdropping on distant conversation. These physical traits align with their role in gathering the seeds of stories.

He describes how initial narratives were pleasant, featuring people, lands, and animals that were all comically friendly. Whales, for instance, might swallow travelers who then explore entire lands inside their bellies. Lafferty mentions a legend that Adam named “nine hundred and ninety-nine” alien species living beyond Earth, all of which maintain a positive memory of the “naming place.” Early writing, allegedly invented by Og the Ogre, used living “alphabet fish” to print stories, though obstacles in distribution and profit margins hindered widespread adoption.

As examples of humorous traditions, Lafferty points to Homer and Rabelais, explaining that time discrepancies are irrelevant for “ogres” who are not bound by ordinary chronology. He claims comedic elements appear throughout scriptures, citing Samson, David’s playful exaggerations about Goliath, Balaam’s talking donkey, and Ezekiel’s odd flying machines. This fun-loving theme, he notes, also spans major Asian epics like the *Ramayana*, *Panchantra*, *Epic of Gilgamesh*, *Mahabharata*, *Druga*, and *Shiva* tales, as well as Greek, Roman, and Celtic mythologies. However, a “bad-humor” seepage has slowly eroded this jovial spirit across centuries.

Lafferty then identifies “seven bad-humored and unfunny devils”—Pretentiousness, Pomposity, Presumption, Pontificality, Pavoninity (Peacockery), Pornography, and Pride—that undermine the once-radiant comedic core of storytelling. He discusses modern science fiction writers, singling out Jules Verne, Mark Twain, Edgar Allan Poe, H.G. Wells, A.E. van Vogt, Alfred Bester, Theodore Sturgeon, Robert Sheckley, Edgar Rice Burroughs, and Arthur C. Clarke as authors retaining some measure of original humor. By contrast, he alludes to others (coded as “A---,” “B---,” “C--,” “D---,” “E---,” “F---,” “G---”) lacking such spirit. Finally, the essay proposes forcibly shutting away those who pollute the genre’s humor, welding them back under “iron doors.” This, he concludes, would allow Science Fiction to rediscover its comedic essence, forging “a whole new cycle of tales worth telling.” Lafferty is dated “June 19, 1980.”

(Adam), (A---), (another A---), (Arabian Nights), (Arthur C. Clarke), (B---), (Balaam), (Bester), (Burroughs), (C--), (Cro-Magnons), (Cúchulain), (D---), (another D---), (still a third D---), (David), (Druga), (Elhanan), (Epic of Gilgamesh), (E---), (F---), (G---), (Goliath), (Greek), (Heinlein), (Homer), (Ireland), (June 19, 1980), (Mahabharata), (Mark Twain), (Og the Ogre), (Panchantra), (Peredur), (Poe), (Rabelais), (Ramayana), (Roman), (Samson), (Sheckley), (Shiva), (Sturgeon), (Tell It Funny, Og), (Van Vogt), (Verne), (Vishnu), (Wales), (Wells)

I. Opening and the World’s Early Humor

1. Title and Initial Statement

- A. "Here: Tell It Funny, Og"
- B. “In the beginning the world was...funny.”
- C. “True Tales from the Beginning will always remember this.”

II. Earliest Story-Telling Tradition

1. Shaggy Ogre Stories

- A. Earliest tales: pleasant, funny, with “shaggy dog/bear/people” elements
- B. Could be called “shaggy ogre stories”
- C. Og the Ogre: seventh son of Adam, first named story-teller

2. Physical Traits of Story-Tellers

- A. Funny-looking, “bug-eyed monsters” for panoramic vision
- B. Big ogre ears for eavesdropping

3. Expanded Senses

- A. Possibly picking up waves beyond audio
- B. Og hears, sees, and smells superbly

4. Comedy in Early Stories

- A. Stories meant to be funny; unfunny ones were disasters
- B. People, situations, animals, and aliens were originally all pleasant and comedic
- C. Example: travelers inside a whale's belly for nine days

5. 999 Alien Species

- A. "Alien monsters were pleasant"
- B. Adam named 999 species living beyond the moon, all friendly

III. Writers, Printing, and Early Humor

1. Early Writers Alongside Tellers

- A. Moveable type invented by Og: "alphabet fish" printing on larch-wood pulp
- B. Distribution and profit margin issues hampered early printing

2. The Style of Early SF ("Knowledge-Fiction")

- A. It was comedic but not only slapstick; horse-laughter vs. urbane humor
- B. Humor was universal, sometimes outrageous

3. Classical Comedy Examples

- A. Homer and Rabelais as comedic "brothers," ignoring time discrepancy
- B. Homer's language anomalies explained by comedic invention
- C. They avoided pomposity

4. Humor in Scriptures

- A. Samson's riddles, David's Goliath story (fictionalized)
- B. Balaam's talking donkey, Ezekiel's flying machines

5. Asian & Mythic Tales

- A. Ramayana, Panchantra, Gilgamesh, Shiva tales, etc. filled with giantism, comedic
- B. "Nothing funnier than a Skyful of Giants"

6. Other Cultural Myths

- A. Greek/Roman myths, Cúchulain, Peredur, Medieval stories all had fun

7. Arabian Nights and the Spoiling Factor

- A. "Almost total fun," but negativity began seeping in
- B. Uncertain if 999 alien species share Earth's comedic "spoiling"

IV. The Seeping of Bad-Humored Forces

1. Negative Entities from an Iron Cavern

- A. Bad-humored things locked away, but some leak out
- 2. Threat of Losing Good-Humor
 - A. Fear the 999 friendly aliens might reject Earth's tainted humor
- 3. The Seven Bad-Humored Devils
 - A. Pretentiousness, Pomposity, Presumption, Pontificality, Pavoninity (Peacockery), Pornography, Pride
- 4. Modern SF Authors' Humor Levels
 - A. Verne, Twain, Poe, Wells had good humor (partially for Wells)
 - B. Van Vogt, Bester, Sturgeon, Sheckley do as well
 - C. Heinlein unexpectedly has glimpses
 - D. Many code-named authors do not, risking SF's soul
- 5. The Need to Save SF
 - A. SF is the only art not yet dead-ended
 - B. Must remove negativity or it may destroy SF

V. Proposed Solution and Conclusion

- 1. Forcible Return of Devils
 - A. Grind up bad-humored spawn, seal them under the iron door
 - B. Ignore their wails, use blowtorches to seal
- 2. Renewed Tales
 - A. This method is "necessary and preventive mayhem," leading to lively new stories
 - B. "Tell them funny, Og"
- 3. Date
 - A. "June 19, 1980"

SYLLOGISM NAME	PREMISE 1	PREMISE 2	CONCLUSION
1. THE WORLD'S ORIGINAL GOOD HUMOR	Lafferty opens by declaring: "In the beginning the world was good-humored, good-natured, genial, and funny," and "The True Tales from the Beginning will always remember this."	Early stories were "pleasant and funny," with elements of "shaggy dog/bear/people" format.	Hence, the earliest narrative tradition on Earth was fundamentally comedic, setting a tone of lightheartedness in primeval tales.

2. OG THE OGRE & THE FIRST STORYTELLERS	The “first we know by name” of these comedic storytellers was “Og the Ogre,” seventh son of the seventh son of Adam, representing the “hairy ogres” who first told “shaggy ogre stories.”	Lafferty also notes that “most story-tellers are funny-looking,” having “bug-eyes” for panoramic vision and “outsized ogre ears” for eavesdropping—descendants of Og’s lineage.	Conclusion: The comedic tradition stems from** archaic, ogre-like figures** who needed unusual sensory faculties to gather story material, thus explaining storytellers’ “funny” appearance.
3. THE FIRST UNFUNNY STORIES WERE DISASTERS	Lafferty asserts “stories are intended to be funny,” and that the earliest unfunny stories “did not appear early” and were “literary disasters.”	By contrast, primeval people, animals, strange lands, and even aliens were friendly and humorous from the get-go—like those “nine hundred and ninety-nine monstrous but pleasant species” that Adam named beyond the moon.	Hence, comedic storytelling was the universal norm at first, and the notion of hostile or grim narratives (unfriendly aliens, etc.) arose much later, representing a deviation.
4. COMEDIC APPROACH IN “SACRED” & ANCIENT EPICS	Lafferty illustrates “deep and pleasant and often outrageous humor” in Homer, Rabelais, and across Scripture narratives (Samson, Balaam’s donkey, David vs. Goliath embellishments, Ezekiel’s flying machines).	The same comedic infusion appears in Asian epics (Ramayana, Mahabharata, Gilgamesh, etc.), Greek & Roman myths, Celtic tales, Arabian Nights—all brimming with a base of playful or “giant” humor.	Conclusion: Even revered texts** historically had comedic or whimsical tones**, showing that “sacred” or “serious” did not exclude humor in early times.
5. THE CORROSION OF EARTH’S HUMOR	Over time, “something seeped in to diminish good-humor,” with “bad-humored things” once locked in an iron cavern now leaking out and spoiling Earth’s comedic spirit.	We face the risk that other cosmic species (“the 999 monstrous but pleasant aliens”) might reject us on the “Day of Reunion” if we continue losing our comedic essence.	Hence, the Earth’s comedic heritage is being “rusted and rotted away,” a pressing threat to our cultural identity and future cosmic acceptance.

6. THE SEVEN BAD-HUMORED DEVILS	Lafferty names the seven devils that “eat ourselves and our narratives alive”: Pretentiousness, Pomposity, Presumption, Pontificality, Pavoninity/Peacockery, Pornography, and Pride.	These devils “inflated themselves immeasurably” once they leaked out, undermining the comedic core of stories and leading to dryness or gloom in modern narratives.	Therefore, the main cause of serious “bad-humored” writing** is infiltration by these seven vices**—contrary to the primal comedic impetus.
7. SOME SF AUTHORS RETAIN THE COMEDY, OTHERS DO NOT	Lafferty cites Jules Verne, Mark Twain, Poe (partly), Wells (in SF mode), Van Vogt, Bester, Sturgeon, Sheckley, Burroughs, Clarke, and Heinlein (sporadically) as writers who keep some measure of comedic spirit.	Others, code-named A—, B—, C—, D—, E—, F—, G—, lack it completely, succumbing to dryness or negativity—putting SF at risk of “the seven devils.”	Conclusion: The comedic or “good-humored” tradition in SF is not universal**, but a crucial distinction—some authors preserve it, while others degrade the genre with stifling seriousness or pomposity.
8. SF AS THE LAST LIVING ART	Lafferty claims “only one art on our earth has not gone rigid and dead-ended: Science Fiction.” If saved, it may “rekindle some of the other arts.”	But this salvation requires eliminating the “bad-humored devils” overshadowing SF’s comedic legacy.	Conclusion: SF stands alone as a continuing, vital domain**—yet it must be purged of pomposity, presumption, etc., to preserve its comedic soul** and revive other arts.
9. THE FINAL REMEDY: GRIND UP THE OFFENDERS	Lafferty suggests forcibly re-imprisoning the devils: “Take all code-named, insufficient, bad-humored spawn... grind them up... pulp them back under that iron door,” sealing it with blow torches.	He terms this “unsullied literary criticism and necessary and preventive mayhem,” with lively enforcement scenes.	Hence, the comedic impetus must be protected by literally (or metaphorically) “destroying” those responsible for unfunny writing, ensuring comedic tradition’s return.
10. “TELL THEM FUNNY, OG”	Concluding, Lafferty addresses the primeval	This expresses the core idea: only	Conclusion: The ultimate goal is to

	story-teller (Og the Ogre) with a final injunction: "Tell them funny."	comedic, good-humored narratives truly align with the earliest, truest storytelling tradition, and we must fight negativity.	restore humanity's original comedic nature** in stories, fulfilling Og's inheritance—funny from the start to the end.
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Arabian Nights: A collection of Middle Eastern and South Asian folktales, also known as *One Thousand and One Nights*, featuring figures like Sinbad, Aladdin, and Scheherazade.

Arthur C. Clarke: (1917–2008) British science fiction writer, known for *Rendezvous with Rama* (1973) and *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968).

Balaam: A prophet in the Hebrew Bible, known for the episode of Balaam's donkey in the Book of Numbers.

Alfred Bester: (1913–1987) American science fiction writer, best known for *The Stars My Destination* (1956) and *The Demolished Man* (1953).

Edgar Rice Burroughs: (1875–1950) American writer, creator of *Tarzan* and the *Barsoom* series featuring John Carter of Mars.

Cro-Magnons: Early modern humans from the Upper Paleolithic period, known for their advanced tools and cave art.

Cúchulain: A hero of Irish mythology, central to the Ulster Cycle, known for his superhuman battle prowess and tragic destiny.

David: A biblical king of Israel, renowned for defeating Goliath and authoring Psalms.

Elhanan: A biblical warrior mentioned in 2 Samuel, sometimes identified with or distinguished from David in the Goliath story.

Epic of Gilgamesh: An ancient Mesopotamian epic, one of the earliest known literary works, chronicling Gilgamesh's quest for immortality.

Goliath: A Philistine warrior defeated by David in the biblical account of 1 Samuel 17.

Greek: Relating to Greece, its language, culture, and mythology, foundational to Western literature and philosophy.

Robert A. Heinlein: (1907–1988) American science fiction writer, known for *Stranger in a Strange Land* (1961) and *Starship Troopers* (1959).

Homer: Ancient Greek poet, traditionally credited with composing *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*.

Mahabharata: A Sanskrit epic of ancient India, central to Hindu tradition, recounting the Kurukshetra War and Krishna's teachings.

Mark Twain: (1835–1910) American writer, known for *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1885) and *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1876).

Panchatantra: An ancient Indian collection of interwoven fables, emphasizing wisdom and practical ethics.

Peredur: A figure in Welsh Arthurian legend, featured in *Peredur son of Efrog*, similar to Percival of the Grail Quest.

Edgar Allan Poe: (1809–1849) American writer, known for gothic tales and poetry, including "The Raven" and "The Tell-Tale Heart."

François Rabelais: (c. 1494–1553) French Renaissance writer, known for the satirical and grotesque *Gargantua and Pantagruel*.

Ramayana: An ancient Sanskrit epic attributed to Valmiki, narrating the life and exile of Prince Rama.

Samson: A biblical judge of Israel, known for his extraordinary strength, which was tied to his uncut hair as part of a Nazirite vow. His story, recorded in *Judges* 13–16, includes feats such as slaying a lion barehanded, defeating 1,000 Philistines with the jawbone of a donkey, and destroying the Philistine temple of Dagon by collapsing its pillars. His downfall came through Delilah, who betrayed him by cutting his hair, leading to his capture and eventual death.

“Rare Earth and Pig-Weeds”

Overview

Lafferty uses the metaphor of well-fertilized fields and pig-weeds to explore how people crave certain “rare earths” or trace elements—both physical and cultural—that are often found outside the mainstream. By likening pulp magazine Science Fiction and other “inferior” popular arts of the early 20th century to these hardy weeds, the essay highlights their persistent appeal despite being dismissed as crude or substandard. It also examines analogous “crippled” media forms like the Silent Movies and radio, asking why they thrived alongside more sophisticated cultural achievements. Lafferty suggests that these rough-edged forms deliver something essential, if elusive, and calls on

imaginative minds—particularly in Science Fiction—to invent a way to rejuvenate that vital element. Dated *July 15, 1980*, Lafferty underscores that without such nourishment, both lush and weedy arts risk dwindling in soul and vigor.

The essay opens with a scene of fat cattle grazing in a rich field planted with alfalfa clover, timothy hay, sorghum cane, and hay-grazer, all fertilized with crushed limestone and fancy phosphates. The field is fenced by seven-stranded barbed wire, and an outer swathe has been plowed to keep away unwanted weeds. Despite these efforts, pig-weeds manage to grow there. Some of the cows, though surrounded by plentiful feed, kneel down to reach their necks and tongues under the barbed wire to eat the pig-weeds.

The farmer notes that his animals have several food supplements yet crave pig-weeds anyway, speculating they seek rare earth minerals or chemicals. He adds that pig-weeds, in his view, do not grow by sunlight but only by moonlight. Lafferty then compares this situation to pulp magazine Science Fiction in the 1920s, calling it a “sorry-looking pig-weed” on the outside of a thriving cultural field.

Next, Lafferty looks at early 20th-century popular arts described as “curiously defective,” such as Silent Movies, which lacked sound despite the availability of talkie technology from the outset, and radio, which lacked sight. Lafferty draws parallels with “Jazz and Rinky-dink,” musics considered incomplete or simplistic, and with pulp magazines printed on rough paper. These arts are labeled as weedy and grubby, yet they survived due to a public craving or even cultish demand. The essay notes that these forms, which supposedly do “not grow by sunlight,” contain “rare earths” that people or cultures need.

Meanwhile, it is emphasized that the same era saw a flourishing of high-quality arts—from city architecture and sculpture to drama, music, and literature—forming a lush, well-fed cultural field. Despite this abundance, people still reached out for these pulp-like “weeds.” Some of these once-outside creations, such as Silent Cinema comedies, were eventually embraced as part of the mainstream but then rapidly withered.

Lafferty reflects on the demise of certain forms, like Ragtime being overshadowed by Jazz, and questions what truly happened to radio, referencing a peculiar anecdote about a child born with a fleshly, portable radio attached to its ear. This incident is presented as potential evidence of immediate evolution or mutation, though the essay admits it is unknown whether this phenomenon transfers the “rare earths.”

Lafferty then enumerates a host of pulp magazines, including *Adventure Stories*, *Amazing Stories*, *Detective Story Magazine*, *Doc Savage*, *Planet Stories*, *Thrilling Wonder Stories*, *Weird Tales*, and many others—over three hundred titles. None of the stories in these publications are deemed “good” or “great” by ordinary measures, though many readers nostalgically recall them. Today, those magazines have become collectors’ items.

Lafferty asks whether there is a better way to acquire the vital “rare earths” than by straining out under fences to grasp at them, concluding that there is no known superior method. It remarks on how the mainstream “lush field,” lacking certain gritty elements, has suffered disease and blight, while even the pig-weeds themselves are losing their old potency. The essay challenges “Science Fiction persons” to invent a means of restoring these essential, elusive nutrients—reminding readers that pig-weeds “only grow by moonlight.” It ends with the date *July 15, 1980*, urging a solution to revitalize both the field and its weeds.

(Adventure Stories), (All-Story Magazine), (Amazing Stories), (Aviation Stories), (Big Game Hunter), (Black Book Detective), (Black Mask Magazine), (Blue Book), (Captain Future), (Circus Stories), (Crushed Limestone), (Daredevil Aces), (Detective Story Magazine), (Doc Savage), (Famous Detective), (Fantastic Adventures), (Frontier Stories), (G-8 and His Battle Aces), (Horror Stories), (Jungle Stories), (Klondike Stories), (Marvel Tales), (Meadow-weeds), (Nick Carter Weekly), (Patent Medicines), (Phantom), (Pig-weeds), (Planet Stories), (Rare Earths and Pig-Weeds), (Real Detective Tales), (Real Western), (Sea Stories), (Seven-stranded Barbed Wire), (Smashing Detective), (Slick Magazines), (South Sea Stories), (Spicy Adventure), (Spicy Detective Stories), (Sport Stories), (Startling Stories), (Stories of Exploration), (Submarine Stories), (Super Science), (Terror Tales), (The Popular Magazine), (The Shadow), (The Spider), (Thrilling Wonder Stories), (Unknown Worlds), (War Stories), (Weird Tales), (Western Story Magazine), (Wild Animal Stories), (Wild West Stories), (Wings), (Wool Splinters), (July 15, 1980)

I. Introduction

1. Title

A. "Here: Rare Earths and Pig-Weeds"

II. The Fat Field and Pig-Weeds

1. Describing the Field

- A. Mixed alfalfa clover, timothy hay, sorghum, hay-grazer
- B. Fertilized with limestone and phosphates, enclosed by barbed-wire
- C. Plowed swathe outside to keep weeds away, yet pig-weeds survive

2. Cows Craving Pig-Weeds

- A. Some cows kneel and stretch necks/tongues to eat pig-weeds
- B. Farmer wonders why, despite supplements
- C. Belief in “rare earths” that pig-weeds provide
- D. Pig-weeds “grow by moonlight”; a half-comic aside

III. Pulp SF as “Pig-Weed”

1. Pulp Magazines in the 1920s
 - A. Described as sorry-looking weeds on edge of lush field
 - B. Other popular arts also “defective and skimpy”
2. Silent Films and Radio
 - A. “Silents” had no sound, radio had no picture
 - B. They were cultish, widely loved despite obvious limitations
3. Further Cultural Contrasts
 - A. “Magazine slickness” vs. ugly pulp printing
 - B. People still demanded this “weedy inferiority”
4. The Moonlight Growth
 - A. These new arts were stunted, “not by sunlight”
 - B. They carried “rare earths” intangible elements

IV. Concurrent Mainstream Renaissance

1. Flourishing Arts Inside the Fence
 - A. Literature, drama, music, art thriving
2. City Elegance
 - A. Decades of excellence in architecture, municipal sculpture/music
3. Popular Literature
 - A. Superior and popular simultaneously
4. Weeds Alongside Abundance
 - A. Pig-weeds thrived on the edges, some not weeds at all

V. Examples of Pig-Weedy Arts

1. Silent Movies
 - A. Overall worthless, but comedic genius thrived
 - B. Sound films and success ironically killed silent comedies
2. Ragtime vs. Jazz
 - A. One overshadowed or “murdered” by the other
3. Radio’s Persistence
 - A. Not truly killed by TV; bizarre anecdote of baby born with a “radio”

- B. Possibly a comedic “proof” of inherited traits
- 4. Pulp Magazines Inventory
 - A. Many titles (detective, adventure, horror, SF, western, etc.)
 - B. Stories not truly great, but fondly recalled
 - C. They became collectors’ items

VI. The Need for “Rare Earths”

- 1. No Better Way Than Stretching for Pig-Weeds
 - A. No alternative found to partake of these “rare earths”
 - B. Past attempts (goat glands, patent meds) fail
- 2. SF’s Potential Role
 - A. SF persons might invent a better method
- 3. Necessity for Youth
 - A. Infusions of “rare earths” essential for a complete person
- 4. Deficiencies and Renewals
 - A. The lush field was never truly complete
 - B. Both mainstream and pig-weeds now weakened
 - C. Let SF invent a solution so that these crucial things grow again
 - D. They grow only by moonlight
 - E. “July 15, 1980”

SYLLOGISM NAME	PREMISE 1	PREMISE 2	CONCLUSION
1. THE COW AND THE PIG-WEEDS: A METAPHOR	Lafferty depicts fat cattle in a lush field (alfalfa, sorghum, etc.), carefully fertilized and fenced, yet some cows strain under the barbed wire to eat “pig-weeds” growing outside.	Even with “several sorts of food supplements,” they crave these skinny weeds. The farmer hypothesizes they seek “rare earths” (special trace minerals) and notes “pig-weeds grow only by moonlight.”	Hence, the “pig-weeds” symbolize something beyond the abundant mainstream—a scrappy, lesser-known resource that still provides an essential nutrient lacking in the “fat field.”
2. PULP SF AND OTHER “WEEDY” ARTS	Lafferty likens 1920s pulp magazine SF (and other popular arts such as silent movies,	These ephemeral or “defective” media appear “outside the fence,” cheaply made, scruffy,	Conclusion: “Weedy” pulp arts** are the cultural pig-weeds**—imperfect, unpolished,

	early radio, ragtime/jazz) to “sorry-looking pig-weed” thriving just outside a robust “lush field” of mainstream, high-quality art.	overshadowed by slick magazines and elegant art forms.	yet fulfilling a craving for “rare earths” that can’t be found in mainstream fields.
3. WHY THESE CRUDE ARTS FLOURISHED	The question: Why did “rank and weedy” pig-weeds (silent films without sound, radio without visuals, pulp mags on cheap paper) still gain cult followings amidst a renaissance of polished arts?	Lafferty answers: they were demanded, providing a “taste of ‘rare earths’” that official mediums lacked, a cultish or “religious” dimension. “They do not grow by sunlight; they grow by moonlight,” i.e., they thrived outside standard artistic rules.	Hence, the lesser or crippled forms endured because fans “stretched their necks” to consume them**, craving intangible trace elements mainstream art didn’t supply.
4. THE LUSH MAINSTREAM FIELD OF THE ERA	Meanwhile, the 1920s–1930s boasted an unusual flowering in literature (including fantasy), drama, music, architecture, municipal sculpture, amateur theatricals, etc.	This confluence created a “fat field growing high and lush,” a level of public arts synergy seldom matched in history.	Conclusion: The “mainstream” was legitimately robust**, yet ironically it still “lacked certain rare nutrients,” prompting people to seek “pig-weeds” outside the fence.
5. SOME PIG-WEEDS NOT WEEDS AT ALL	E.g., Silent Cinema was generally worthless except for “the great Comics and Comedies,” which were “wonderful.” They got transplanted inside the lush field, but soon died after talkies arrived and the field gave them richer conditions.	Similarly, ragtime was replaced (“murdered”) by jazz, etc.—“pig-weeds eat each other,” and some among them ironically turn out to be real cultural gems.	Conclusion: Certain “weedy arts” cross into mainstream acceptance**, but ironically lose their vitality** once fully embraced by the “rich field.”
6. RADIO SURVIVES IN	People thought TV killed radio, but	This suggests “acquired characteristics can be	Hence, even when overshadowed by a

MUTATED FORM	Lafferty recounts a bizarre anecdote of a baby born with a functioning radio of flesh, permanently tuned to a 24-hour rock station.	inherited,” and changes come by “instant mutations,” not slow evolution. Radio persists in a strange living embedment.	“successor” medium (television), radio endures** in bizarre, mutated forms.** Lafferty extends the metaphor to physical “rare earth” transmissions.
7. FATE OF THE PULP MAGAZINES	The pulps, including SF magazines, formed a sub-class of “pig-weeds” with hundreds of niche titles (detective, horror, western, etc.).	They “weren’t good nor great,” but are now nostalgic collectors’ items. The out-of-fence craving for them persists as “we can’t stamp out the memory.”	Therefore, the weedy pulps similarly “died or changed,” leaving behind a nostalgic hunger in those who once consumed them.
8. THE NEED FOR “RARE EARTHS”	Lafferty argues that both body and soul require these obscure “trace” nutrients, referencing the analogy with pig-weeds.	People crave them “some time in life, preferably in youth,” or they’ll never be complete. They can’t rely on any mainstream feed alone.	Conclusion: We have an innate human hunger for ephemeral, non-mainstream art forms**—the intangible “rare earths” that complement the standard cultural diet.
9. WITHOUT THESE CRUDE NUTRIENTS, DISEASE ENSUES	The lush field, once outwardly strong, eventually suffered disease and blight, or “it wasn’t so lush to begin with.”	This field needed the pig-weeds’ trace minerals, but it never integrated them well, so the mainstream arts are now “scrawny,” lacking renewal.	Hence, the mainstream alone cannot sustain vibrant culture**—it needed the “rare earth” infusion** from pig-weeds to remain healthy.
10. THE FINAL PLEA: WE NEED A NEW METHOD	Lafferty ends, calling for some SF person to invent a better way to gather those intangible “rare earths,” since the original pig-weeds of old are mostly gone.	He reminds us they “only grow by moonlight,” i.e., outside standard acceptance, so a cunning new approach is required to restore or replicate them.	Conclusion: Culture must find a fresh mode to supply these essential “moonlit” nutrients**—or remain malnourished**. Lafferty urges a new solution, presumably from inventive SF minds.

All-Story Magazine A pulp magazine (1905–1920), later merged with *The Argosy*, known for publishing *Tarzan of the Apes* by Edgar Rice Burroughs.

Amazing Stories The first science fiction magazine, founded in 1926 by Hugo Gernsback, instrumental in defining the genre.

Aviation Stories: A pulp magazine category featuring aerial combat, stunt flying, and adventure narratives set in the early days of aviation.

Big Game Hunter: Likely referring to pulp stories centered on hunting expeditions, often set in Africa or India, glorifying colonial-era adventures.

Black Book Detective A pulp magazine (1933–1953) featuring crime fiction, best known for the character The Black Bat.

Black Mask A hardboiled crime fiction pulp magazine (1920–1951) that launched the careers of Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler.

Blue Book A long-running pulp magazine (1905–1975) that published adventure, detective, and science fiction stories.

Captain Future A pulp science fiction magazine (1940–1951) featuring the spacefaring hero Captain Future, primarily written by Edmond Hamilton.

Circus Stories: A pulp genre featuring stories set in traveling circuses, often incorporating mystery, romance, or adventure elements.

Daredevil Aces A pulp magazine (1932–1943) focused on World War I aerial combat and fighter aces.

Detective Story Magazine One of the earliest detective pulp magazines (1915–1949), known for shaping crime fiction.

Doc Savage Magazine A pulp magazine (1933–1949) featuring the scientist-adventurer Doc Savage, created by Henry Ralston and John Nanovic, with primary authorship by Lester Dent.

Famous Detective A pulp magazine (1938–1953) featuring crime and detective fiction.

Fantastic Adventures A pulp magazine (1939–1953) publishing science fiction and fantasy, a companion to *Amazing Stories*.

Frontier Stories: A pulp magazine featuring Western adventure stories, active during the early to mid-20th century.

G-8 and His Battle Aces: A World War I aviation pulp series (1933–1944) featuring the fictional ace pilot G-8.

Horror Stories: A pulp horror magazine (1935–1941) known for graphic, lurid tales in the vein of *Weird Tales*.

Jungle Stories: A pulp magazine (1938–1954) specializing in adventure stories set in exotic jungle environments, often featuring Tarzan-like heroes.

Klondike Stories: Pulp fiction stories set during the Klondike Gold Rush, a common adventure theme.

Marvel Tales: A science fiction and fantasy pulp magazine (1934–1935), later revived as a comic book series by Marvel Comics.

Nick Carter Weekly: A long-running dime novel and pulp magazine (1896–1915) featuring detective Nick Carter.

Patent Medicines: A term for pre-FDA cure-all tonics, often referenced in pulp fiction for their dubious medical claims.

Phantom: *The Phantom*, a pulp-influenced comic strip hero created by Lee Falk in 1936.

Planet Stories: A science fiction pulp magazine (1939–1955) featuring planetary adventure stories, publishing authors like Leigh Brackett and Ray Bradbury.

Rare Earths and Pig-Weeds: No verifiable information available.

Real Detective Tales: A pulp magazine featuring crime and mystery stories, active in the early 20th century.

Real Western: A pulp magazine publishing traditional Western stories, active in the mid-20th century.

Sea Stories: A pulp magazine category focused on naval and maritime adventure tales.

Seven-Stranded Barbed Wire: No direct literary reference found.

Smashing Detective: A pulp magazine (1936–1952) specializing in hardboiled crime fiction.

Slick Magazines: Glossy, high-production magazines like *The Saturday Evening Post*, contrasting with pulps' cheaper newsprint.

South Sea Stories: A pulp magazine category focusing on tropical island adventures and tales of piracy.

Spicy Adventure Stories: A pulp magazine (1934–1946) known for its risqué action-adventure stories.

Spicy Detective Stories: A pulp magazine (1934–1949) blending crime fiction with sexualized elements.

Sport Story Magazine: A pulp magazine category focusing on athletic competitions and heroic sports figures.

Startling Stories: A science fiction pulp magazine (1939–1955) publishing space operas and adventure-driven SF.

Stories of Exploration: A pulp genre featuring tales of adventurers discovering lost civilizations and unknown lands.

Submarine Stories: A pulp fiction subgenre focused on undersea adventure and warfare, particularly popular during World War I and II.

Super Science: A pulp magazine category featuring exaggerated, futuristic science fiction concepts.

“The Gathering of the Tribes”

Overview

Lafferty describes Science Fiction conventions as lively, tribal-style gatherings that draw fans from across the globe to celebrate their shared passion. Focusing on the “38th Annual World Science Fiction Convention” in Boston (August 28 to September 2), the narrative details how thousands of attendees reveled in book deals, parties, discussion panels, and cultural exchanges. The communal spirit, fueled by shared interests in speculative literature, film, and art, underscores the unique allure of these events. Although the convention formally ends, the celebration continues through “Dead Dog Parties,” extending the camaraderie beyond the official schedule. Lafferty’s account captures both the exuberant energy and the wistful moment of parting that mark these gatherings.

Summary

The essay opens by portraying Science Fiction as a “Blood-Nation” scattered worldwide in various

“tribes or clans” that unite annually at conventions or festivals, now held not only in America and Europe but also in Australia and Japan. Lafferty emphasizes the joyous, overflowing spirit of these meetings, comparing them to primitive festivals. Conventioneers range in age from “eight to eighty” (and sometimes beyond) and are drawn by a collective quest for friendship and “magic.”

The largest gathering is called the “World Science Fiction Convention,” and Lafferty has just returned from the 38th edition, hosted at the Sheraton-Boston Hotel in Boston, Massachusetts, from August 28 through September 2. This event also spread into five nearby hotels—Copley Plaza, Copley Square, Midtown, Lenox, and Boston Park Plaza—and drew around seven thousand attendees. Lafferty contrasts it with the previous year’s “World” convention in Brighton, England, which had a stronger European presence, though the two hundred European visitors in Boston were exceptionally enthusiastic.

A central attraction was the “giant treasure cave” of book and magazine dealers, featuring more than two hundred vendors in a vast hall. Tens of thousands of new Fantasy and Science Fiction titles and hundreds of thousands of older books, predominantly from the last fifty to sixty years, were on display. Alongside these were countless pulp and slick magazines, reflecting the decades of Science Fiction’s growth. Collectors and fans buzzed with excitement, spending carefully saved funds on rare or coveted items, sometimes foregoing meals to do so. Lafferty notes that free food and drinks at nighttime “parties” helped offset any hunger.

On Friday night, numerous large regional parties were held—such as the Texas Party, Louisiana-and-South Party, San Francisco Bay Area Party, New York Parties, Australia-and-Friends Party (“Australia in ’83” Bid), France-and-French-Speaking Party, Chicago Area Party, and the New England Party. Every night saw multiple parties; for example, the Scandinavians hosted a late Saturday night bash dubbed the “Copenhagen in ’83” Bidding Party, where many first-time drinkers sampled Aquavit and found themselves thoroughly inebriated.

The Convention Suite opened nightly at 8:30 PM and closed at 7:30 AM, featuring bathtubs filled with iced-down beer and soft drinks, plus tables heaped with snacks. Discussions flourished on every topic among groups large and small. Another main component of the convention was the extensive array of “Discussion Panels, Lectures, and various Readings,” totaling eighty-five sessions of about one hour each. They included themes like “Artificial Intelligence,” “Altered States,” “Sword and Sorcery,” “Japanese Science Fiction,” “The Hard Core of Fantasy,” “The Uncertain Edge of Reality,” “Things That Go Chomp in the Night—Vampires in SF and Fantasy,” “Living in Someone Else’s Dreamworld,” “Life on a Neutron Star” (by Doctor Robert Forward), “The Dead Cat in History,” “Out of the Petri Dish—Building Cultures,” “Concepts of Interstellar Flight Systems,” “Post-Holocaust Themes in Feminist SF,” “Technology for Androgynous Futures,” “The Hard Stuff—World Building,” “Guest Editorial—Fandom Considered as Mythology,” “The Realities of Fantasy,” “Alternate Universes,” “Does SF Have to be Bad?,” and “The Case for a Lunar Colony” (panelists included James Baen, Jerry Pournelle, and Charles Sheffield).

Some panels were extremely popular, allowing attendees ample opportunity to pose questions. Scientists from Harvard and “Massachusetts Tech,” plus prominent authors, fans, and various “pseudo-scientists” shared ideas. The fans themselves often hailed from diverse places, such as Little Rock, Arkansas—where Lafferty jokes about a recurring name, “Margaret Middleton,” who is a red-haired housewife, SF fan, book dealer, and folk singer. Folk Singing, referred to by many fans as “Filk Singing,” had a strong presence, with sessions for children as well, including one that taught “How to Be a Werewolf.”

The convention also featured a massive Art Show, which Lafferty lauds as housing the only “real art” being produced—namely, Fantasy Art. A Masquerade Ball displayed elaborate costumes, reminiscent of Renaissance flair. The “Fan Cabaret” offered nightly amateur performances, and continuous film programs ran sixteen hours a day in two theater halls. Attendees also screened their own homemade fantasy films in smaller video rooms.

A daily paper, *Lobster Tales*, appeared midmorning with humor, updates, and announcements, though Lafferty never witnessed anyone physically distributing it. Lafferty lists personal highlights around Boston, including the shopping center arcades between the hotel and the Prudential Tower, scenic views of the Charles River, local fountains, and spots like St. Cecelia’s Church, the all-night ice cream restaurant, Shelly’s Bar, and the Kon Tiki Ports Restaurant and Bar.

As the convention neared its end, Lafferty recounts a sense of melancholy, likening it to finishing a beloved book or movie. Official programming ended on the evening of September 1, with vendors packing merchandise in a circus-like teardown. Nevertheless, many attendees stayed on, attending “Dead Dog Parties”—and even “Really Dead Dog Parties” for the last few stragglers—where leftover food and liquor sustained the final hours of camaraderie. Leaving on September 2, Lafferty met friends both old and new, savoring a quieter post-convention atmosphere. Lafferty closes on September 6, 1980, with a note of wistfulness, acknowledging that these communal bonds and parties can stretch on, even after the formal end.

(38th Annual World Science Fiction Convention), (Aquavit), (Australia in '83), (Boston), (Boston Park Plaza), (Brighton, England), (Copley Plaza), (Copley Square), (Dead Dog Parties), (Damon Knight), (Doctor Robert Forward), (Folk Singing), (Harvard), (James Baen), (Japan), (Jerry Pournelle), (Kate Wilhelm), (Kon Tiki Ports Restaurant and Bar), (Lenox), (Little Rock, Arkansas), (Lobster Tales), (Margaret Middleton), (Massachusetts Tech), (Midtown), (Norway), (Scandinavians), (September 1), (September 2), (September 6, 1980), (Sheraton-Boston Hotel), (St. Cecelia's), (Texas Party), (The Clarion Call), (The Futurians), (The Hard Core of Fantasy), (The Realities of Fantasy), (The Uncertain Edge of Reality), (Time Binding), (World Science Fiction Convention)

I. Introduction

1. “The Gathering Of The Tribes”

II. Concept of SF as a Blood-Nation

1. Worldwide Tribal Gatherings
 - A. SF is scattered but meets in cons/festivals across continents
 - B. Annual events in America, Europe, Australia, Japan
 - C. Overflowing spirit of largess and assembly
2. The Attendees and Their Quest
 - A. Dozens to thousands gather, from ages 8 to 80+
 - B. They seek magic, find friendship and sometimes the magic
3. The Uniqueness of These Conclaves
 - A. No other fiction/literature has such vast fan gatherings
 - B. Conventions described as mystic tribal rites

III. The 38th Annual Worldcon (Boston 1980)

1. Setting and Scale
 - A. Narrator just returned from Sheraton-Boston Hotel
 - B. Overflow into five nearby hotels, ~7000 persons, Aug 28–Sep 2
2. International Aspect
 - A. Fewer European mainlanders than last year in Brighton
 - B. But those 200 were exuberant
3. Dealer's Hall
 - A. 200+ book/mag dealers in a "treasure cave"
 - B. Tens of thousands of new SF/F books, hundreds of thousands older
 - C. Feverish collecting, "paper prey" for serious buyers
4. Heart of the Convention
 - A. Young attendees spent all saved money here
 - B. If short on food money, they rely on free party snacks

IV. Nightlife and Parties

1. The Great Regional Parties
 - A. Friday night: Texas, Louisiana, NYC, Aussie Bid, etc.
 - B. Big parties every night, e.g. Saturday's Scandinavian Party

2. Convention Suite Culture

- A. Attendees mostly “night people,” suite open 8:30 PM to 7:30 AM
- B. Bathtubs full of iced beers/soft drinks, tables of snacks
- C. Constant conversation, no need for hunger/thirst/loneliness

V. Panels, Lectures, and Discussions

1. Another “Heart” of the Convention

- A. Compare to multi-brained Dinosaurs: the con has multiple hearts

2. Panel Content and Q&A

- A. Authors, fans, scientists, and “pseudo-scientists” partake
- B. Attendees want “enraptured science,” not just sober theory

3. Popular Sessions

- A. 85 total panels, popular ones include: AI, Altered States, Sword & Sorcery, Feminist SF, Interstellar Flight, etc.

VI. Other Convention Highlights

1. Filk Singing & Folk Music

- A. Margaret Middleton from Arkansas, Housewife/Book-dealer/Singer
- B. “Filk” label, overcame Hard Rock dominance, sounded Scottish/Norwegian

2. Children’s Programs

- A. E.g., “How to Be a Werewolf,” which Lafferty humorously wishes to attend

3. The Art Show

- A. Claimed to be “the only real art painted nowadays”

4. Masquerade Ball & Fan Cabaret

- A. Renaissance flair in costuming, imaginative nightly amateur performances

5. Film Tracks

- A. Ran 16 hours/day in two theaters, 40 feature films
- B. Amateur fantasy films in smaller video rooms
- C. “Everyone is a friend at the Convention”

6. Daily Con Newsletter

- A. Called “Lobster Tales,” appeared every morning with quips & announcements

7. Personal Favorite Spots

- A. Arcades near Prudential Tower, Charles River view, fountains, St. Cecelia's Church, 24-hour Ice Cream, Shelly's Bar, Kon Tiki Ports

VII. Ending and Aftermath

1. Dreading the End
 - A. Narrator compares finishing the con to finishing a beloved book/film
 - B. "Only 20 hours left!" feeling
2. Dead Dog Parties
 - A. On evening of Sep 1, official con ended, no more programming
 - B. Most left, but some stayed (Europeans, Aussies, Californians)
 - C. They consolidated leftover drinks/food into "Dead Dog Parties" lasting till dawn
3. Final Day
 - A. Narrator departs Sep 2, meets friends not seen earlier
 - B. Pleasant, less crowded final day
4. The "Really Dead Dog Parties"
 - A. Some remain even later for the "Really Dead Dog" events
 - B. Narrator has never attended one
 - C. "September 6, 1980"

SYLLOGISM NAME	PREMISE 1	PREMISE 2	CONCLUSION
1. SF AS A BLOOD-NATION IN TRIBAL GATHERINGS	Lafferty asserts that Science Fiction is more than mere fiction: it is "a Blood-Nation scattered worldwide" which holds annual "Conventions or Festivals" in America, Europe, Australia, and now Japan.	These gatherings are "joyous," "overflowing with spirit," and "somewhat primitive" in their sense of largess and assembly—they resemble tribal rites.	Hence, SF fandom functions like an extended tribe, meeting in celebratory conclaves that have an almost ritualistic quality.
2. THE WORLD SF CONVENTION AS THE PREMIER RITE	No other fiction/literature/activity has fans assembling in such conclaves. The apex is the annual World Science Fiction Convention ("Worldcon").	Lafferty just returned from the "38th Annual World SF Convention" in Boston, which drew around 7,000 attendees across multiple large hotels	Conclusion: The Worldcon stands as the largest and most significant of these "tribal" SF gatherings, confirming SF's

		(Sheraton-Boston, Copley, etc.).	uniqueness among cultural phenomena.
3. ATTENDEES SEEKING MORE THAN FRIENDSHIP	These thousands of con-goers range in age from 8 to 80, many with a “questing look,” all friendly yet also searching “for magic and the place where it nests.”	According to Lafferty, they all find friendship, and many do indeed find that sense of magic—the intangible wonder SF offers.	Hence, the convention is a place of real camaraderie and “mystic” exploration**—beyond normal social interaction, it’s about discovering “magic.”
4. THE “GIANT TREASURE CAVE” OF DEALERS’ ROOM	A huge hall contained 200+ tables/booths of books and magazines—tens of thousands of new SF/Fantasy titles, hundreds of thousands of old volumes/pulps.	Young fans had saved up money to “stalk paper prey,” often spending not just their allocated funds but “eating money,” starved but joyously collecting.	Conclusion: The “dealers’ room” is a central heart of the convention**, a mecca for paper treasures where fans sacrifice personal comfort to seize rare or desired volumes.
5. GRAND PARTIES, ESPECIALLY THE “REGION NIGHTS”	Another convention highlight is the nightly parties—regional-themed extravaganzas like “Texas Party,” “Australia in ’83 Bid Party,” “New York Parties,” etc., supplying free drinks/food.	Conventioners are mostly “night people,” with the official Convention Suite open from 8:30 PM to 7:30 AM, offering bathtubs of iced-down drinks, junk food, lively conversation, and no chance of hunger or loneliness.	Hence, socializing runs deep into the night, forging friendships and cultural cross-pollination in an ebullient environment—the second “heart” of the con.
6. DISCUSSION PANELS, LECTURES, & MULTIPLE “HEARTS”	Like a composite beast with several beating hearts, the Worldcon also featured 85 discussion panels on varied SF themes—“Artificial Intelligence,” “Sword & Sorcery,” “Hard Core of Fantasy,” “Life on a Neutron	Each panel included major authors, fans, and sometimes real scientists from Harvard/MIT, though “not so much sober theory as enraptured theory.” The Q&A	Therefore, another core of the con is the daytime intellectual exchange—vibrant and wide-ranging, it offers “slanted

	Star,” “Does SF Have to be Bad?” etc.	sessions were often the best part, letting any attendee jump in.	science” that fans crave.
7. FOLK SINGING & CHILDREN’S PROGRAMS	Besides Hard Rock or typical mainstream music, <i>Folk Singing</i> (called “Filk Singing” in SF circles) thrives at cons. Margaret Middleton, a red-haired fan from Little Rock, is a folk-singer and emblem of this revival.	Folk Singing “almost exactly” matches Norwegian or Scottish traditions, and there are children’s events like “How to Be a Werewolf,” plus special folk-singing sets for kids.	Conclusion: The Worldcon** fosters a diverse cultural tapestry**, including “filk” folk singing and whimsical children’s programming that reflect SF’s inclusive, creative spirit.
8. ART SHOWS, FILMS, & DAILY “NEWSPAPER”	The Art Show was “huge and splendid,” with Fantasy Art singled out by Lafferty as “the only real art being painted these years.” Meanwhile, 16 hours of films per day in two halls—plus amateur films in smaller rooms—offered continuous motion pictures.	A daily paper called <i>Lobster Tales</i> delivered comedic quips and announcements every morning, though no one ever saw who distributed it.	Hence, the con is an all-encompassing cultural festival—visual arts, film screenings, in-house publications—beyond just reading or conversation.
9. TERMINAL SADNESS AS THE CON WINDS DOWN	Lafferty compares the end of a wonderful book or film to “panic near the end,” lamenting: “What, only 20 hours left, and then it’s finished!”	After 6 days (Aug 28–Sep 2), the convention ended, with dealers packing up like a circus leaving town. Many departed that night, but for those who remained, the “Dead Dog Parties” began—an after-con tradition letting the leftover folks celebrate one more night.	Conclusion: This sense of ephemeral wonder leads to a mixture of joy and sorrow** as the con’s final hours approach, culminating in “Dead Dog” gatherings to stave off the letdown.
10. “REALLY DEAD DOG PARTIES”: THE REMNANT OF THE REMNANT	Even after the Dead Dog Parties, some still linger for a final “Really Dead Dog Party” the next day. Lafferty confesses he’s never	On that last day, Lafferty meets a dozen new friends he never crossed paths with earlier,	Hence, these post-con phases reveal the deep communal bond: each step tries to extend the magic

	attended one, as he departs late on Sep 2.	underscoring the con's scale and serendipity.	just a bit longer**, forging final new friendships.
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38th Annual *World Science Fiction Convention*: Also known as Noreascon Two, this convention was held from August 29 to September 1, 1980, at the Sheraton-Boston Hotel and Hynes Civic Auditorium in Boston, Massachusetts. The event featured Guests of Honor Damon Knight and Kate Wilhelm, with Robert Silverberg serving as Toastmaster. Attendance was approximately 5,850.

Aquavit: A traditional Scandinavian distilled spirit flavored with caraway or dill, commonly consumed in Nordic countries during festive occasions.

Australia in '83: A promotional campaign advocating for Australia to host the 1983 *World Science Fiction Convention*.

Boston Park Plaza: A historic hotel in Boston, often utilized for conventions and large gatherings.

Brighton, England: The location of the 37th World Science Fiction Convention, known as Seacon '79, held in 1979.

Copley Plaza: Another term for the Fairmont Copley Plaza, a luxury hotel in Boston's Back Bay area, serving as a venue for various events.

Copley Square: A public square in Boston surrounded by notable institutions and often associated with cultural events.

Dead Dog Parties: Informal gatherings held after the conclusion of a convention, providing attendees an opportunity to relax and socialize.

Damon Knight: Born September 19, 1922, in Baker City, Oregon; died April 15, 2002, in Eugene, Oregon. Knight was a prolific science fiction author, editor, and critic. He founded the Science Fiction Writers of America (SFWA) in 1965 and co-founded the Clarion Writers Workshop.

Doctor Robert Forward: Robert L. Forward (1932–2002) was an American physicist and science fiction writer known for his scientifically rigorous hard science fiction, particularly in the fields of gravitational physics and advanced propulsion.

Folk Singing: A musical tradition often embraced by science fiction fandom, leading to the creation of "filk" music, which involves the adaptation or creation of songs with themes pertinent to science fiction and fantasy.

James Baen: An influential science fiction editor and publisher, Baen founded Baen Books in 1983, focusing on science fiction and fantasy genres.

Jerry Pournelle: An American science fiction writer and essayist (1933–2017), Pournelle was known for his works in hard science fiction and collaborations with Larry Niven.

Kate Wilhelm: Born June 8, 1928, in Toledo, Ohio; died March 8, 2018, in Eugene, Oregon. Wilhelm was an American author of science fiction and mystery novels. She co-founded the Clarion Writers Workshop with her husband, Damon Knight.

Kon Tiki Ports Restaurant and Bar: A Polynesian-themed establishment in Boston, known as a social venue during conventions and gatherings.

Lenox: A town in Massachusetts known for its cultural and artistic significance, including hosting literary events and retreats.

Little Rock, Arkansas: The capital city of Arkansas, with an active regional science fiction fandom contributing to the broader speculative fiction community.

Massachusetts Tech: A colloquial term for the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), a prestigious university in Cambridge, Massachusetts, known for its advancements in technology and science.

Sheraton-Boston Hotel: One of the primary venues for the 38th World Science Fiction Convention in 1980, located in Boston, Massachusetts.

St. Cecelia's: A church located in Boston, possibly used for events or gatherings during conventions.

The Futurians: A group of science fiction fans and professionals active in New York City from 1937 to 1945. Members included Isaac Asimov, James Blish, Damon Knight, Cyril M. Kornbluth, Judith Merril, Frederik Pohl, and Donald A. Wollheim. The group significantly influenced the development of science fiction literature and fandom. [Cite this page](#)

World Science Fiction Convention: An annual gathering of science fiction professionals and enthusiasts, featuring the Hugo Awards, panels, and discussions on speculative fiction.

“The Day After the World Ends”

Overview

In 'The Day After The World Ended' (notes for a speech at DeepSouthCon '79 in New Orleans on July 21, 1979), Lafferty argues that our era is literally "the day after" the collapse of what was once called "Western Civilization" or "Modern Civilization." He says that this catastrophic shift occurred sometime between 1912 and 1962, leaving behind an unstructured vacuum where traditional forms—like prose fiction—no longer function. By examining how "Science Fiction" persists in this post-world environment, Lafferty identifies it as an awkward yet unique survivor, possibly carrying the sparks needed to kindle a new world. He questions why no one has seized the unprecedented freedom to shape a successor civilization and urges that we recognize our moment as an open opportunity rather than a terminal silence.

Summary

Lafferty says he will speak about a "peculiar science-fictionish circumstance," which he calls the "After The World Ended" situation, or "Grubbing in the Rubble." He notes that this scenario—making do after total catastrophe—has been overused in speculative writing but never convincingly executed. He proposes that no credible fictional account exists because "fact precludes fiction": humanity actually resides in a real "day after" setting that began sometime between 1912 and 1962.

Next, Lafferty states that "Western Civilization" or "Modern Civilization" was abruptly destroyed during that half-century, although there is nearly universal amnesia about this collapse. He claims that nobody now recalls the structured world that once existed, and that the old forms of recollection disappeared with it. Quoting a Plato reference to man's search for meaning, he asserts that such a quest no longer applies because "all the looking-glasses were broken in the catastrophe."

He then describes how the grand superstructure of the old world came crashing down, leaving behind debates about whether humanity gained or lost when it ended. Some consider that we may have been left in "Flatland," a dimensionally reduced state that cannot perceive the missing heights of the past. Lafferty introduces "Science Fiction" as a potential means to design new worlds—useful now that our previous world is gone—but highlights that prose fiction itself no longer holds power in an unstructured setting.

Continuing, he compares attempts to plow a field that no longer exists with trying to produce standard fiction in a civilization that has vanished. He explains how traditional prose fiction flourished only within a structured environment from about 1605 (with *Don Quixote*) until the early or mid-20th century—citing *The Old Wives' Tale* (1908), *Of Human Bondage* (1915), and other examples as possible last novels of their kind. By linking the dissolution of structured society to the disappearance of genuine fiction, he argues that current literary efforts, if labeled "fiction," are typically "zombie-fiction," lacking the essence that once animated novels.

He then underscores how "Science Fiction" is an exception, having never conformed strictly to old-world fiction. Though it may not always be "good," it still survives, possibly because it was less tethered to the structured reality that collapsed. He observes that the present era is likewise "post-

musical music,” “post-artistic art,” and “post-experiential experience,” describing it as a partially unconscious, “Flatland” condition. Lafferty views the two world wars and revolutionary movements as side effects or rubble-sifting, not the cause of the world’s destruction.

Addressing the “Phoenix Syndrome,” a concept popularized by historian Toynbee, he notes that worlds sometimes reemerge bigger (but not necessarily better) after collapse. While a new civilization could rise from the ashes, it is not guaranteed. He labels our current environment a “Utopia” where near-total freedom exists, though no widespread creativity has emerged to build something new. The conditions are akin to the “If only” premise in Science Fiction, yet the masses remain inert.

Lafferty calls attention to an unsettling contradiction: everything is in place for new forms or ideas, but “nothing grows.” He questions why no one harnesses these unique possibilities, pointing out that it is easier now than ever to assume the role of genius or builder. He cites the poet Housman’s verse about being “a stranger and afraid in a world I never made,” insisting that this old notion no longer applies since that world no longer exists. Instead, people are asked why they are not currently “making a world,” given the wide-open opportunity.

Finally, he suggests that even though the old structures are gone, we have building stones all around us and can invent an entirely new culture. He envisions a “do-it-yourself Science Fiction story” in which the characters, including each of us, must decide the next developments of “The Day After The World Ended.” Lafferty concludes on a note of urgency, emphasizing that if we do not spark a new civilization, we risk sinking into terminal silence. Hence, he refuses to write “The End,” insisting that the story of humanity’s future must continue.

(“All Quiet on the Western Front”), (Arnold Bennett), (A.E. Housman), (By Love Possessed), (DeepSouthCon '79), (Don Quixote), (Flatland), (Gorki’s “The Bystander”), (Hoffmann), (Isak Dinesen’s “Last Tales”), (July 21, 1979), (Maugham’s “Of Human Bondage”), (Modern Civilization), (New Orleans), (O’Flaherty’s “The Informer”), (Old Wives’ Tale), (Phoenix Syndrome), (Plato), (Remarque), (Science Fiction), (Structured Western Civilization), (The Day After The World Ended), (Toynbee), (Utopia), (Washington Irving), (Western Civilization)

I. Opening and Overworked SF Theme

1. Speech Context and Topic
 - A. “The Day After The World Ended” (notes for a speech at DeepSouthCon '79)
 - B. Introduction by Lafferty/speaker
 - a. Sets out to discuss “the peculiar science-fictionish circumstance” in which we live
 - b. Frames the scenario as an “overworked theme”: “After The World Ended”
2. “Grubbing in the Rubble” Situation
 - A. Claims it has been used hundreds of times in SF

- B. Asserts it's "never been well-handled even once"
- C. Explains personal attempts to write such stories unsuccessfully
- 3. "Fact Precludes Fiction" Reasoning
 - A. "Being inside the situation, we are too close to see it clearly"
 - B. SF fixates on near- or far-future doomsday scenarios
 - C. Fails to realize "the destruction of our world has already happened"

II. The World Ended Between 1912 and 1962

- 1. The Actual Catastrophe and Amnesia
 - A. "That world"—often called Western/Modern Civilization—ended in a half-century span
 - B. Public amnesia obscures it: "Nobody now remembers our late world very clearly"
 - C. Historiographers note that all "ends of worlds" produce memory blocks
- 2. Plato's Declaration vs. Present Condition
 - A. "Plato once said man is a being in search of meaning"
 - B. Contrasts with: "Man is not now in search of meaning... He does not recollect"
 - C. "All the looking-glasses were broken in the catastrophe that ended the world"
- 3. The Superstructure's Collapse
 - A. Vague memory of a "large and intricate superstructure" that came crashing down
 - B. Dispute whether we lost a "true and valid dimension" or merely "trashy construction"
 - C. "Cannot be recaptured or analyzed" because the entire structure is gone

III. Flatland and the Loss of Dimension

- 1. Concept of "Flatland"
 - A. Suggests we now live in a "Flatland" lacking height or structure
 - B. "Even if we could go back there," we wouldn't see the missing dimension
 - C. Time machines or "eyes from Flatland" can't perceive what's outside Flatland
- 2. Questions About Science Fiction's Role
 - A. Traditional approach: "What's it good for?" but values are "banned" now
 - B. Alternative: "How does SF work? What does it do?"
 - C. Hypothesis: "SF sometimes designs new worlds," relevant since ours ended
- 3. Fiction's Impossibility in the Present Environment
 - A. "There is no fiction possible in this environment," half of SF is shot
 - B. The curious "prose fiction" form was lost with the old world's destruction
 - C. "We've been plowing a field that isn't there anymore"

IV. Prose Fiction as a Reflection of Old Structure

1. Historical Range of Prose Fiction
 - A. Dates it from *Don Quixote* (1605) to “various ‘last novels’” in the 20th century
 - B. Cites specific examples: Arnold Bennett, Maugham, Gorki, O’Flaherty, Remarque, Cozzens
 - C. Short stories had even shorter duration (Hoffmann, Washington Irving, Isak Dinesen)
2. The Shadow and Zombie-Fiction
 - A. “A shadow can’t last after the object has disappeared”
 - B. “If it still walks about, maybe it’s a zombie”
 - C. Contemporary literature: “peacock posturing, pornography, gadgetry,” “non-fiction novels,” etc.
3. Science Fiction as an Exception
 - A. “It was never a properly fashioned fiction”
 - B. “More of a pre-world or post-world camp-fire story”
 - C. “The ghost of some other fiction might say: ‘You’re not very good,’ but SF answers, ‘I’m alive and you’re dead.’”

V. The Post-World Condition and Being Marooned

1. Post-Musical, Post-Artistic, Post-Conscious Era
 - A. “We are, partly at least, in a post-conscious world”
 - B. The old world ended not purely via world wars or revolutions—those were “side lights”
 - C. Collective “dark age” or limbo: “the cellar of a world that has blown away”
2. Impossibility of Staying Put
 - A. “We can’t stay here because the ground we are standing on is sinking”
 - B. People show no curiosity about paradoxes of living in “Flatland”
 - C. The present resembles “life in a photographic negative”
3. Science Fiction Unaware of Its Own Sealed Lore
 - A. SF is a “semi-secret society so confused it can’t recall its own passwords”
 - B. Contains “cryptic memories and elements” from multiple earlier worlds
 - C. Nevertheless, SF seldom applies the “Day After” theme to the real present

VI. The Phoenix Syndrome and Potential Rebirth

1. Toynbee’s Study of 24 Civilizations
 - A. “He kept running into the ‘Fire in the Ashes Phenomenon’”
 - B. Rebirth can be bigger but not necessarily better
 - C. Possibly the old world ended because it had become too large, no longer able to fly
2. Waiting for a New World to Form
 - A. Not guaranteed or automatic—could remain a vacuum
 - B. Sometimes new worlds appear after a few decades, sometimes centuries
 - C. “There has never been as wide and deep a vacuum as now”

3. The Present as Utopia
 - A. "By every definition, this is Utopia" but some see it as a calamity
 - B. "Almost total freedom... we live in rubble and remnant"
 - C. "If only" premises are fulfilled, yet "nothing grows. And nothing grows. And nothing grows."

VII. The Call to Build a New Civilization

1. "If You Are Not Right Now Making a World, Why Aren't You?"
 - A. The Housman verse: "I, a stranger and afraid / In a world I never made—"
 - B. That older world "isn't here anymore"
 - C. Challenges the audience: "You can now set up your own rules... be a genius... nothing's stopping you"
2. Building Stones All Around
 - A. "All it's waiting for is ideas to germinate and a few sparks to kindle"
 - B. SF or other "survivor-groups" might hold "sparking machines"
 - C. But "if we can't spark reanimation, then we're really dead"
3. Counter-Arguments from "Some of You"
 - A. "What's the matter with the way it is now?"
 - B. "Nobody's driving the contraption... we've taken the wheels off..."
 - C. Meanwhile the muck is rising to our mouths; soon we'll drown

VIII. Possible Futures and the Stuck Calendar

1. Imagining a Successor World
 - A. "Might have new arts, new happinesses, new categories of thought"
 - B. "It's no more difficult to build it than to predict it"
 - C. "Be an inventor of it if you want to be in on a new movement"
2. We Are Characters in a SF Story Named "The Day After The World Ended"
 - A. "The continuity has reached crux point... brilliant strokes are called for"
 - B. "Any character may take any liberty he wishes in this post-world story"
 - C. "We can't leave the story; the calendar is stuck on the day after the world ended"
3. Conclusion: "It Must Not End"
 - A. Urges retitling the scenario as "First on a New Planet" to encourage creativity
 - B. "I refrain from writing 'The End' here"
 - C. Ends on the note that it must continue rather than conclude

No.	Title	Major Premise	Minor Premise	Conclusion
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1	Introduction to the Theme	If we are living under a peculiar science-fictionish condition, then our situation sets a unique thematic stage.	Lafferty announces, "I'm going to talk about the peculiar science-fictionish circumstance..." and notes that the theme is overworked, never well-handled; it is named the "After The World Ended" situation, subtitled "Grubbing in the Rubble."	Therefore, the stage is set by an overworked, ill-handled post-world situation.
2	Fact Precluding Fiction	If fact precludes fiction when we are too close to a real catastrophe, then plausible fiction becomes impossible.	Lafferty explains that "fact precludes fiction... we are too close to it to see it clearly," and that SF's babbling about cosmic destructions is hindered by an "impenetrable amnesia" that blocks clear examination of the catastrophe.	Therefore, our proximity to the catastrophe prevents the crafting of plausible fiction.
3	The Actual Catastrophe	If a real catastrophic event occurred that ended a civilization, then that world is truly gone.	Lafferty states literally that a real event (sometime between 1912 and 1962) ended "Western Civilization" (or "Modern Civilization"), and that historiographers note amnesia as common to all "ends of worlds."	Therefore, the old world has ended—and its memory is lost in historical amnesia.

II. Fiction's Demise in an Unstructured World

No.	Title	Major Premise	Minor Premise	Conclusion
1	Questioning Plato's Declaration	If Plato's claim that "Man is... in search of meaning" no longer applies after a catastrophe, then man no longer seeks meaning.	Lafferty notes that after "The Day After The World Ended," man "does not recollect... does not reflect."	Therefore, in the post-catastrophe era, man is not in search of meaning.
2	Uncertain Loss of Dimension	If there is a vague memory of a once-grand superstructure, then debate arises over	There is a faint memory of a collapsed superstructure—and disputes about whether sweeping away the old	Therefore, the loss of dimensionality remains uncertain and disputed.

		whether its loss was gain or loss.	was beneficial or if something vital was lost (with no way to recapture the old structure).	
3	"Flatland" as the Usual Condition	If most worlds are "Flatlands" (lacking vertical dimension), then a time machine from such a world can see only what is in Flatland.	Evidence suggests that "Flatlands" are more common, making worlds with height the exception.	Therefore, the usual condition is one of flatness, limiting perception to that dimension.
4	Defining SF's Role (Or Lack Thereof)	If the value question "What's it good for?" is banned, then alternative questions about function and design arise.	Lafferty raises alternate questions ("How does it work? What does it do?") and notes that SF sometimes "designs new worlds" because the previous one is destroyed.	Therefore, SF's role is ambiguous in an unstructured post-world.
5	Incompatibility with "No Fiction" Left	If the structured form of prose fiction cannot survive the collapse of the old world, then no true fiction remains.	Lafferty laments that "prose fiction was lost in the shipwreck of the old world."	Therefore, the available fiction is insufficient to capture the post-catastrophe reality.
6	Attempting to Build on Nonexistent Ground	If one attempts to build on what no longer exists, then the effort is futile.	Lafferty likens it to a contractor building on the wrong lot—plowing a field that isn't there.	Therefore, attempts to create new fiction on nonexistent ground are doomed.
7	Short Story Also Gone	If a special form of fiction vanishes when conditions collapse, then that form is lost.	Lafferty notes that the short story, once prominent from ~1819 to Isak Dinesen's "Last Tales" in 1955, is now gone.	Therefore, the short story form has disappeared in the post-catastrophe era.
8	Apparent Exceptions	If structured prose fiction cannot survive unstructured society, then any apparent exceptions are merely illusory.	The thesis is that prose fiction, a structured form, cannot survive in an unstructured society.	Therefore, apparent exceptions do not change the fact that structured prose fiction is lost.

9	Zombie-Fiction	If only a shadow remains after its object is gone, then what persists is a lifeless mimicry—zombie-fiction.	With the structured world gone, what remains is “zombiefiction” (e.g., porn, posing, new journalism) that lacks substance.	Therefore, traditional fiction is now reduced to mere zombie-fiction.
10	SF: The Exception	If mis-named Science Fiction still “walks” a little despite its flaws, then it remains as an exception among dead forms.	Lafferty notes that SF “still walks a little” and is not a complete zombie—even if it says, “You’re not very good... but I’m alive and you’re dead.”	Therefore, SF endures as a flawed but extant exception in the post-catastrophe landscape.

III. Living in a Post-World Era

No.	Title	Major Premise	Minor Premise	Conclusion
1	Post-Everything Condition	If we are in an unstructured era, then we live in a condition beyond traditional art and music.	Lafferty describes the era as “post-musical music, post-artistic art, post-fictional fiction,” partly in a post-conscious world of uncertain permanence.	Therefore, we live in a radically unstructured, post-world condition.
2	Marooned and Chopped Off	If the old world ended in an unclear manner, then we are marooned with its remnants only as side lights.	Lafferty remarks that how the old world ended “isn’t clear” and that the world wars were merely side lights.	Therefore, we are marooned and disconnected from a clearly defined past world.
3	Literal, Not Allegorical	If the conditions we face are real rather than allegorical, then our situation is a literal state of being.	Lafferty emphasizes that we have either lost our last world or are between worlds—like a photographic negative or a limbo in the Collective Unconscious.	Therefore, our post-world state is literal and not merely symbolic.
4	Urgency to Move On	If the ground beneath us is sinking, then immediate action to preserve	Lafferty warns, “We can’t stay here... we’d better remember fragments of past or future,” as the ground is literally sinking.	Therefore, there is an urgent need to move on from our unstable present.

		fragments of past or future is necessary.		
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IV. The Place of Science Fiction Now

No.	Title	Major Premise	Minor Premise	Conclusion
1	SF's Semi-Secret Society	If a cultural movement forgets its own credentials, then it becomes a semi-secret society.	Lafferty notes that SF "can't remember its own passwords" and appears confused.	Therefore, SF now exists as a semi-secret, disoriented club.
2	A Pleasurable Club	If an art form remains pleasant and non-restrictive, then it offers a form of enjoyment despite chaos.	It is described as "pleasant and non-restrictive... fun is more scarce now than before."	Therefore, SF still provides a measure of pleasure, even if its structure is confused.
3	The Irony of SF in "Day After" Mode	If SF is trapped in a dismal, post-world plot yet fails to apply it to current reality, then it loses relevance.	Lafferty remarks that SF is "trapped in a dismal science-fictionish situation... right in the middle of 'The Day After The World Ended' plot" but does not address the present.	Therefore, SF's irony undermines its ability to reflect current reality.
4	Unconscious Keeper of Sparks	If SF carries latent creative sparks that remain unrecognized due to amnesia or taboo, then potential renewal exists.	Lafferty states that "Science Fiction As Survivor" carries sparks that might kindle fires again, though these remain unacknowledged.	Therefore, SF holds an unconscious potential for renewal.
5	Transition Creatures	If we have just undergone a traumatic passage, then our state is one of transitional, diminished awareness.	Lafferty describes us as "creatures who have just made a traumatic passage... dopey, half-asleep."	Therefore, our current condition is one of transition and impaired alertness.

V. Phoenix Syndrome and the Next World

No.	Title	Major Premise	Minor Premise	Conclusion
1	Toynbee's "Phoenix Syndrome"	If after a world's death a "Fire in the Ashes" occurs, then a phoenix may arise—but not necessarily in improved form.	Lafferty notes that so far the phoenix has grown bigger after each rebirth, but "maybe not better."	Therefore, rebirth occurs but does not guarantee a qualitative improvement in the new world.
2	Uncertainty of Rebirth	If the world's rebirth is subject to variable intervals, then its emergence is uncertain.	Lafferty states that "if the world is reborn... it's not certain at all... intervals vary... never a vacuum as big as now."	Therefore, the possibility of rebirth is uncertain and inconsistent.
3	Freedom in Rubble	If an environment offers nearly total freedom despite destruction, then it presents a paradox of opportunity.	Lafferty describes living in a wide-open "people's-republic" amid rubble.	Therefore, the post-catastrophe state offers freedom despite its chaotic ruins.
4	Utopian Paradox	If a utopia is defined by abundant possibilities yet nothing grows, then a paradox is evident.	Lafferty observes that "by every definition, this is Utopia... And nothing grows," despite having "if onlies" more possible than ever.	Therefore, the situation is a utopia in potential but paradoxically stagnant.

VI. Opportunity vs. Stagnation

No.	Title	Major Premise	Minor Premise	Conclusion
1	Swept Clear, Yet No Creativity	If a place is cleared of old accumulation yet nothing moves, then creative activity is absent.	Lafferty remarks that "never been a place as clear of accumulation... but nothing is moving that way."	Therefore, despite a clean slate, creativity remains absent.
2	Choices Are Ours	If there are no predetermined choices, then individuals must actively decide to create a new world.	Lafferty suggests, "the best way to be in on a new world is to help invent it."	Therefore, creative choices rest with us.

3	Housman Verse and Responsibility	If a verse expresses alienation from a world one never made, then it implies a responsibility to create one's own world.	Housman's verse ("I, a stranger and afraid / In a world I never made") is cited as having become a "crocodile verse," prompting the question, "Why aren't you [making one]?"	Therefore, there is a personal responsibility to create a new world.
4	Toward a Possible Renaissance	If a new civilization can emerge after the old structured world falls, then reanimation must be sparked.	Lafferty contends that a new civilization-culture will emerge if we can spark reanimation.	Therefore, creative renewal offers hope for a renaissance.
5	Arguments Against Reanimation	If some argue against reanimation due to complacency, then those arguments reveal a dangerous inertia.	Critics claim "Forget that reanimation" and "nobody's driving the contraption... we like it that way," despite sinking ruins.	Therefore, arguments against reanimation reflect complacency in the face of impending collapse.
6	Building a New World or Drowning	If we do not drown in the present decay, then there is an opportunity to build something new.	Lafferty states, "We can't reconstruct the old... we have an open opportunity to make something new."	Therefore, we must build a new world to avoid being overwhelmed by decay.

VII. The Ongoing "Do-It-Yourself" SF Story

No.	Title	Major Premise	Minor Premise	Conclusion
1	We Are Characters in "The Day After The World Ended"	If we are characters in a do-it-yourself SF story, then we have the power to determine what happens next.	Lafferty notes that our "non-world" is part of a story called "The Day After The World Ended" and that the continuity is at a "crux point."	Therefore, we have an unprecedented chance to shape our future.
2	The Stuck Calendar	If time remains fixed on a specific, unchanging day, then creative renewal is stalled.	The calendar is stuck on "The Day After The World Ended"—these should be Green Years, but nothing grows.	Therefore, the stuck calendar symbolizes a lack of creative progress.

3	Failure to Move	If less gifted individuals have invented worlds and yet we do not move, then inertia dominates the present.	Lafferty observes that “people less gifted have invented worlds... yet we do not move” and silence occupies the present time.	Therefore, our failure to move signifies creative stagnation.
4	“What Does Happen Now?”	If no character can devise the next episode in our story, then the narrative remains in stasis.	Although any character may take liberties, none can escape the framework of the story.	Therefore, the story remains unresolved and stagnant.
5	Refusal to End	If one refrains from declaring an end, then the narrative continues indefinitely.	Lafferty explicitly refrains from writing “The End,” insisting that the story must not conclude.	Therefore, the narrative of our non-world persists without a final ending.

Part II: Post-Catastrophe Fiction and Its Implications

NO.	TITLE	MAJOR PREMISE	MINOR PREMISE	CONCLUSION
1	The Overworked Theme of Post-Catastrophe Fiction	If a theme is repeatedly used without proper handling, then it becomes overworked and problematic for good fiction.	The “After The World Ended” situation has been over-used hundreds of times yet never produced a truly good story.	Therefore, the post-catastrophe theme is overworked and unfruitful.
2	Fact Precludes Fiction When Too Close	If one is so near a real catastrophe that facts obscure imaginative distance, then plausible fiction becomes impossible.	We are “inside” the catastrophe—the world ended recently—so fact precludes clear imaginative fiction.	Therefore, the current condition makes writing plausible fiction impossible.
3	The Recent End of Our World and Its Amnesia	If a world is destroyed and its memory is lost, then its details	The world we knew ended suddenly between 1912 and 1962, and collective	Therefore, the details of our former world are irretrievably lost.

		cannot be clearly recalled.	amnesia now shrouds its memory.	
4	The Loss of Reflective Capacity Post-Catastrophe	If a catastrophe destroys not only structures but also the tools for self-reflection, then humanity loses its capacity for meaning.	Plato's declaration that "man is in search of himself" no longer applies after all "looking-glasses" have been broken.	Therefore, the end of the old world has destroyed our capacity for reflective self-searching.
5	The Disputed Legacy of the Old World's Structure	If a vague memory of a lost superstructure exists, then debate will arise over whether its collapse was gain or loss.	There is disputed evidence that our late world possessed a grand structure that crashed, leaving us in a "Flatland" where dimensions are lost.	Therefore, it remains unresolved whether the collapse of the old world's structure was beneficial or detrimental.
6	The Role of Science Fiction in Designing New Worlds	If a creative art can design new worlds to fill the void left by the old, then it has a vital function after catastrophe.	Science Fiction sometimes "designs new worlds"—a timely role given that our previous world is gone.	Therefore, one essential role of Science Fiction is to envision and create new worlds.
7	The Demise of Structured Prose Fiction	If an art form reflects its society's structure, then when that structure collapses, the art form fails.	Prose fiction, which thrived as a structured form for 300 years, became impossible when the structured world ended.	Therefore, the collapse of structured society has led to the demise of traditional prose fiction.
8	The Emergence of Zombie-Fiction	If the shadow of an art form cannot last after its source is gone, then only a lifeless mimicry remains.	With the structured world gone, traditional prose fiction now exists only as "zombiefiction"—a ghostly imitation lacking substance.	Therefore, what remains of traditional fiction is mere zombie-fiction.
9	Our Present Unstructured, Post-Conscious Condition	If the world has lost its structure and reflective capacity, then	We now live in a post-musical, post-artistic, post-fictional, and	Therefore, our current human condition is one of diminished,

		humanity exists in a diminished state of consciousness.	post-experiential era— a postconscious world where people are “half-asleep” and dopey.	fragmented consciousness.
10	Marooned Between Worlds and in Flatland	If the old world has ended and its memory is lost, then we are marooned between what was and what might have been.	Lafferty asserts that “today is The Day After The World Ended” and that we might be living in “Flatland” or a photographic negative of the past.	Therefore, we are stranded in a limbo between worlds, lacking the fullness of our former reality.
11	The Impossibility of Reconstructing the Past	If recollection is lost in a catastrophe, then the original structure cannot be reconstructed.	The old world cannot be recaptured or analyzed because its capacity for recollection was taken with it in the catastrophe.	Therefore, we cannot reconstruct the old structured world.
12	The Imperative to Remember or Recreate	If the ground beneath us is sinking, then it is essential to preserve fragments of the past or envision a new future.	The instability of our present state forces us to remember or imagine a future before we are completely lost.	Therefore, it is imperative to preserve memories or envision a future world.
13	Science Fiction’s Confused, Cryptic Identity	If a cultural movement cannot recall its own identity, then its organization becomes confused and semi-secret.	Science Fiction is described as a semi-secret society that can’t remember its own passwords yet harbors cryptic memories and ancient lore.	Therefore, the present state of Science Fiction is one of confused self-identity and cryptic antiquarianism.
14	The Dull Treatment of the “Day After” Theme	If an art form treats a dynamic and traumatic situation with dullness, then it fails to capture its urgency.	Science Fiction has rendered the “Day After The World Ended” plot dull and detached from the reality of the present catastrophe.	Therefore, SF fails to effectively address the dynamic, immediate reality of our post-world condition.

15	The Lingering Sparks of Surviving Fiction	If remnants of a once-vibrant art form persist in sealed, ritualistic forms, then there is potential for future renewal.	“Science Fiction As Survivor” carries a few sealed ritual jars of sparks that might kindle new fires, though amnesia or taboo prevents their recognition.	Therefore, although remnants of fiction persist, their potential for renewal remains unrecognized.
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Part III: Post-Catastrophe Fiction

NO.	TITLE	MAJOR PREMISE	MINOR PREMISE	CONCLUSION
16	The Trauma of Transition and Its Impact on Consciousness	If a species emerging from a traumatic transition becomes half-asleep, then its creative and conscious capacities are impaired.	We are described as emerging from an old life form in a state akin to a tadpole or chrysalis—half-asleep and diminished.	Therefore, our post-world condition is marked by impaired consciousness and reduced creative vitality.
17	The Phoenix Syndrome and the Possibility of Rebirth	If rebirth from ashes does not guarantee improvement, then civilizations reborn are not necessarily better than before.	Toynbee’s studies reveal that although the phoenix grows larger after each rebirth, it may become too unwieldy.	Therefore, while rebirth is possible, it does not ensure that the new world will be qualitatively superior.
18	The Shortening of Creative Vacuums	If the intervals between the end of old worlds and the emergence of new ones have shortened, then the current creative void is vast.	Historical intervals have varied from centuries to decades; now the creative vacuum is unprecedentedly expansive.	Therefore, we currently face an unusually vast and deep creative void that urgently awaits renewal.
19	Freedom Amid Rubble: The Paradox of the Non-World	If a state offers nearly total freedom yet exists only as disordered rubble, then it is	We live in a “people’s-republic” of almost total liberty, but also amid rubble and non-governing remnants.	Therefore, our current state is paradoxically both a utopia of freedom and a chaotic

		simultaneously utopian and chaotic.		remnant of a dead world.
20	The Utopian Opportunity to Create Anew	If an environment provides unprecedented freedom and raw material yet remains inert, then it is an unfulfilled utopian opportunity.	Although the seedbed of creativity is wide open and the necessary “fructifying minerals” are present, nothing is growing and no one is building a new world.	Therefore, the current state is an unfulfilled utopian opportunity that demands active creative engagement.
21	The “If Only” Nexus of Science Fiction	If every flight of fancy in SF begins with an “if only” premise, then the present moment should fulfill those possibilities.	Currently, all the “if onlies” are more than possible and unrestrained, yet people continue to hobble as if fettered.	Therefore, we stand at a nexus where creative potential is unbound, though hindered by human inertia.
22	The Unprecedented Opportunity for World-Building	If the remnants of the old world have been swept clear, then there exists a rare opportunity for entirely new creation.	There has never been a place so free of past superstructure—leaving fine “building stones” scattered about, but no one is constructing a new world.	Therefore, we have an unprecedented opportunity to build a new world, provided we choose to act.
23	The Moral Imperative to Create	If one is no longer responsible for a world that no longer exists, then one must ask why one isn’t creating a new world.	Traditional verses lament a world one never made; with the old world gone, we are left with a choice to create anew.	Therefore, each person must confront the question of creative responsibility and decide to build a new world.
24	Group Ingenuity and the Role of the Creative Elite	If a small elite of geniuses can harness group ingenuity to create a new world, then proclaiming oneself a genius is the first step.	Lafferty urges individuals to declare themselves geniuses, set up their own rules, and join a small elite capable of ushering in a new civilization.	Therefore, we must embrace our creative potential and join the creative elite to innovate a new world.

25	The Imminent Possibility of Reanimation	If the survival of our culture depends on igniting sparks of creativity, then failure to reanimate these sparks results in cultural death.	Several survivor groups have “sparking machines” but without successful reanimation, our culture is doomed.	Therefore, the future of our culture hinges on reanimating and sparking new creative life.
26	The Urgency of Action in the Face of Decay	If the rubble of the old world is sinking into foul muck and threatens to drown us, then immediate action is required.	While some are complacent (“it tickles their noses”), Lafferty warns that unless we move, we will be drowned by the sinking rubble.	Therefore, we must act decisively now to prevent our creative and cultural demise.
27	The Open-Ended Nature of the Post-World Game	If we are characters in a do-it-yourself story with no fixed rules, then each participant is free to shape the next episode.	We are all characters in “The Day After The World Ended,” a game without rules in which our future remains undetermined.	Therefore, our future is open-ended and mutable—but we must take responsibility for writing the next chapter.
28	The Stuck Calendar and the Lack of Creativity	If time is perceived as stagnant and uncreative, then the current era is marked by a failure to generate new ideas.	The calendar is stuck on “The Day After The World Ended” day after day, reflecting a widespread creative silence.	Therefore, our present era is characterized by temporal stagnation and a lack of creative output.
29	The Call to Invent a New World	If an unprecedented opportunity exists to build a new world, then the best participation is to become one of its inventors.	Lafferty declares that a small number of people—from a couple hundred to a couple billion working with “uneasy brilliance”—can produce a stunning, unpredictable creation.	Therefore, to seize this opportunity, one must actively participate in inventing and building a new world.
30	The Critical “Crux Point” of Our Narrative	If the continuity of our cultural narrative has reached a	The current moment is described as the “crux point” where our SF story offers an	Therefore, we are at a decisive juncture demanding bold, creative

		make-or-break juncture, then bold creative action is urgently needed.	unprecedented opportunity to determine what happens next.	strokes to shape our future.
31	The Final Imperative: It Must Not End	If the possibility for renewal and creation exists, then our narrative must not be allowed to terminate.	Lafferty refrains from writing “The End,” insisting that our story must continue despite the dead world around us.	Therefore, we must ensure that our narrative endures by continuously creating and reimagining our world.

“It’s Down the Slippery Cellar Stairs”

Overview

Lafferty likens fiction writing to a manual-mental trade that anyone with sufficient interest can learn. Lafferty emphasizes the need for ideas, proper tools, and what Lafferty calls “Susceptibility to Infestation,” or the capacity for stories to manifest themselves through a writer. It suggests that truly good stories can emerge even from flawed writers, as though each story is its own living entity seeking a host. Finally, Lafferty underlines the fleeting nature of the best creative impulses, noting that youthful exuberance is often lost over time and urging writers to seize the moment before it slips away.

Summary

The essay begins by describing fiction writing as a trade, akin to carpentry or masonry, where one may advance from apprentice to journeyman to master. It highlights that almost anyone, with the right will and interest, can learn to shape the intangible, quasi-spiritual material of storytelling. Lafferty addresses objections that writing “can’t be taught,” insisting instead that it can be learned, citing a humorous example from an “SF story” in which a child writes fiction in the womb.

Next, Lafferty explains that no official institution or union regulates fiction writers, and that each writer makes or changes his own rules. It asserts that success depends on factors such as talent, ideas, adequate tools, and “Susceptibility to Infestation,” meaning an openness to being “possessed” by a story seeking to be written. Lafferty jokes about “kidneys” as a mixed-up reference for brains, insisting that all of a person’s mental and visceral faculties—including so-called “visceral brains”—are crucial.

The essay then advises would-be writers to descend “the slippery cellar stairs” of their minds to find story ideas lurking in the unconscious. It notes that these ideas will replenish themselves as fast as

they are used and proposes that they constitute either a caricature of the world or are the true essence of which the external world is a caricature. Furthermore, the writer's main tools are language and self, which become more adept with practice.

Regarding standard narrative structures, Lafferty challenges the notion that a story requires a strict beginning, middle, and end, calling such advice an editor's phrase that does not necessarily reflect the organic reality of a living story. Lafferty claims that truly good stories "write themselves," even though no writer is wholly "good." Instead, many writers function as "hosts" for stories that come to them by way of "infestation," resulting in excellent tales despite Lafferty's flaws.

Finally, the essay argues that a certain narrowing of mental pathways happens with age, dimming spontaneity and originality. Because of this, younger writers have a built-in advantage, and Lafferty concludes by urging immediate action—"yesterday" or "today"—to harness creative impulses before they fade further.

(Dutch boy), (SF), (Susceptibility to Infestation)

I. Introduction to Fiction Writing as a Trade

1. Title and Opening Concept
 - A. "Here: It's Down The Slippery Cellar Stairs"
 - B. Fiction writing as a manual-mental construction trade
 - C. Accessible to almost anyone with sufficient will
 - D. Material is "more fleshy and more ghostly" than carpentry or masonry

II. Can Writing Be Taught?

1. Common Protest
 - A. "Shriek, shriek!" Some insist writing can't be taught
 - B. Yet it can be learned, which is better
 - C. Many improbable people have mastered it
 - D. The womb-writing SF anecdote as a fictional extreme
2. Lack of Institutional Regulation
 - A. No formal license or union for writers (yet)
 - B. No single set of rules; one makes one's own

III. Core Elements of Story-Building

1. Ability, Disposition, and the Brain
 - A. Anecdote of Dutch boy mixing "kidneys" for "brains"
 - B. "Visceral brains" and incongruity help

2. Finding Ideas: “Down the Slippery Cellar Stairs”
 - A. The cellar of one’s mind offers infinite weird stuff
 - B. It’s an “essential enzyme,” caricature or prime stuff
3. Tools and Structure
 - A. Tools are your language and yourself
 - B. Conventional story “beginning, middle, end” is optional
4. “Good Stories Write Themselves”
 - A. Summation that truly strong stories emerge naturally

IV. Writers vs. Stories: Infestation Concept

1. Quality of Writers
 - A. “No truly good writers exist,” mostly amiable frauds
 - B. An irrational number less than one is the count of “great writers”
2. Good Stories as Independent Entities
 - A. They get themselves written via “infestation” or “possession”
 - B. A “ghost-form” story uses a writer as a host

V. Physical & Temporal Limits

1. Aging Constrictions
 - A. Writing juices must flow through brain pathways, which narrow with age
 - B. Exuberance/spontaneity/originality fade, sometimes returning briefly
2. Best Time to Write Is Now
 - A. Youth has the advantage
 - B. “The best time was yesterday; next best is today”

SYLLOGISM NAME	PREMISE 1	PREMISE 2	CONCLUSION
S1: WRITING AS A TRADE	“Fiction writing is one of the manual-mental construction trades,” analogous to carpentry or masonry.	In these trades, a worker can advance from apprentice to journeyman to master.	Therefore, writing can be learned and mastered just like any other trade, requiring sustained interest, practice, and skill development.
S2: WRITING CAN BE LEARNED BY ANYONE	Lafferty observes that many who become “adept” at fiction writing are not	If people with average abilities can master writing by interest and will, then almost “anybody” can learn it.	Hence, fiction writing is widely accessible—most who have the will can learn it.

	extraordinary geniuses.		
S3: "IT CAN'T BE TAUGHT" VS. "IT CAN BE LEARNED"	Some protest, "Writing is special—it can't be taught."	But learning can occur even when formal teaching is impossible; indeed, "nobody is born knowing it," so it is always learned by experience, trial, and error.	Thus, the best phrasing is that writing cannot be formally taught like a rigid subject, but it can be learned through doing.
S4: NO OFFICIAL LICENSING	In most skilled trades, there may be licenses or unions regulating who can practice (e.g., electricians, plumbers).	For fiction writers, "There isn't any institute empowered to regulate, examine, or license"—nor must one join a union.	Therefore, anyone may practice writing without institutional gatekeepers.
S5: MAKING ONE'S OWN RULES	There are "rules" for fiction, but not "universally-accepted or consensus rules."	A writer "makes his own rules" and can change them at will.	Consequently, the craft is flexible; no single authoritative rulebook dictates how fiction must be written.
S6: REQUIREMENTS FOR WRITING	Writing requires (1) ability & disposition, (2) ideas, (3) proper tools (language & self), and (4) something Lafferty calls "Susceptibility to Infestation."	The first three (talent, ideas, tools) are common to many creative pursuits. The fourth (infestation) is more mysterious.	Therefore, to produce stories, one must combine basic skills/ideas/tools with a special intangible quality that allows stories to "inhabit" the writer.
S7: "KIDNEYS" AS BRAINS	Lafferty references a Dutch boy mixing up English words: tapping his head and saying "kidneys" instead of "brains."	Writing indeed uses all sorts of "brains," including "visceral brains," i.e., intuitive or bodily intelligence.	Hence, intellect alone is insufficient; imaginative and "incongruous" bodily-level creativity also matters.
S8: ROLE OF INCONGRUITY	"Incongruity helps" in writing—clashing ideas, odd juxtapositions, unusual mental leaps.	Such paradoxical or weird touches often fuel creativity and uniqueness in storytelling.	Therefore, embracing incongruity can spark more original, engaging fiction.

S9: THE SLIPPERY CELLAR STAIRS (SOURCE OF IDEAS)	Lafferty says you get ideas by going “down the slippery cellar stairs” to the “cellar of your own mind.”	Down there, you find “good ideas lying around on the dank floor,” plus “bottles of reverie” to uncork—i.e., the subconscious or unconscious mind teems with raw story material.	Therefore, a writer can delve into personal subconscious for an endless supply of story ideas.
S10: WEIRD STUFF AS ESSENTIAL ENZYME	“You’re loaded with weird stuff” in your unconscious; it’s “an essential enzyme” that allows you to function.	Using up that weird stuff in writing doesn’t deplete you permanently—it “replaces itself as rapidly as it’s used.”	Consequently, a writer should boldly draw from personal oddities, trusting the supply will replenish.
S11: SHAPING IDEA-NUCLEI	You gather idea-nuclei from “both inside and outside sources.”	With your language and self as the chief tools, you “shape” these into any sort of story you want.	Thus, storytelling is the creative manipulation of raw idea fragments, forging them into a cohesive narrative.
S12: BEGINNING, MIDDLE, END	Editors often say a story needs a “beginning, middle, and end.”	Lafferty counters that these are “just phrases”; real living stories don’t have neat linear segments.	Hence, “beginning-middle-end” is an oversimplification, and a story can be more organic or open-ended.
S13: A STORY AS A LIVING SEGMENT	Lafferty insists “a story must be a living entity,” more like a “living segment” of life than a complete, topographically bounded structure.	Living things “don’t have beginnings and middles and ends” in a strict sense; they evolve or continue.	Therefore, stories are dynamic rather than trivially partitioned.
S14: GOOD STORIES “WRITE THEMSELVES”	“The good stories, of course, write themselves”—suggesting they have an autonomy or momentum.	In other words, a writer who attempts to control every aspect forcibly might stifle the story’s natural flow.	Thus, a genuinely strong story feels as though it emerges almost independently, with the author as facilitator.
S15: “NO REALLY GOOD WRITERS”	Lafferty claims: “There aren’t any (truly) good writers.”	If so, then presumably no one stands as a	Conclusion: The craft of writing never achieves a single perfect or “really

	Writers are mostly “likeable frauds,” or “unlikable frauds,” or “stumblers,” “screamers,” “drones.”	perfect craftsman at all times.	good writer.” Everyone is flawed.
S16: “REALLY GOOD STORIES” DO EXIST	Despite “no really good writers,” there exist “a number of really good stories.”	The proportion of good stories is small, but still “very many.”	Hence, good stories emerge despite the lack of “perfect writers.”
S17: INFESTATION BY STORY	Lafferty suggests that a good story is an “independent being or person” that “gets itself born or written” via a host writer.	The story “infests” or “possesses” the writer to ensure it is transmitted into written form.	Therefore, the existence of “really good stories” without “really good writers” is explained by story-infestation—the story works through any available host.
S18: INFESTATION AS A REAL SPIRIT MANIFESTATION	People talk of “possession” by devils or “infestation” by spirits.	Lafferty sees a “ghost-form superior story” seizing partial control of a writer, far more genuinely than séance phenomena.	Thus, “infestation” is like a creative overshadowing: the story’s spirit uses the writer as an instrument.
S19: WHY MEDIOCRE WRITERS SOMETIMES PRODUCE GREAT WORK	Many authors “who are not really good writers” occasionally produce “very good stories.”	This occurs because of their “Susceptibility to Infestation,” letting a strong story inhabit them.	Hence, seemingly average authors can be vessels for genuinely outstanding tales.
S20: LIMITS OF THE BRAIN’S CONSTRICTIONS	All writing “juices” must pass through the brain’s arteries, nerves, chemical signals.	Over time, “things in the brain become constricted,” and the blood/ideas no longer flow as richly.	Thus, aging reduces spontaneity, originality, and exuberance in writing.
S21: YOUTH’S BUILT-IN ADVANTAGE	“What is lost after a while is exuberance, spontaneity, originality.”	Young people still have these qualities in abundance, so fiction writing “is mostly for young people” who have fresh minds.	Therefore, the best time to write is when one is young and unconstrained—before time dulls the mind’s creative flow.

S22: "THE BEST TIME TO WRITE IS YESTERDAY"	Lafferty says the second-best time is "today," but by tomorrow you may have lost something.	Because creative faculties can diminish even overnight, waiting can be fatal to a story's spark.	Hence, don't procrastinate: one should write as soon as possible to capture ideas before they fade.
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"Shape of the S. F. Story"

Overview

In *Shape Of The S.F. Story*, Lafferty likens the classic Science Fiction tale to a trilobite with three distinct segments: the beginning, middle, and end. This three-part structure, he argues, reflects heroic or battle-driven narratives—such as the "hunt story," "battle story," and "carnal encounter story"—and remains a dominant format demanded by conventional heroes. While the shape is often viewed as nearly universal, Lafferty points out that it excludes certain forms of experience and enjoyment, especially in its abrupt endings. Using ocean waves as a metaphor, he illustrates both the satisfaction of a dramatic crest and the neglected possibilities of "misshapen" narratives that do not conform to the standard arc. The challenges readers to consider whether something important lies beyond this traditional "box" of storytelling.

Summary

The essay opens by stressing Lafferty's wish to present the subtitle "in letters of flame," then introduces the concept of the three-part—or "trilobite"—structure of the Science Fiction story. It compares these segments to the extinct marine arthropod of the Paleozoic, noting that many stories naturally divide into a beginning, middle, and end, often labeled "the scent," "the pursuit," and "the killing." Lafferty identifies three classic types—the hunt story, the battle story, and the "carnal encounter" story—and explains that each typically contains these core segments, with the middle of the carnal story frequently overshadowing all other aspects.

It next describes how a beginning can be flexible, serving as the initial hook or problem statement—such as the raising of a fox in a hunt or the mysterious disappearance of colonists on "Wallenda World." The middle typically entails pursuit, conflict, or questing, while the end often brings a climactic resolution, akin to a "killing" or "conquest." According to Lafferty, this tripartite structure fits the intense, "heroic" style of human action but can be limiting, rarely accounting for experiences that do not culminate in a single climax.

Citing Aristotle as Laffertyity behind certain dramatic unities and referencing a centuries-long tradition, Lafferty highlights how "heroes" demand that stories follow these traditional rules. It labels this shape as "Homeric, Howardian, and Heinleinich Heroic," pointing to an enduring parade of heroic forms that reinforce the three-segment framework. While Lafferty admits the shape

effectively covers most storytelling scenarios, it questions whether such constraint excludes other narrative possibilities—such as scenes of enjoyment that might happen after a climactic resolution.

By analogy, Lafferty describes ocean waves: the majority rise and crash like a classic story, but some stand still or break incompletely, thus failing to produce the typical satisfying crest. He notes that these nonconforming “new waves” usually lack quality and do not command as much attention. The essay briefly mentions the mismatch between certain mundane or “middle-modern” realities—like farming and business—and the heroic shape, relating them to Cain and to George Babbit, who could not easily occupy a heroic framework.

Finally, Lafferty recalls a singular story (implied to be a religious reference) that extends beyond the final “killing” and allows something after death, though it is not strongly influential in literature. It concludes by asking if a more open-minded approach to narrative might permit “things outside the box,” thereby acknowledging that the classic three-part shape, though highly effective, may also be constraining.

(Aristotle), (Cain Adamson), (Christ), (George Babbit), (Heinleinlich), (Homeric), (Howardian), (Paleozoic), (Swinburne), (Tulsa), (Wallenda World)

I. Introduction and Subtitle

1. Shape Of The S.F. Story"
 - A. Desire to print the sub-title in “letters of flame”

II. Defining the Trilobite Shape

1. Classic Three-Part Framework
 - A. SF story shape = trilobite with three lobes
 - B. Often called beginning, middle, end, or scent-pursuit-killing
 - C. Ties to hunt, battle, or carnal encounter (“prey, fray, lay”)
2. The Beginning Segment
 - A. “Scent” or “sighting,” hooking interest, problem statement
 - B. Flexible, open-ended arrangement
3. The Middle Segment
 - A. The hunt, pursuit, or battle of wits/weapons
 - B. Campaigns, courtships, quests, ambushes
4. The End Segment
 - A. The kill, conquest, blow-up, dramatic resolution

- B. Practiced resolution with correct tone

III. The Classic Box and Its Heroes

1. Nearly Universal Use
 - A. Matches natural events (storms, waves) but more strongly fits human stories
2. Aristotelian Rules and Heroic Defense
 - A. “Who says it must be so?” – Aristotle, plus a vast heroic host
 - B. SF emphasizes the heroic formula (Homeric, Howardian, Heinleinlich)
 - C. The hero stays center stage with a proven shape
3. Strength and Limitations
 - A. A “big box” that covers almost everything well
 - B. Missing small elements, e.g. post-climax enjoyment

IV. Divergence from the Shape

1. The Day Before Tomorrow
 - A. Modern daily life (farming, business) fails to conform
 - B. Examples: Cain, Babbitt, or Christ as anti-hero
2. Alternate Stories Continuing After Death
 - A. One story refuses final kill as “the end,” but not influential
3. SF's Strict Enforcement
 - A. SF punishes dissenting forms; lesser shapes are “scruffy”
 - B. Final questions: should new wavelets be tolerated? Is there an outside to the box?

NO.	TITLE	MAJOR PREMISE	MINOR PREMISE	CONCLUSION
1	The Classic Three-Part Shape of Stories	If a story's structure is divided into three distinct segments, then it resembles a trilobite form with a beginning, a middle, and an end.	Lafferty asserts that the shape of Science Fiction (and many other stories) is trilobite—with three lobes identified as the beginning (scent/sighting), the middle (pursuit/courtship/battle), and the end (killing/conquest/climax).	Therefore, the classic shape of a story is a three-part structure akin to a trilobite.
2	Universality and Rigidity of	If many people insist on fitting all aspects	Lafferty notes that numerous people force	Therefore, the three-part

	the Three-Part Form	of life into a three-part framework, then that framework becomes regarded as the only proper shape for narratives.	everything to conform to the “beginning–middle–end” shape, accepting it as the sole form for a story.	structure is universally imposed—and often rigidly—on narratives.
3	The Three Great Original Story Types	If the classic three-part form fits three original types of stories, then these story types are foundational to narrative art.	The classic form perfectly fits the hunt story, the battle story, and the carnal encounter story (also crudely called the stories of the prey, the fray, and the lay).	Therefore, these three original story types serve as the foundation for the classic narrative shape.
4	Overemphasis on the Middle Segment	If one segment of a story’s structure becomes overly dominant, then it can monopolize narrative expression.	Lafferty explains that the second part of the third segment (the pursuit or courtship aspect) has come to contain almost all narrative and presentation, overshadowing new growth.	Therefore, an overemphasis on the middle segment has narrowed narrative possibilities.
5	Flexibility of the Beginning of a Story	If the opening of a narrative serves as an adaptable hook rather than a fixed starting point, then it is inherently flexible and open-ended.	The beginning is described as the “scent or sighting” — an interest hook adaptable to any situation rather than a literal, fixed beginning.	Therefore, the beginning of a story is a flexible, open-ended element that sets the stage without confining the narrative.
6	The Middle as a Broad Arena of Action	If the middle segment of a story encompasses actions from hunts to courtships and battles, then it can represent a vast range of human and ultra-modern situations.	Lafferty illustrates that the middle covers pursuits, trap-setting, battles (of wits or weapons), quests, travel, and even ritual rapes, spanning from the primordial to the ultra-modern.	Therefore, the middle of a story is a broad, versatile arena that can adapt to many forms of action.
7	The End as the Inevitable Climax	If a narrative’s conclusion must resolve its conflicts	The end is described as the killing, conquest, or blow-up — the dramatic resolution	Therefore, the end of a story functions as its

		with the proper tone and pace, then the ending serves as the dramatic climax that ties the narrative together.	or climax that nearly always has the proper emphasis.	dramatic and conclusive climax.
8	The Classic Shape's Relation to Human Nature	If only humans—with their nervous, tightly focused nature—are inclined to restrict themselves to a clearly defined framework, then that framework reflects a peculiarly human quality.	The shape holds most strongly for human beings because only people have “jerky nervousness” and the willingness to confine themselves within strict, box-like limits.	Therefore, the classic three-part shape of stories reflects the uniquely human impulse to impose structure and boundaries.
9	The “Box” Analogy and Its Limitations	If a structure is likened to the inside of a box, then it imposes strict limits and ignores the possibility of an outside.	Lafferty compares the classic shape to the inside of a box—a big box that believes itself universal but excludes what lies outside (e.g., genuine enjoyment).	Therefore, while the classic shape is robust, it is also limiting because it excludes elements that fall outside its predefined boundaries.
10	The Missing Element: Enjoyment	If a narrative form cuts off a vital element before it can be fully experienced, then it is incomplete.	Lafferty criticizes the classic shape for always ending too soon—just as enjoyment begins, the story's end arrives, leaving no room for an “after-climax” period.	Therefore, the classic shape is deficient in that it omits the phase of sustained enjoyment that might follow the climax.
11	The Classic Shape and Natural Phenomena	If a narrative structure mirrors natural phenomena that follow a rise, flow, and crash, then the classic story shape has a natural, heroic quality.	Lafferty likens the classic shape to ocean waves—rising quickly, flowing in continuity, and culminating in a crashing climax—which is seen as heroic and emblematic of Science Fiction.	Therefore, the classic three-part story shape has a naturally heroic and dynamic quality, akin to the form of ocean waves.

12	Exceptions to the Classic Shape	If there exist narratives that do not conform to the classic rising-climax pattern, then those exceptions must be identified and accounted for.	Lafferty describes exceptions such as the standing wave that never breaks, waves that break badly or incompletely, and the “dreary middle-modern” that do not fit the classic shape.	Therefore, while the classic shape is predominant, there are notable exceptions that challenge its universality.
13	Historical and Cultural Application of the Classic Shape	If the classic three-part structure is applied widely—from heroic tales to history, eruptions, and thunder-storms—then it is deeply ingrained in human narrative traditions.	Lafferty asserts that the classic shape fits not only in stories but also in histories, natural phenomena, and even in human actions, as demonstrated by heroic figures insisting on its application.	Therefore, the classic shape is a time-honored narrative form that pervades both literature and nature.
14	Laffertyity of the Heroic Tradition	If heroic tradition defines the rules of narrative structure, then those who embody heroism will enforce the classic shape.	Lafferty notes that heroes—Homeric, Howardian, Heinleinich—lay down the rules for their accounts, insisting that stories must have a beginning, middle, and end, centered on “Center Stage.”	Therefore, the heroic tradition reinforces and mandates the classic three-part structure as the proper form for a story.
15	The Box as “Almost Universal” Yet Incomplete	If a structure is nearly universal in scope but fails to encompass all necessary elements, then its universality is only partial.	The classic shape (the big box) is almost universal because it seems all-encompassing—but it is missing vital elements (such as sustained enjoyment after the climax).	Therefore, while the classic shape is broadly applicable, it remains incomplete due to its inherent limitations.
16	Questioning the Inviolability of the Classic Shape	If the rules of narrative structure are imposed by tradition rather than necessity, then they can and should be questioned.	Lafferty challenges the Laffertyity of Aristotle and the uncritical acceptance of the “beginning–middle–end” law, asking who says that these rules must apply universally.	Therefore, the classic narrative shape is not an immutable law but a traditional framework that merits critical reexamination.

17	The Response of the Heroic Host	If a host of heroic figures enforces the traditional shape by proclaiming its necessity, then their collective declaration reinforces the classic form.	Lafferty describes a “rampant host” (heroes with spears, blasters, etc.) insisting that the classic shape must apply, to which the only response is acquiescence (“Oh, all right then”).	Therefore, the heroic host’s insistence confirms the dominance of the classic shape, even if reluctantly accepted.
18	The Efficacy and Limitations of the Classic Shape	If a narrative form consistently delivers a complete and dramatic resolution, then it is effective—but if it curtails essential post-climactic enjoyment, then it has limitations.	The classic shape works “thunderously well” for most heroic stories, yet it inevitably cuts off the phase of enjoyment after the climax.	Therefore, while the classic shape is highly effective in producing dramatic narratives, its strict form limits the potential for extended post-climax enjoyment.
19	The Acceptance of Dissenting, New Shapes	If alternative narrative forms exist outside the classic box, then their acceptance depends on whether they are allowed to coexist with the established form.	Lafferty questions whether ignoble wavelets, poor-quality new shapes, or “Things outside the Box” should be tolerated.	Therefore, the debate centers on whether dissenting narrative forms should be accepted alongside the classic shape.

“Review: *Some Things Dark and Dangerous*”

Overview

In review of *Some Things Dark And Dangerous*—a suspense anthology edited by Joan Kahn—Lafferty argues that revisiting older, often forgotten works can yield fresh insight and genuine thrills. The collection contains sixteen pieces, including factual accounts and fictional tales, featuring well-known authors such as Evelyn Waugh, Robert Louis Stevenson, and Dorothy Sayers, as well as lesser-remembered masters of suspense. Emphasizing that the “suspense story” is neither trivial nor escapist, the review links it to themes of eschatology, tension, and the universal appeal of a good,

chilling narrative. The book is praised for delivering vivid, unsettling experiences that demonstrate the ongoing vitality of this genre.

Summary

The review begins by identifying *Some Things Dark And Dangerous* as the third and best of Joan Kahn's "good but forgotten stories" series. The anthology features sixteen selections—four nonfiction pieces and twelve works of fiction—beginning with an Evelyn Waugh story and closing with a Robert Louis Stevenson piece. Lafferty highlights appearances by writers like Blackwood, Collier, Henry Kuttner (writing as Lewis Padgett), Dorothy Sayers, F. Marion Crawford, and Howard Pyle.

Lafferty then addresses two anticipated objections about reprinting older material and about the relevance of the suspense story. It argues that assembling older works can be significant, citing great literary traditions like *Scripture* and the *Arabian Nights* as examples of influential compilations. Regarding suspense as a form, the reviewer suggests that all life is inherently suspenseful, with certain entries in the anthology—"Fatal Visit of the Inca" from Prescott's History and "These Terrible Men, the Harpes!" by Robert Coates—illustrating a near-eschatological intensity.

Next, the review notes how some find suspense and "serenity" incompatible, yet it insists they are not exact opposites, referencing the term "serene" as having subtropical and ominous connotations. The reviewer contends that both animals and humans experience suspense, though humanity alone has undergone key changes in it, referencing "the Fall" and a "Redemption" that reshaped the nature of tension. John Collier's "Wet Saturday" is cited as an example of macabre suspense, while Kuttner's "When the Bough Breaks" may allude to biblical or cosmic themes of failure or downfall.

Further remarks praise the presence of Dorothy Sayers ("The Fantastic Horror of the Cat in the Bag") and highlight the best story in the collection—Henry Kuttner's "When the Bough Breaks"—noting Lafferty's exceptional talent. Additional entries include "Calling All Stars" by Leo Szilard, "The White Cat of Drumgunniol" by Sheridan Le Fanu, and "The Murder of Doctor Burdell" by Edmund Pearson. Overall, the reviewer endorses the book, stressing that allowing one's "flesh to crawl" is a sign of lively engagement with suspense fiction, and cautioning that those who dismiss it might be overlooking the genuine power of the form.

(Blackwood), (Calling All Stars), (Chesterton), (Collier), (Dorothy Sayers), (Edmund Pearson), (Evelyn Waugh), (F. Marion Crawford), (Fatal Visit of the Inca), (God the Father), (Hanging By A Thread), (Harper & Row), (Henry Kuttner), (Howard Pyle), (Joan Kahn), (Lewis Padgett), (Ms. Loveday's Little Outing), (Portrait of a Murderer), (Prescott's History), (Q. Patrick), (Robert Coates), (Robert Louis Stevenson), (Some Things Dark And Dangerous), (The Edge of the Chair), (The Fantastic Horror of the Cat in the Bag), (The Murder of Doctor Burdell), (The White Cat of Drumgunniol), (These Terrible Men, the Harpes!), (Wet Saturday), (When the Bough Breaks)

SYLLOGISM NAME	PREMISE 1	PREMISE 2	CONCLUSION
1. "SOME THINGS DARK AND DANGEROUS": A COLLECTION OF FORGOTTEN GEMS	Joan Kahn's new anthology is the third in a series (after <i>The Edge of the Chair</i> and <i>Hanging by a Thread</i>), featuring 16 older "good but forgotten" stories—some fact, mostly fiction.	Authors range from Evelyn Waugh to Robert Louis Stevenson, with "great" names like Blackwood, Collier, Kuttner (Lewis Padgett), Sayers, F. Marion Crawford, etc. All are "dated" and most are deceased, but represent "Blood and Thunder" suspense, none formula detective.	Conclusion: This latest Joan Kahn anthology rescues old, high-quality suspense tales—neglected but still artistically strong, bridging a century of hidden storytelling.
2. THE VALUE OF REPRINTING OLD STORIES	Lafferty anticipates the objection: "Why another collection of old stories that sank out of sight?"	He answers that all great literature (Scripture, Epics, Shakespeare, etc.) arises from "collections of old material." So reprinting can be vital if these pieces stand alone in their category.	Hence, reissuing "sunk" works can preserve important storytelling traditions—the mechanism of cultural memory.
3. SUSPENSE STORY AS "INFERIOR, TRIVIAL SURROGATE?"	A second protest: "Is suspense merely escapist or worthless while huge eschatological crises loom?"	Lafferty counters: "All culture since the breechclout is escapist in some sense; the suspense story retains more of the 'clout' and 'axe' than other forms." It can be "eschatological," presenting final things or cosmic dread, not mere formula.	Conclusion: Far from trivial, suspense is integral to the human experience** ("the whole life affair is a suspense story"**).
4. GOD THE FATHER AS A MASTER SUSPENSE-WRITER	Lafferty cites a writer-friend (an unbeliever) who says that "God the Father," on the basis of scriptural narrations, would rank among the greatest suspense masters.	Lafferty claims God "enjoys these things Himself" but is not "directly" in this anthology. Evelyn Waugh stands as a "viceroy" for the divine comedic/suspense style.	Hence, suspense has divine or cosmic resonance**, with "God the Father" arguably penning ultimate suspense narratives.

5. SUSPENSE VS. "SERENITY"	Another critique: "Suspense should be minimized to reach serenity." Lafferty warns "serenity" can be double-meaning: a calm that can also be a "noxious dew or mist," not the opposite of suspense.	The two co-exist: "Serene is related to sere, a claw or talon... sometimes it means 'too late.'" So "serenity" can be tricky and ominous, while "suspense" is a "necessary tension."	Conclusion: Suspense is not necessarily negative**; it's integral to life's tension**—serenity can be ambiguous, so we shouldn't dismiss suspense in favor of a possibly "toxic calm."
6. TWO CHANGES IN THE NATURE OF SUSPENSE	Lafferty posits that humankind's experience of suspense changed twice: at the Fall, man entered "Suspended Animation or Animated Suspense," and at the Redemption, it was "not abolished but sanctified."	Suspense's dread may have partially lifted, but the tension itself increased in "grace," fueling ongoing drama, the "pleasure principle," and victory principle. The "heart of things" remains a cosmic tension essential to immediate newness.	Hence, suspense became not mere fear** but a "holy tension"** after the second shift, a necessary dynamic in the comedic or grace-infused cosmos.
7. ILLUSTRATIONS: KUTTNER, COLLIER, DOROTHY SAYERS	Among the anthology's stories, Lafferty highlights Kuttner's "When the Bough Breaks" as "the best," possibly referencing a "Fall of Man" parallel in its ending. Collier's "Wet Saturday" exemplifies that weird "animated suspense." Dorothy Sayers's "The Fantastic Horror of the Cat in the Bag" is also a highlight.	Sayers's story might be widely known, so "the only thing wrong" is that many will have read it. Meanwhile, Kuttner's piece possibly references deeper biblical or mythic arcs.	Conclusion: The anthology** brims with deeper significance** in these suspense tales—Kuttner's "Bough" tying to cosmic narratives, Collier capturing edgy tension, Sayers providing classic thrills.
8. THE "MUSICS" AND THE LIVELY ARTS	Lafferty notes we lack the right words to tie these experiences—suspense, mystery,	In reading these older tales, we glimpse fleeting pieces of something important: cosmic	Hence, anthologies like this highlight how "suspense" merges with** a broader,

	comedic dread— together. The Greeks called them simply “the musics,” a synergy of lively arts, sciences, and eschatologies.	tension, the unspoken unity in all “lively arts.”	vibrant cultural tradition** (the “musics”), bridging archaic energies and modern glimpses.
9. FINAL VERDICT ON THE BOOK	Lafferty concludes that <i>Some Things Dark and Dangerous</i> is “a very good book” that can make “the flesh crawl a little”—a sign we’re alive with more than one life.	He cautions: If you think you’re “above” good suspense fiction, you may also be “looking at other things upside down.”	Conclusion: This collection** is well worth reading**: letting suspense “tingle your flesh” is healthy, and dismissing it as beneath you suggests a skewed perception of life.

Algernon Blackwood: An English author (1869–1951) renowned for his ghost stories and supernatural fiction, including works like *The Willows* and *The Wendigo*. His work appears in *Some Things Dark And Dangerous*.

"Calling All Stars": A short story by physicist and writer Leo Szilard, included in *Some Things Dark And Dangerous*.

G.K. Chesterton: An English writer (1874–1936) known for his essays, novels, and the creation of the priest-detective Father Brown.

John Collier: A British-born author (1901–1980) recognized for his short stories blending fantasy and satire, such as *The Chaser*. His story "Wet Saturday" appears in *Some Things Dark And Dangerous*.

Dorothy L. Sayers: An English crime writer (1893–1957) best known for her mystery novels featuring detective Lord Peter Wimsey. Her story "The Fantastic Horror of the Cat in the Bag" appears in *Some Things Dark And Dangerous*.

Edmund Pearson: An American writer (1880–1937) specializing in true crime stories. His piece "The Murder of Doctor Burdell" appears in *Some Things Dark And Dangerous*.

Evelyn Waugh: A British author (1903–1966) celebrated for satirical novels like *Brideshead Revisited*. His short story "Mr. Loveday's Little Outing" opens *Some Things Dark And Dangerous*.

F. Marion Crawford: An American writer (1854–1909) known for his novels and supernatural stories, including *The Upper Berth*. His work appears in *Some Things Dark And Dangerous*.

"Fatal Visit of the Inca": A selection from *Prescott's History*, included in *Some Things Dark And Dangerous*. It presents a historical account with near-eschatological intensity.

"God the Father": A central figure in monotheistic religions, representing the supreme deity and creator.

"Hanging By A Thread": A phrase denoting a precarious situation; also the title of a 1979 disaster-themed television movie.

Harper & Row: An American publishing firm established in 1962, later merged into HarperCollins.

Henry Kuttner: An American author (1915–1958) known for his science fiction and fantasy works, often collaborating with his wife, C.L. Moore. His story "When the Bough Breaks," published under the pseudonym Lewis Padgett, appears in *Some Things Dark And Dangerous*.

Howard Pyle: An American illustrator and author (1853–1911), famed for works like *The Merry Adventures of Robin Hood*. His work appears in *Some Things Dark And Dangerous*.

Joan Kahn: An American editor and author (1914–1994), recognized for her work in mystery and suspense literature. She compiled *Some Things Dark And Dangerous* as the third entry in her "good but forgotten stories" series.

Lewis Padgett: A pseudonym used by Henry Kuttner and C.L. Moore for their collaborative science fiction stories, including "When the Bough Breaks," featured in *Some Things Dark And Dangerous*.

"Mr. Loveday's Little Outing": A short story by Evelyn Waugh, first published in 1935, satirizing British society. It is the opening selection in *Some Things Dark And Dangerous*.

Portrait of a Murderer: A 1934 crime novel by Anne Meredith, recently republished as part of the British Library Crime Classics series.

Prescott's History: Refers to *History of the Conquest of Mexico* by William H. Prescott (1796–1859). An excerpt, "Fatal Visit of the Inca," appears in *Some Things Dark And Dangerous*.

Q. Patrick: A pseudonym used by multiple authors, including Richard Wilson Webb and Hugh Callingham Wheeler, for mystery novels.

Robert Coates: An American writer and art critic (1897–1973), credited with coining the term "abstract expressionism." His story "These Terrible Men, the Harpes!" appears in *Some Things Dark And Dangerous*.

Robert Louis Stevenson: A Scottish novelist (1850–1894) famed for classics like *Treasure Island* and *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*. His work closes *Some Things Dark And Dangerous*.

Some Things Dark And Dangerous. The third entry in Joan Kahn's "good but forgotten stories" series. This anthology contains sixteen selections—twelve fiction pieces and four nonfiction works—featuring authors such as Blackwood, Collier, Henry Kuttner (as Lewis Padgett), Dorothy Sayers, F. Marion Crawford, Howard Pyle, Evelyn Waugh, and Robert Louis Stevenson.

The Edge of the Chair. A 1967 anthology compiled by Joan Kahn, featuring a collection of suspenseful short stories and true crime pieces. Contributors include Agatha Christie, Ray Bradbury, and Dorothy L. Sayers.

"The Fantastic Horror of the Cat in the Bag": A short story by Dorothy L. Sayers, featuring Lord Peter Wimsey. Included in *Some Things Dark And Dangerous*.

"The Murder of Doctor Burdell": A true crime account by Edmund Pearson detailing the 1857 unsolved murder of Dr. Harvey Burdell in New York City. Included in *Some Things Dark And Dangerous*.

"The White Cat of Drumgunniol": A short story by Sheridan Le Fanu, included in *Some Things Dark And Dangerous*.

"These Terrible Men, the Harpes!": A historical true crime story by Robert Coates about the Harpe brothers, included in *Some Things Dark And Dangerous*.

"Wet Saturday": A short story by John Collier, adapted into an episode of *Alfred Hitchcock Presents* in 1956. Included in *Some Things Dark And Dangerous*.

"When the Bough Breaks": A 1944 science fiction short story by Lewis Padgett (Henry Kuttner and C.L. Moore), exploring themes of child prodigies and telepathy. Cited as the best entry in *Some Things Dark And Dangerous*.

"Review: *Tales of the Natural and Supernatural*"

Overview

Lafferty says this collection of story is both uneven and charmingly reminiscent of nineteenth-century storytelling. He draws attention to Pei's ability to entertain rather than frighten, emphasizing the "sunniness" that pervades the book. Several stories stand out as either especially strong or

notably weak, though even the weakest effort is quite short. Lafferty concludes that Pei's foray into fiction succeeds without slipping in any overt ideological "propaganda."

Summary

Lafferty names the work under discussion—*Tales Of The Natural And Supernatural*—and its publisher, Devin-Adair. It describes Dr. Mario A. Pei as a "twelve-sided (at least) genius" who is "damned near world's greatest linguist," a "political and social and economic analyst," a "battler for the right and for the Right," a "gnome and knower," and "a good candidate for the title 'The Noblest Roman of them all.'" It then notes that beyond these many facets, Pei has a "thirteenth string to his bow," meaning he has long been writing fictional tales, and that the best and the worst of these stories appear together in this collection.

Next, the reviewer poses a single "pertinent question": how well does this "multiplex genius" succeed in this field of fiction writing? The immediate answer is that he does "pretty well." The review references past philologists who wrote tales, most famously the (Brothers Grimm), known both for (Grimm's Law) regarding the relationship of (Indo-European languages) and for their fairy tales. These older tales are described as uneven, and Pei's stories are similarly judged uneven. Still, the reviewer appreciates what is called Pei's "successful nineteenth-century flavor," suggesting that newer storytelling techniques are not necessarily improvements over older styles exemplified by (Poe) or (Blackwood).

Further on, the reviewer singles out "With His Arm in a Sling" as the shortest and weakest story in the collection, while naming "The Bones of Charlemagne" and "The Sparrows of Paris" as the best. The latter is described as a "superb short novel." The review credits Pei's humor with preventing even his most "outré" supernatural plots from becoming frightening, labeling him "not a flesh-crawler" but "an entertainer." The book as a whole is said to amount to "much more than the totality of its parts," thanks to an overarching warmth, or "sunniness," that permeates Lafferty.

Finally, the reviewer addresses whether Pei inserts his strong personal views into these stories, concluding that he does not, aside from conveying a "pleasant sanity" throughout. Lafferty ends with the concise judgment that the collection is "pretty good," indicating the reviewer's overall positive impression.

(Belloc), (Blackwood), (Brothers Grimm), (Charlemagne), (Devin-Adair), (Dr. Mario A. Pei), (Grimm's Law), (Indo-European languages), (Poe), (*Tales Of The Natural And Supernatural*), (*The Bones of Charlemagne*), (*The Noblest Roman of them all*), (*The Sparrows of Paris*), (*With His Arm in a Sling*)

I. Introduction: The Polymathic Mario A. Pei

1. Pei's credentials and expertise
 - A. "Twelve-sided genius" with a vast range of knowledge
 - B. "World's greatest philologist" and near-greatest linguist
 - C. "Gnome and knower," likened to a "Noblest Roman"

II. Pei's Fictional Endeavor

1. The thirteenth field: Fiction writing
 - A. Revealed to have been writing fiction for years
 - B. A surprise addition to his long list of achievements

III. Evaluating Pei's Success in Fiction

1. The central question: Does his genius translate to fiction?
 - A. Reference to Belloc's definition of genius as multiplexity
 - B. Answer: "He succeeds pretty well."

IV. Pei's Place in the Philological Tradition

1. The last great philologists who wrote fiction
 - A. The Brothers Grimm: fairy tales and Grimm's Law
 - B. Suggestion that Pei follows in their footsteps

V. Style and Influences

1. Comparisons to 19th-century literary traditions
 - A. Poe and Blackwood as reference points
 - B. Statement: "All change has not been improvement."

VI. Strengths and Weaknesses of Pei's Stories

1. The weakest: *With His Arm in a Sling*
 - A. "The worst (and thankfully the shortest)."
2. The strongest: *The Bones of Charlemagne* and *The Sparrows of Paris*
 - A. The latter praised as a "superb short novel."

VII. Pei's Humor as a Narrative Force

1. Lightness preventing true horror
 - A. "Prevents even the most outré of the supernatural tales from being really frightening."
 - B. "A flesh-crawler he is not. But he is an entertainer."

VIII. Overall Assessment of the Collection

1. The sum greater than its parts
 - A. "There is a sunniness that suffuses it all."

NO.	TITLE	MAJOR PREMISE	MINOR PREMISE	CONCLUSION
1	Pei's Multiplex Genius	If genius is the ability to think in several different categories, then a multiplex genius is one who excels in many fields.	Mario A. Pei is described as a twelve-sided genius—world's greatest philologist, near world's greatest linguist, and a multifaceted analyst—now revealing a "thirteenth string" in fiction writing.	Therefore, Pei is a true multiplex genius who has successfully expanded his talents into fiction writing.
2	The Pertinent Question of Success in Fiction	If a genius ventures into a new field, the key issue is how well he succeeds in that field.	The review poses the question: "How well does this multiplex genius succeed in this odd thirteenth field?" and answers, "He succeeds pretty well."	Therefore, Pei's foray into fiction writing is notably successful.
3	Historical Precedent in Philological Storytelling	If the last great philologists to write tales were the Brothers Grimm, then their example sets a high standard for storytelling among scholars.	The review recalls that the Brothers Grimm not only formulated Grimm's Law but also created enduring fairy tales.	Therefore, Pei's venture into fictional tales is measured against the esteemed legacy of the Grimm storytellers.
4	Uneven Quality and Traditional Technique	If a collection of tales is uneven yet follows an old, unaltered technique, then it reflects the timeless style of traditional fairy or suspense stories.	Pei's tales are noted as "very uneven" and "innocent of any change in tale-telling technique since the time of Poe or Blackwood."	Therefore, Pei's collection exhibits the traditional narrative style of older, established tales, despite its uneven quality.

5	Nineteenth-Century Flavor as a Mark of Authenticity	If a work's distinct period flavor can suggest that change is not always improvement, then a successful retention of a past style is valuable.	The review praises Pei's successful nineteenth-century flavor, implying that all change has not been improvement.	Therefore, the traditional flavor in Pei's tales serves as a mark of authenticity and enduring quality.
6	Evaluative Range within the Collection	If a collection contains both its worst and its best examples, then the range of quality can be assessed clearly.	The review identifies "With His Arm in a Sling" as the worst (and shortest) story, while "The Bones of Charlemagne" and "The Sparrows of Paris" are hailed as the best—with the latter being almost a superb short novel.	Therefore, the collection displays a wide range of quality, with some stories standing out remarkably.
7	The Role of Humor in Softening the Supernatural	If humor can prevent even the most outré supernatural tales from being truly frightening, then a writer's humor is a valuable tempering device.	Pei's humor "keeps creeping in" and prevents his supernatural tales from being really frightening.	Therefore, Pei's intermittent humor is a beneficial element that softens and humanizes his supernatural narratives.
8	Pei as an Entertainer Rather Than a Gore-Monger	If a writer is judged not by raw horror but by his ability to entertain, then his work should be appreciated for its overall engaging quality.	The review asserts that Pei is "not a flesh-crawler" but an entertainer, and that his book "comes to much more than the totality of its parts" with a pervasive sunniness.	Therefore, Pei's work is valued primarily as entertaining and uplifting rather than purely horrifying.
9	The Absence of Overt Propaganda	If a writer is known for strong personal views, then one might	The review notes that Pei slips no direct propaganda into his tales, except indirectly	Therefore, despite his strong views, Pei's storytelling remains free of

		expect overt propaganda unless he deliberately refrains from it.	through the “pleasant sanity” running through them.	overt ideological bias.
10	Overall Critical Appraisal	If a collection is both diverse in quality and enriched with traditional flavor, humor, and engaging entertainment, then it is considered “pretty good.”	The reviewer concludes that despite unevenness, Pei’s collection—combining the best and worst of his fictional tales—is “pretty good.”	Therefore, the overall assessment of Pei’s collection is favorable.

“Review: Mysteries of Time and Space”

Overview

Lafferty reviews Brad Steiger's *Mysteries of Time and Space*, a compilation of unexplained anomalies and artifacts that challenge conventional scientific consensus. Drawing from the tradition of Charles Fort and later figures like Immanuel Velikovsky, Steiger catalogs phenomena such as ancient Roman coins in Native American burial sites, inexplicable carvings of elephants in pre-Columbian America, and artifacts depicting dinosaurs in Acambaro, Mexico. While he attempts explanations, they are often less compelling than the raw data itself. The book critiques the rigidity of mainstream science, contrasting its hostility toward anomalous discoveries with the more open-minded attitudes of catastrophists and creationists. The overall tone is one of enthusiastic wonder, embracing a universe that appears to revel in the outrageous.

Summary

Charles Fort, writing between 1919 and the 1930s, compiled extensive records of unexplained phenomena, provoking both wonder and hostility from the scientific community. Unlike many of his followers, Fort made little effort to explain these anomalies. In the 1950s, Immanuel Velikovsky similarly presented an array of high anomalies, though his attempts at explanation—while fascinating—were scarcely more plausible than the anomalies themselves.

Since then, countless books have attempted to document extraordinary occurrences, often without distinction. However, Brad Steiger, following in the tradition of the late Ivan T. Sanderson, is notably better at this pursuit than most and far superior to the *Chariots of the Gods* school of speculation. His book includes references to supposed prints of shoes dating back 500 million years and numerous ancient carvings of elephants in a pre-Columbian America that should not have known them.

Steiger, like Velikovsky, offers explanations, though his are largely unsatisfactory. Among the more astonishing claims he presents is the discovery of Roman coins in Native American burial mounds, alongside the more than 30,000 artifacts unearthed in Acambaro, Mexico, in 1945. These artifacts, dated to roughly 6,500 years ago, include accurate depictions of dinosaurs and other creatures long extinct, as well as representations of beings that are impossible in any known framework.

The book takes a critical stance toward the scientific establishment, arguing that those who resist such anomalous discoveries are often the same individuals who reject the possibility of design in the universe. It contrasts this rigid skepticism with the openness of catastrophists and creationists, who are less troubled by "awkward facts." Steiger suggests that the universe is meant to be enjoyed, describing it as full of "fun, outrageous fun." The book revels in the bizarre, referencing accounts of flesh, blood, fish, frogs, and manuscript pages falling from the sky. The final passages evoke a world populated by "fish-faced warriors, mummies, horsemen, and gladiators grappling with gigantic reptiles," embracing a vision of history and existence that is as exhilarating as it is improbable.

I. Introductory Context

- Initial Book Mention
 - A. "Review: Mysteries Of Time And Space by Brad Steiger"
 - B. "Prentice-Hall"
- Charles Fort's Legacy
 - A. "From 1919 into the 1930s, Charles Fort presented mountains of incredible happenings."
 - B. "The only word for them was 'wonderful'."
 - C. "The only word for the reaction of the scientific community was 'furious'."
 - D. "A cut above his followers, Fort didn't try very hard to explain his monstrosities."
- Immanuel Velikovsky's Anomalies
 - A. "In the 1950's, Immanuel Velikovsky presented such an array of high anomalies that there were attempts to suppress him."
 - B. "Velikovsky did try to explain his data, and his explanations were almost as wonderful (though not quite as likely) as the facts themselves."

II. Broad Continuation of Anomalistic Literature

- Transition from Fort & Velikovsky to Brad Steiger
 - A. "Since then, there have been several hundred books overflowing with amazing facts, and this review could apply to almost any of them, except that ("the print of a shoe 500 million years old") except that, after the late Ivan T. Sanderson, Brad Steiger does this sort of thing much better than anyone else."
 - B. "He is a few cuts above the 'Chariots of the Gods' cult."
- Brief Examples of Alleged Anomalies
 - A. "(Innumerable carvings and pictures of elephants from an early America that knew no elephants.)"
 - B. "Brad Steiger also attempts explanations, and his explanations are less than wonderful; but nobody can do everything."
 - C. "(Roman coins in Amerindian burial mounds.)"

III. Responses to "Facts That Do Not Fit"

- The Divide Over Design
 - A. "A surprising thing is that the people who are infuriated by the facts that do not fit are the same people who will not admit the possibility of design in the universe."
 - B. "They are in fear of anything that will not fit into their particular non-design consensus."
 - C. "But awkward facts do not bother the catastrophists very much, and they don't bother the creationists."
- The Acambaro Artifacts
 - A. "(The more than 30,000 impossible artifacts of Acambaro, Mexico, discovered in 1945 and dated at about 6,500 years old.)"
 - B. "Every one of these is different and every one is incredible."
 - C. "There are accurate representations of dinosaurs and other creatures more than 100 million years old that Mexicans of 6,500 years ago just couldn't have reconstructed."
 - D. "These artifacts are of peoples and animals that have been, and are, and will be, and of those that cannot possibly be.)"

IV. The "Great-Gusto-of-God" and Final Reflections

- Ultimate Explanation
 - A. "There is only one explanation; the 'Great-Gusto-of-God' explanation."
- Further Phenomena and Concluding Thoughts

- A. ("blood, flesh, live fish, frogs and the pages of a mysterious manuscript falling out of clear skies.")"
- B. "We hold to the idea that there is supposed to be fun, outrageous fun, in the universe."
- C. "and always those fish-faced warriors, mummies, horsemen and gladiators grappling with gigantic reptiles.")"
- D. "Now he's talking about our kind of people."

NO.	TITLE	MAJOR PREMISE	MINOR PREMISE	CONCLUSION
1	Fort's Collection and the Reaction of Science	If an exposé of incredible, anomalous happenings elicits a "furious" reaction from the scientific community, then those happenings are simultaneously "wonderful" and disruptive.	From 1919 into the 1930s, Charles Fort presented mountains of incredible happenings described as "wonderful," provoking fury among scientists.	Therefore, Fort's collection is both awe-inspiring and contentious, revealing anomalies that defy conventional science.
2	Velikovsky's Anomalies and Explanations	If a presenter of high anomalies attempts to explain his data and produces explanations nearly as astonishing as the facts, then his work is remarkable though its explanations may lack full plausibility.	In the 1950s, Immanuel Velikovsky offered an array of high anomalies with explanations almost as wonderful as the facts, though not quite as likely.	Therefore, Velikovsky's work is notable for its extraordinary anomalies, even if his explanations are less convincing.
3	The Proliferation of Amazing Facts	If, after a pioneering	Since Velikovsky, several hundred books	Therefore, the genre has become replete

		work, hundreds of books overflow with amazing facts, then the field becomes saturated with extraordinary but often similar anomalies.	have been published overflowing with amazing facts about time, space, and anomalies.	with collections of astonishing facts, setting a high standard for what counts as “amazing.”
4	Brad Steiger’s Superior Presentation	If a reviewer considers one author’s work markedly superior to that of a cultish alternative, then that author is regarded as “a few cuts above” the rival group.	Brad Steiger is described as doing this sort of thing much better than anyone else—placing him a few cuts above the “Chariots of the Gods” cult.	Therefore, Brad Steiger’s presentation of anomalies is superior, offering a more credible and compelling account than his cultish rivals.
5	The Limitations of Explanations in Steiger’s Work	If a writer attempts explanations that fall short of the wonder of the facts, then one must accept that no one can do everything perfectly.	Although Steiger also attempts explanations for the anomalies he presents, his explanations are acknowledged as less than wonderful.	Therefore, while his explanations do not match the astonishing nature of the facts, his overall contribution remains valuable because perfection in explanation is impossible.
6	The Bias of the Non-Design Crowd	If individuals infuriated by awkward facts are the same ones who	Those infuriated by facts that do not fit are the very people who refuse to admit any possibility of	Therefore, the rejection of anomalous facts by some is rooted in a rigid commitment to a

		reject any possibility of design in the universe, then their opposition is driven by a fear of nonconforming evidence.	design in the universe, clinging to a non-design consensus.	worldview that excludes design.
7	Acceptance by Catastrophists and Creationists	If awkward, anomalous facts do not trouble catastrophists or creationists, then these groups are more open to evidence that challenges conventional design.	According to the review, awkward facts do not bother catastrophists or creationists.	Therefore, those groups are more receptive to anomalies that defy standard scientific explanations.
8	The Acambaro Artifacts as Incontrovertible Anomalies	If a large number of artifacts exhibit details that are impossible under conventional chronology, then they constitute powerful anomalies.	Over 30,000 artifacts from Acambaro, Mexico—dated at about 6,500 years old—accurately depict dinosaurs and creatures over 100 million years old, defying conventional reconstruction.	Therefore, the Acambaro artifacts present strong evidence of anomalies that challenge traditional historical timelines.
9	The “Great-Gusto-of-God” Explanation	If the only explanation that can account for a vast array of impossible	The review states that there is only one explanation for these anomalies: the “Great-Gusto-of-God” explanation, illustrated	Therefore, the anomalies are best explained by a divine, abundant creative force—a “Great-Gusto-of-God.”

		anomalies is one invoking a divine, creative abundance, then that explanation becomes the sole viable alternative.	by vivid imagery of “blood, flesh, live fish, frogs, and the pages of a mysterious manuscript falling out of clear skies.”	
10	The Intended Playfulness of the Universe	If the universe is meant to be full of fun and outrageous experiences, then its strange and fantastic phenomena are purposeful.	The review affirms that we hold to the idea that the universe is supposed to be fun, citing images of fish-faced warriors, mummies, horsemen, and gladiators grappling with gigantic reptiles as evidence of outrageous fun.	Therefore, the playful, surreal phenomena in the universe are an integral part of its intended character.
11	Resonance with “Our Kind of People”	If a description of anomalies and cosmic fun resonates with the values and tastes of a particular group, then it speaks to “our kind of people.”	The review concludes by noting that the description of outrageous, fun cosmic phenomena is “now he's talking about our kind of people.”	Therefore, the portrayal of anomalies and wonder in the universe aligns with the sensibilities of those who appreciate Science Fiction.
12	The Cumulative Impact on the Genre	If a genre accumulates a wealth of anomalous facts and receives increasingly sophisticated treatments from authors,	From Fort through Velikovsky to hundreds of subsequent works—and finally to Brad Steiger’s superior presentation—the field has evolved into one overflowing with amazing facts,	Therefore, the cumulative evolution of the genre is marked by ever-growing complexity that blends wonder, controversy, and a call to divine creativity.

		then it evolves into a complex field characterized by both wonder and controversy.	controversial interpretations, and a unifying “Great-Gusto-of-God” explanation.	
13	The Persistent Promise of Outrageous Wonder	If the essence of Science Fiction is to promise magic and wonder despite frequent shortcomings, then its success must be measured by its enduring ability to inspire awe.	The review acknowledges that even if Science Fiction fails in nineteen out of twenty cases, its persistent promise of magic and wonder qualifies it as a “modified success.”	Therefore, Science Fiction’s value lies in its consistent, if imperfect, ability to evoke awe and wonder.

“Tolkien as Christian”

Overview

In “Tolkien As Christian,” Lafferty wrestles with whether J.R.R. Tolkien’s work, especially *The Lord of the Rings*, truly omits Christ and Christian elements. Lafferty notes Tolkien’s avoidance of labels such as “Christian” or “Catholic,” and questions how Middle-Earth could remain so devoid of overt religious references despite Tolkien’s personal background. There is extensive commentary on Tolkien’s strong narrative appeal, the fervor of his “cult” following, and the puzzling absence of any direct Christ figure in Lafferty. The writer explores Jungian ideas about archetypes, the concept of a “collective unconscious,” and how Tolkien’s fantasy seemingly taps into ancient mythical resonances without ever allowing Christ to appear. Ultimately, Lafferty regards this omission as deliberate and mysterious, leaving readers to question Tolkien’s motives in “excising” all traces of the Redemption from Middle-Earth.

Summary

Lafferty opens with Lafferty saying that a “great folly” is about to be committed by writing a piece called “Tolkien As Christian,” and warning that doing so invites attack by “surrogate people” wielding

“rubber serpents” which supposedly contain real venom. Lafferty continues that to avoid this folly would mean failing the “scriptural caution” about leaving undone necessary tasks, so Lafferty proceeds.

Lafferty then states that they are not a member of the “Tolkien cult,” acknowledging some resentment toward non-members speaking on Tolkien, and remarks that J.R.R. Tolkien himself was not part of that cult. The question of viewing Tolkien as a Christian is deemed too narrow, since “Christian” is said to concern “small pieces” fallen off something more essential; Lafferty asserts Tolkien was not a Christian. A consideration of Tolkien as Catholic arises, but a difficulty is mentioned.

Next, Lafferty explains that whenever naming came up, Tolkien referred to himself as a “Papist,” describing “Papists” as a mannered, droll club on the edges of English Universities, noted mainly for eccentricity. It is stated that Papists do not take themselves as seriously as members of the Society for Creative Anachronism in the United States. Lafferty points out that Tolkien seemingly never used words like “Christian” or “Catholic.”

Because Lafferty did not know Tolkien personally and finds most accounts of him overly effusive, the decision is made to study Tolkien’s works directly, specifically *The Lord of the Rings*. Lafferty expresses puzzlement at Tolkien’s powerful emotional impact on many types of readers and the resulting passionate “cult,” but admits they cannot find a clear explanation for it.

Lafferty was briefly puzzled about why less cultish readers still enjoy Tolkien and attributes it to Tolkien’s “fine narrative flow,” something Lafferty considers once common but now rare. People, Lafferty says, hunger for such excellence and seize it when found.

Pivoting to Tolkien and Christ, Lafferty cites the Redemption as the central act of history which illuminates everything, asking whether any work can leave Christ out. Lafferty says it is possible, but only with great effort, then asks if Christ is left out of Tolkien’s work. Lafferty answers yes and wonders by what effort that omission was achieved and how its “screaming emptiness” was disguised.

Lafferty asserts that the omission required toilsome labor over many years, and this essay aims to explore the method Tolkien used to conceal it. An old saying is recalled: a Catholic supposedly cannot climb a tree without showing his Catholic identity. Tolkien is described as climbing a tree (possibly the Norse World-Tree, Yggdrasil) without revealing himself, by pretending to be part Dwarf, Elf, Ent, or Hobbit—something in the “anteroom of humanity.” This, Lafferty says, resonates with a memory common to readers.

Quoting Jung on the collective unconscious—“not individual but common to all men, and perhaps even to all animals”—Lafferty ponders whether this unconscious is also common to Elves, Gnomes, Trolls, Dwarfs, or Kobolds. Lafferty posits that we find part of these beings in ourselves, suggesting

authenticity and a shared group unconscious. Lafferty notes that this discussion inevitably touches on Tolkien and Jungian Psychology.

Lafferty proposes someone should write about the link between the Collective Unconscious and Purgatory, speculating that “Middle-Earth” might be the connecting land, though Christ suffuses Purgatory, while Middle-Earth in Tolkien’s version is pointedly purged of Christ. Lafferty once called Tolkien’s fantasy “elephantine,” but also compares it to the Woolly Mammoth, Mastodon, and the Behemoth, wondering if the same creator who made lambs could also have made such a “Behemoth.”

Then Lafferty describes a large Christian church in Lafferty’s city that omits the cross from a style that normally requires it, thereby creating awkward architectural angles to avoid any shape resembling a cross. In parallel, Tolkien is said to remove every hint of Christ from Middle-Earth with even greater care.

A story is recalled from Chesterton about a man who inherits all the gold in a household and even removes gilding from decorative letters in books, leaving holes. Tolkien, Lafferty suggests, does likewise in removing all traces of the “Christ influence,” then disguising the resultant gaps. Lafferty stresses that Christ, the “Christ gold,” is universally distributed across time, myth, and geography—citing Homer, Virgil, Africans, American Indians, and so on—and that all mythologies changed after the Nativity. The quest in these stories, after Christ’s birth, shifted from “When?” to “Where?”

Lafferty contends that Middle-Earth also once contained that central treasure, but it was “gathered out of there and destroyed.” Lafferty calls this extraction a literal heresy (“pulling out,” or “heresis”). The Ring, in countless legends, is the Fisherman’s Ring and is often discovered via fish or nets. But in *The Lord of the Rings*, there is a reversal: the ring is sought in order to be destroyed, not enthroned, making the questors act in a “devil role,” flipping good and evil.

A reference to the Devil’s temptation—“dic ut lapides isti panes fiant” (“command that these stones become bread”)—is used to suggest the ring’s transformation might be a devilish inversion. Lafferty says Christian references cannot be found in Tolkien’s text because they were deliberately removed, calling this removal the work’s core mystery.

While affirming Tolkien’s personal worth and commitment, Lafferty suggests he did the opposite of what might be expected in a “Catholic writer.” Lafferty wonders if Tolkien tried to remove only the worst distortions surrounding the Redemption or if he did not grasp the reality beyond those “barnacles,” but considers both possibilities unlikely.

Lafferty quotes Christ from Matthew about handing a son a stone instead of bread, or a snake instead of fish. Then notes that the Tolkien cult has complete faith in Tolkien, sometimes likening that faith to the True Faith, but Lafferty insists the cult reversed good and evil in wanting the Ring destroyed.

An anecdote follows about a man of great sincerity explaining Tolkien's importance, but simultaneously appearing with a second face that offers a contradictory version. This contradictory face holds a stone as though it were bread and a snake as if it were fish, while the man's teeth are broken and his face is snake-bitten. Yet he insists it is sweet bread and good fish. The two images merge, but the dual impression remains, and the man declares that to be the "real moment and import of Tolkien." Lafferty admits not understanding this, seeing only a hard stone and a glaring snake.

Concluding, Lafferty acknowledges possibly being wrong, given that "softer stones" and "rubbery snakes" might suffice as substitutes—this being an "age of surrogates." Nevertheless, Lafferty worries that there may be "real venom" in those rubber snakes now.

(Arabian Nights), (Behemoth), (Catholic), (Chesterton), (Christian), (Christ), (Dwarf), (Dwarfs), (Eddas), (Elf), (Elves), (English Universities), (Ent), (Fisherman's Ring), (Gnomes), (Hobbit), (Homer), (J.R.R. Tolkien), (Jewry), (Jung), (Jungian Psychology), (Kobolds), (Mastodon), (Matthew), (Middle-Earth), (Norse), (Papist), (Papists), (Purgatory), (Society for Creative Anachronism in the United States), (Teilhard), (The Lord of the Rings), (Tolkien), (Tolkien As Christian), (Tolkien cult), (Trolls), (Virgil), (Wooly Mammoth), (Yggdrasil)

I. Opening Statements about Two Kinds of Science Fiction

1. Lafferty's Division of SF
 - A. "There are two kinds of Science Fiction, but I must disregard one kind completely."
 - B. Confession of Incomprehension
 - a. "I do not understand it at all, and I am unable to generate any interest in it."
 - b. Immediate pivot to a broader philosophical cleavage
 - C. Parallel Cleavage for "Almost Everything"
 - a. "There are two kinds of almost everything."
 - b. Sets up extended logic leading to "two kinds of people."
2. Two Kinds of People in the World
 - A. "There are persons with a strong interest and affection for themselves and themselves alone."
 - b. Egocentric inclination (i.e., they become cult figures, demand attention)
 - B. The Second Sort
 - a. "There are persons with a strong interest and affection for the world about them..."
 - b. Contrasted as outward-looking, "the difference... is very deep."
 - C. Inexplicable Fascination with the First Sort
 - a. "Often able to transmit their intoxication with themselves to others."
 - b. Groups echo "Amen, Amen, you sure are!"
 - c. "A universe with only one person in it... is too small."

3. Clarification of Orientation
 - A. Egocentric "Spotlight" Tendency
 - a. "A person of the first sort will see and admire himself both from within and without."
 - b. External vistas set as spotlights on self
 - B. World-Centric Perspective
 - a. "A person of the second sort will see the world objectively... also subjectively."
 - b. "No one can see things without putting his own personal signature on his seeing."
4. Lafferty's Self-Identification
 - A. "I am mostly a person of the second sort."
 - B. Attributes of Lafferty
 - a. "I have a certain affection for myself... as I would for any other ungifted and clumsy... acquaintance."
 - b. Not listing self among "the fifty most interesting persons I know."
 - c. "I'm so clumsy... trouble learning to do a simple right-face..."
 - d. "I could never even learn to whistle."
 - C. Pleased with the External World
 - a. "I've always been pretty much pleased and interested... in the world around me."
 - b. Just as first-sort people are uncritical in self-adulation, second-sort is uncritical in world-admiration.

II. Notions of Anonymity and Egocentricity

1. Roles These Two Sorts Play
 - A. "There is not nearly enough anonymity in the world..."
 - a. Persons of the world-centered sort provide most anonymity
 - B. Egocentric People's Contribution
 - a. "Not nearly enough egocentricity, but the first sort tries to supply the lack."
 - C. Resulting Two-Style Expression
 - a. "For this reason there are two sorts of everything... including science fiction."
2. Introducing "Planet-Falls" as a Core SF Experience
 - A. "To me, most of the great moments of SF are planet-falls..."
 - B. Daily Wonder of Arriving on New Worlds
 - a. "We live on a tolerably new world... always more than ninety percent unexplored by ourselves."
 - C. The Joy of Exploration
 - a. "It's an intricate and massive world... physically astonishing, prodigal in line and color..."
 - b. Comedic references to tribbles, fuzzies, "superior fauna known as mankind."
 - c. "Etymologically all happenings are happy."

III. Early Comedic Bits from Troy Gordon's Columns

1. The First “Eternal Truths” Submission
 - A. Attribution to Joe Larimore Howe
 - a. “He sent me a list of eternal truths...”
 - b. “(1) It takes a fat dog to weigh 500 pounds.”
 - c. “(2) A 100-pound sack of flour will make one very large biscuit.”
 - B. Linking to SF’s Difficulty of “Eternal Truths”
 - a. “Admittedly this is a very short list but then I’m new to the eternal truth business!”
 - b. Harder to find truths in SF than in “things in general.”
2. Cannibal Anecdote from Claude Smith
 - A. Soldier’s Question
 - a. “Have you ever eaten anyone from Oklahoma?” / “They’re delicious.”
 - B. Texans vs. Oklahomans
 - a. “We never eat Texans.”
 - b. “Did you ever try to clean one?”
 - C. Lafferty’s Parallel to SF
 - a. “But it’s much harder to clean SF than to clean a Texan.”
 - b. “Easier to clean the Augean stables...”
3. Third “Troy Gorgonzolism”: Glenn Ford Omelet Story
 - A. “Actor Glenn Ford’s wife was quoted: All he can really make is an omelet...”
 - B. “He taught me how to throw it up and catch it in a pan.”
 - C. Lafferty’s SF Parallel
 - a. “This seems an unsanitary way of arriving at the essence of either an omelet or SF...”
 - b. “A lot of it is easy to throw up, but when you’ve caught it in a pan, what have you caught?”

IV. Attempted Definitions of “SF”: The Ganymede (Jenks, OK) Conversation

1. Lafferty’s Letter to Brad Balfour
 - A. Mentions “Language turned on itself boggles down.”
 - B. Specific Example with the “Out-of-Town Friend” from Ganymede
 - a. In reality, he’s from Jenks, Oklahoma
 - b. But introduced as “an alien with a mastery of English so profound that it gets in the way of communication.”
2. The Friend Dissects “SF” Terminology
 - A. “I understand the original pictographic value of the two letters...”
 - B. “They sometimes stand for what? ‘Science Fiction.’”
 - C. “Science is scientis, from scire, to know... that tells us nothing.”
 - D. “Fiction is from fingere, to shape, first used in potter’s trade... so it’s a pot?”
 - a. Shingle realized in his hand
 - b. Earthen pot also “realized” physically

E. Fact vs. Fiction Etymology

- a. "Factum is from facere, a thing made or done, a 'feat'... that also is what a fiction is."
- b. "So a 'fact' and a 'fiction' are the same thing?" / "I've got to when you put it that way..."

F. Fantasy, Speculative, "As If"

- a. "Fantasy is Greek phantuzein, 'to display.'"
- b. "Speculative from specular, 'to watch' or 'spy.' Are you a spy?"
- c. "SF is the phonetic equivalent of 'as if' in Milt Gross dialect."

G. Conclusion / The SF Hook

- a. "My friend did not really come from Ganymede. He came from Jenks, Oklahoma."
- b. "I have used the SF hook here in one small falsehood."

V. Hugo Gernsback's "Scientifiction" and the Beginnings of Pulp SF

1. Gernsback's Own Definition

- A. "By Scientifiction I mean Jules Verne, H.G. Wells, and Edgar Allan Poe type of story..."

B. Peter Haining's Explanation

- a. Gernsback included adventures in space, time travel, aliens, future catastrophe, utopias

C. Mirra Ginsburg's Perspective

- a. Themes "range far and wide—time and space, man and machines, death and immortality..."
- b. "Science fiction is, essentially, a literature of play..."

2. The Missing Excitement and Wonder

- A. "But the one thing these definitions leave out is the excitement and the element of wonder and magic..."

B. "Adventures In Time And Space" as partial definition

- a. "A little 'Adventures In Width And Breadth' would not convey such an excitement."

3. Ancient Greek Roots: Zeno as SF's Real Father

- A. "They are referred to as the Paradoxes of Zeno... wonder stuff, speculative magic."
- B. "H.G. Wells took up the same paradoxes 22 centuries later... that also was wonder stuff."
- C. "All the rest is commentary... pushing around the crumbs left over."

VI. Expansion: World-Building, Ghostliness, and Early US SF Scene

1. All Projections Inside the Paradoxes

- A. "Certainly there may be time travel... moving in time as a cubic dimension."
- B. "Ghostliness, uncanny creatures, the 'Witch of Agnesi' as a mathematical antic."
- C. "Irrational numbers → irrational universes."

2. The Homesteading of SF in the 1920s

- A. "It homesteaded the area and it proved up on the homestead... taken out of public

- domain.”
- B. Influx of Comic Strips, Silent Movies, Radio
 - a. “It was more than coincidence that radio was a main hobby of Gernsback.”
 - b. Gadgeteers, crystal set builders, short-range broadcasters—“magical inventions.”
- C. Basic Hardware: “Other World Adventure” and “Mechanical Men.”
 - a. Done “entirely by juveniles behind the backs of adults.”
- 3. Lafferty’s Own Missed Encounter
 - A. “I was a juvenile then and I missed it completely.”
 - a. Possibly because he wasn’t living in big city asphalt circumstances
 - B. Family/Ethnic Background
 - a. “Irish American... farmers who moved to Iowa, then Oklahoma... I had no knowledge of newsstands.”
 - b. “I had read Poe, Verne, Wells, Dunsany... but never heard of science fiction.”
- 4. The Old Gernsback Magazines
 - A. “Tear the covers off those old Gernsback magazines and save them... burn the magazines themselves.”
 - B. “There was the smell of magic, but not much real content.”
 - C. “An old moth-eaten magician, busting on every trick, but kids still watch in hope.”

VII. The So-Called Golden Age of John W. Campbell

- 1. Launch of Astounding (1930)
 - A. Writers included E.E. Smith, John W. Campbell, Gernsback veterans
- 2. Campbell Becomes Editor (1938)
 - A. “The so-called ‘Golden Age of Science Fiction’ began.”
 - B. “Unknown” magazine in 1939, “Campbell nation rates this a bit less golden.”
- 3. Severe Critique of Campbell
 - A. Aldiss on Gernsback as a “worst disaster”
 - B. “It is probably dangerous to argue John W. Campbell was the worst disaster... and yet it’s quite true.”
 - C. “He had such writers as Van Vogt, Heinlein, Asimov... none of them were very good.”
 - a. “Campbell extracted their brains, put them in bottles...”
 - b. “Another explanation: he had a strong will... flaccid personalities.”
- 4. The “Programmed” Writers of Campbell’s Stable
 - A. Van Vogt, Heinlein, Asimov, etc. singled out for “competence but tedium.”
 - B. “Fascism is the only logical conclusion to secular liberal premise...” comedic condemnation.
 - C. “All these things were entering their period of popularity, so it went well with the horses in that stable.”

VIII. The “Little Golden Age” Beyond Campbell

1. Horace Gold's *Galaxy*, Anthony Boucher & McComas's *Fantasy and Science Fiction*
 - A. Freed SF from mandatory stale science or backward viewpoint
 - B. "A whole cavalcade of SF magazines... anthologies of original stories."
2. Notable Good Novels
 - A. *Canticle for Leibowitz*, *The Stars My Destination*, *More than Human*, *Rogue Ship*, *Childhood's End*
 - a. "These were good novels, though not all great."
3. "Three Special Treats"
 - A. Cordwainer Smith
 - B. J.G. Ballard (lost some of his "fine hand" later)
 - C. Arthur C. Clarke (a real scientist and competent fictioneer)
4. Regeneration of the Moth-Eaten Magician
 - A. "He had escaped from dead hands of Gernsback and Campbell... he would escape from others."
 - B. "It was never promised we'd be free of octopodes... but trust the moth-eaten magician."

IX. Lafferty's Personal Writing Experience

1. Starting Career in 1959 (Age 45)
 - A. "First short stories published in 1960, first novels in 1968."
 - B. "They never sold well... a hundred or a few hundred faithful fans."
 - C. "I go out with my lantern into the crags sometimes looking for another ninety-nine thousand."
2. Thoughts on SF's Overall Performance
 - A. "SF always promises more than it delivers... 1 in 20 might be a success."
 - B. "It remains mostly a literature of kids... but there is also the phenomenon of the child born old."
 - C. "Has never been forward-looking or daring... behind main-line fiction, behind Joyce and Proust..."
3. Comparison to Jazz
 - A. Quote from Winthrop Sargeant about "jazz musician has a remarkable sense of subdivided and subordinate accents..."
 - B. "Similarly, SF has syncopated subtleties foreign to main-line writing..."
 - C. "People who don't have that multi-category ability will spit it out if fed to them."

X. The Trail of the Serpent (Inferior Porn in SF) and Heinlein's Apotheosis

1. The Porn Element
 - A. "Contemporary SF is marred by a strong blend of inferior pornography."
 - B. "It's little-boy macho, about as 'adult' as an adult bookstore... nine-tenths of the present anthologies are ruined..."
2. The 1976 Muehlebach Hotel Event in Kansas City
 - A. "An apotheosis ceremony for a 'tedious pusher of fascism-for-boys.'"
 - B. Numerous tributes, "I slept and woke and slept and woke again... still going on."
 - C. The 'Hand of God' Fiasco
 - a. "A ceiling panel was to slide back... The giant Hand of God was to come down..."
 - b. "But it stuck... The Voice of God never did sound."
 - c. "The squalid apotheosis did take place, and now Heinlein is one of the Gods."
3. "Who Are the People in SF and How to Tell Them Apart?"
 - A. Lists 80+ Writers (Ackerman, Aldiss, Anderson, Asimov, etc.)
 - a. "No, of course I haven't left anybody out..."
 - B. The Couple of Lines about Beards
 - a. "They prove the rule of Mike and Ike / That guys with beards all write alike."
 - b. "You can't tell the bearded ones apart."

XI. SF's Direction: Back to 1946, or Forward?

1. The Art Calendar Anecdote
 - A. "Man buys a hundred thousand art calendars for one cent each... If 1946 ever comes back, I've got it made."
 - B. SF Allegedly Dragged to 1946
 - a. Blames "del Rey, Silverberg, Pohl, and others too devious to even have names."
 - b. "No element of nostalgia... Something clammier at work."
2. Potential for a Real Future After This Backward Detour
 - A. "Then maybe there will be a real future after this sad detour."
 - B. "Is SF good for anything?"
3. Science Fiction as a "Bridge" Between Two Cultures
 - A. C.P. Snow's concept of the gap between arts and sciences
 - B. "SF is the possible bridge... the only place arty/literary meet the technological."
 - C. "It can be an enjoyment... an instrument... you can move mountains with it."

XII. Wrap-Up with More "Eternal Truths" and Cannibal Gags

1. Return to the Fat Idea / Flour Sack Jokes
 - A. "It takes a very fat idea to weigh five hundred pounds, especially a science fiction idea."
 - B. "A 100-pound sack of flour will make one short story or two tall stories."
 - C. "Other eternal truths about SF may be discovered any day."

2. Cannibals Who Eat SF People
 - A. "Fried they taste like pork, boiled like beef, roasted like camel..."
 - B. "We never even bother to clean them; we don't want to lose any flavor."
 - C. "The brains are the best part... you never know what you're going to find in their brains."
3. "Throw-Up" Omelet Revisited
 - A. "He taught me how to throw it up and catch it in a pan."
 - B. SF's partial sense of "pre-digested slurry."
 - C. "We're getting better... Upward and onward!"
4. Final Affirmation
 - A. "We are the very special guys."
 - B. "We make new worlds, we make new skies."

SYLLOGISM NAME	PREMISE 1	PREMISE 2	CONCLUSION
S1: THE "GREAT FOLLY" OF WRITING ON TOLKIEN AS CHRISTIAN	Lafferty says that to write "Tolkien as Christian" is to commit a "great folly" that provokes certain hostile reactions ("fangs of rubber serpents with real venom").	Yet not writing it would mean "leaving undone the things we ought to have done" (i.e., ignoring an important topic).	Therefore, Lafferty decides to proceed with this "folly" despite the backlash, fulfilling what he sees as a necessary discussion.
S2: TOLKIEN CULT VS. NON-CULT MEMBERS	Lafferty is "not a member of the Tolkien cult," and notes that cult members resent outsiders speaking about Tolkien.	Tolkien himself "was not a member of the Tolkien cult," i.e., the author never endorsed a fanatical following around his work.	Thus, Lafferty feels free to discuss Tolkien as an outsider, paralleling Tolkien's own outsider stance to the cult.
S3: "CHRISTIAN" VS. "PAPIST" VS. "CATHOLIC"	Lafferty says "Christian" is about "handling small pieces fallen off an essential thing," and Tolkien never used the term "Catholic" about himself.	Tolkien referred to himself as a "Papist," a term implying a quaint, eccentric group at English universities.	Consequently, discussing Tolkien "as Christian" or "as Catholic" is tricky since Tolkien preferred the more archaic identity "Papist."
S4: ACCOUNTS OF TOLKIEN	All available accounts describing Tolkien are "effusive" and likely	Lafferty did not personally know Tolkien	Therefore, Lafferty must turn to Tolkien's works (especially <i>The</i>

MIGHT BE INACCURATE	exaggerate or misrepresent him, making him sound more pretentious or less worthy than he was.	and thus can't rely on personal acquaintance.	<i>Lord of the Rings</i>) for understanding Tolkien's deeper views.
S5: PUZZLE OF TOLKIEN'S STRONG EMOTIONAL IMPACT	Tolkien's work "has had a strong emotional impact on various sorts of people," even generating a "passionate cult."	Lafferty reread Tolkien trying to discover why that impact is so intense—but he "hasn't found the answer."	Hence, the cultic passion around Tolkien remains somewhat mysterious to Lafferty.
S6: GENUINE PLEASURE FROM TOLKIEN'S NARRATIVE FLOW	Many non-cultish, non-pretentious readers "find genuine pleasure" in Tolkien.	Lafferty believes the reason is simply Tolkien's "fine narrative flow," which is "once common, now rare."	Thus, people hunger for good storytelling and latch onto Tolkien because he still provides it.
S7: LEAVING CHRIST OUT OF ANY WORK	The Redemption is the "central act of history," illuminating past and future, making Christ "the only valid environment."	One can theoretically omit Christ from a work "only with very great effort."	Therefore, any serious literary or mythic work that omits Christ has done so intentionally and laboriously.
S8: "IS CHRIST LEFT OUT OF TOLKIEN'S WORK?"	Lafferty asks whether The Lord of the Rings excludes Christ.	He concludes that "yes," Christ is absent from the novel's entire environment.	Therefore, Tolkien's omission of Christ from Middle-Earth is deliberate and complete.
S9: GREAT EFFORT IN OMITTING CHRIST	If Christ is "naturally central" to all mythic frameworks after the Redemption, removing Him requires unusual diligence.	Lafferty sees Tolkien's 12+ years of writing <i>The Lord of the Rings</i> as "a toilsome effort" to keep Christ out.	Hence, Tolkien must have devised special strategies to "disguise the resultant screaming emptiness" in the text.
S10: TOLKIEN'S "TREE-CLIMBING" WITHOUT	"A Catholic can't climb a tree without showing he's	Tolkien climbs the "World-Tree" (Yggdrasil-like) but avoids all Christian/Catholic	Thus, Tolkien deftly hides his Catholic identity in the fictional

REVEALING CATHOLICISM	Catholic,” says an old saying.	markers by posing as Dwarf, Elf, Ent, Hobbit—creatures “in the anteroom of humanity.”	vantage of non-human species.
S11: AUTHENTICITY OF NON-HUMAN MINDSETS	Tolkien’s Dwarfs, Elves, Hobbits, etc. “ring with a valid sound and strike concords” in the reader’s unconscious.	We find pieces of them within ourselves, proving some “collective unconscious” authenticity.	Therefore, Tolkien’s artistry resonates psychologically, whether or not these creatures “really exist” physically.
S12: CHRIST AS LORD OF THE ARCHETYPES	Jung’s “collective unconscious” includes archetypes that shape myths.	Christ is “Lord of the Archetypes” in the real cosmic sense, and He “suffuses Purgatory.”	Hence, removing Christ from a mythical sub-creation (like Middle-Earth) is a radical extraction—He is ordinarily present in all archetypal forms.
S13: MIDDLE-EARTH AS PURGATORY?	One might relate Middle-Earth to a “collective unconscious realm” akin to Purgatory, bridging reality and myth.	In actual Purgatory, Christ is present.	Therefore, if Middle-Earth were truly analogous to Purgatory, it would include Christ—yet Tolkien’s Middle-Earth does not.
S14: ELEPHANTINE FANTASY	Lafferty previously called Tolkien’s fantasy “elephantine,” meaning huge, weighty, slow-moving.	It is not just “big” like an elephant but reminiscent of the Woolly Mammoth, Mastodon, and Behemoth—raising a question: “Are you sure He who made the lamb made thee?”	Thus, Tolkien’s mythic approach is vast and formidable, evoking a primeval sense that might overshadow simpler Christian symbolism.
S15: “CHURCH WITH NO CROSS” ANALOGY	A large Christian sect in Lafferty’s city forbids display of the cross, so its church-building is designed with no straight lines (lest they inadvertently form a cross).	This “gaping omission” is disguised by elaborate angles, spires, and contrivances.	Likewise, Tolkien’s Middle-Earth is built to avoid forming the “shadow of Christ,” requiring elaborate narrative contrivances to hide even a hint of the cross.

S16: EXTREME MEASURES TO EXCISE CHRIST	By normal probability and cultural tradition, Christ would appear in any sprawling mythic tapestry.	Tolkien systematically “cuts out” every trace or shape that might suggest Christ, then disguises the holes so readers won’t see obvious blanks.	Therefore, <i>The Lord of the Rings</i> is methodically purged of Christ-signifiers, a labor Lafferty finds deeply puzzling.
S17: CHRIST IS UBIQUITOUS IN MYTHS	“Christ-gold” is “found forwards and backwards in time,” and “every mythology” has traces or prophecy of the Redemption.	Homer is “gold-speckled” with Christ’s coming; Virgil “knows everything except the name.” African and American Indian mythologies also anticipate or symbolically reflect Christ.	Hence, it is unusual for an epic “myth” written after the Incarnation to have no Christ element—yet Tolkien achieves precisely that.
S18: MYTH AFTER THE INCARNATION	After Christ’s birth, the quest changed from “When?” to “Where?”—the “treasure” is in actual geography.	All sagas, cycles, Eddas, or mythologies since then have a changed orientation, often linking to Christ.	Thus, logically, Middle-Earth should reflect Christ in some manner if it is “post-Incarnation”—but Tolkien forcibly removes Him.
S19: TOLKIEN’S “HERESY” = REMOVING THE ESSENTIAL ELEMENT	The word “heresy” (from Greek <i>hairesis</i> , “to pick out”) implies removing a key piece from a unified whole.	The Redemption is “central” to all post-Incarnation myth, so removing Christ from Middle-Earth is a literal “pulling out” of the essential element.	Therefore, Tolkien’s approach is described as a “compulsive removal,” an act of “heresy” (in the strict sense of excising something crucial).
S20: THE RING AS THE FISHERMAN’S RING	Traditionally, “the Ring” is the Fisherman’s Ring (the Pope’s ring, or the ring in biblical/folklore fish stories).	In many legends, the ring is found in a fish’s mouth, tying it to “fisherman” archetypes in Jewish and Arabian traditions as well.	Thus, the ring motif normally points to Christian/Petrine (St. Peter the fisherman) symbolism—but Tolkien inverts it.
S21: REVERSING GOOD AND EVIL OF THE RING	The usual ring archetype is a sacred or redemptive object (the Pearl beyond price, the Grail-like ring) to be enthroned or recovered.	In <i>The Lord of the Rings</i> , the quest is to destroy the ring as evil, not to crown it as good.	Consequently, Tolkien’s ring-lore flips the typical Christian fish/ring motif, making the ring something demonic.

S22: INVERSION OR DEVIL ROLES	Because the ring was originally a Christ-like or Papal artifact in broad mythology, destroying it is “like playing devil roles.”	The hobbits and questors appear “likable” but might be “devil’s agents” by reversing the ring’s usual sacred value.	Therefore, Lafferty suggests Tolkien’s narrative “turns things into their opposites,” which is a hallmark of diabolic confusion.
S23: STONES INTO BREAD — A DIABOLIC TEMPTATION	“dic ut lapides isti panes fiant” is the Devil’s temptation: “Command these stones become bread.”	Tolkien’s sub-creation seemingly includes a transmutation of good into evil and evil into good, reminiscent of that satanic reversal.	Lafferty sees an implication that Middle-Earth’s moral categories have been “swapped,” which is suspiciously reminiscent of diabolic illusions.
S24: NO ACCIDENTAL CHRISTIAN ELEMENT	By random chance or cultural probability, there would be many Christian references in such a large saga.	Tolkien’s text lacks them entirely.	Therefore, the absence is obviously deliberate, not an oversight.
S25: TOLKIEN’S PERSONAL WORTH VS. WORK’S EMPTINESS	Lafferty states “we do not doubt Tolkien’s personal worth and commitment” (he’s presumably devout).	Yet Tolkien’s major work does “a puzzling and opposite thing,” systematically removing Christ.	Thus, there is a contradiction between Tolkien’s own Catholic faith and the Christ-less universe of Middle-Earth.
S26: POSSIBLE MOTIVES FOR CHRIST REMOVAL	Lafferty speculates Tolkien might be removing “grosser barnacles” from the “Redemption Ship”—i.e., clearing away distortions or encrustations around Christianity.	Or perhaps Tolkien himself “understood nothing about the Transcendent Ship beyond these barnacles.”	Lafferty finds both possibilities unlikely, leaving the reason for Tolkien’s thorough excision of Christ mysterious.
S27: THE STONE AND THE SNAKE	Christ asked if any father would give his son a stone instead of bread, or a snake instead of a fish.	The “Tolkien cult” claims they are getting bread/fish from Tolkien’s text, but Lafferty sees them actually receiving “stone” and “snake.”	Thus, the cult’s devotion might be feeding on illusions—mistaking a stone for bread and a snake for fish, ironically fulfilling

			Christ's warning in reverse.
S28: TOTAL FAITH IN TOLKIEN	Tolkien devotees have "total faith in Tolkien," viewing their devotion as an illustrative microcosm of True Faith.	Lafferty points out they ironically celebrate an inverted quest (destroying the ring) as good.	Hence, the faith that Tolkien fans profess might be misguided, reversing central Christian symbols.
S29: EXAMPLE OF A TOLKIEN DEVOTEE	A man tried to explain Tolkien's profound importance to Lafferty, "his face shining with sincerity."	Simultaneously, Lafferty perceived a second image of the same man, brandishing "a stone" and "a snake" but believing them to be "bread" and "fish."	Therefore, Lafferty sees a dual reality in the cult follower: sincere devotion, but unwitting self-delusion.
S30: BLOOD AND VENOM FROM SNAKE-BITES	The man's "face was bloodied and snake-bit," yet he insisted he was nourished by fish.	This reveals the extent of self-deception in the Tolkien cult: they ingest illusions but claim them as life-giving.	Hence, Lafferty sees the cult's "faith" as an unhealthy, possibly toxic devotion.
S31: SURROGATE AGE OF "RUBBER SNAKES" WITH REAL VENOM	Lafferty references "the age of surrogates," where illusions or simulacra (fake bread, rubber snakes) are used.	Rumor says these rubber snakes now contain real venom, making them genuinely harmful.	Thus, illusions (like a Christ-less myth passed off as Christian) can become truly poisonous, not merely pretend.
S32: THE CENTRAL MYSTERY	Lafferty confesses "I do not understand" how or why Tolkien undertook this enormous labor of excising Christ, nor how fans embrace it.	He sees them reversing good and evil, ignoring the harmful consequences.	Therefore, the essay ends acknowledging the puzzle: Tolkien's devout identity vs. a Christ-less epic, and fans' unwavering acceptance of it, remains an enigma.

"Review: *Again, Dangerous Visions*"

Overview

Lafferty describes the famous anthology edited by Harlan Ellison and published by Doubleday. He notes the book's contents—46 original stories by 43 writers—along with extensive introductions and afterwords, and characterizes the entire work as a “non-fiction novel” that subsumes the individual stories into Ellison's vision. Although many of the included stories are regarded as imperfect, the reviewer finds at least ten good ones and emphasizes how unusual and entertaining the collection can be. The reviewer also critiques Ellison's editing approach, which appears to distort or diminish some writers' personal views or styles. Ultimately, the recommendation is to buy and read the anthology, with the caveat that Ellison himself has become a “phenomenon” subject to critical scrutiny.

Summary

Lafferty begins by presenting “Review: Again, Dangerous Visions” as edited by Harlan Ellison and published by Doubleday. It states that this anthology is very entertaining, sometimes unintentionally, and raises the question of whether it is worth the listed price of \$12.95. The reviewer quickly decides it is worth it because the reader is assumed to have sufficient resources, and the reviewer points out that anyone who has not read the original “DANGEROUS VISIONS” has never encountered anything quite like this new volume.

The reviewer observes that the anthology “perverts the noble concept of Science Fiction at almost every turning,” but also notes that Science Fiction is composed of imperfections anyway. It is explained that, on the surface, the anthology contains 46 original stories by 43 authors, with individual introductions and afterwords totaling about 60,000 words. However, underneath this surface appearance, the reviewer argues that the book functions as a “large and rambling non-fiction novel,” the second in a trilogy following “DANGEROUS VISIONS,” with the third to be named “THE LAST DANGEROUS VISIONS.”

The reviewer likens Harlan Ellison's editorial style to a type of welded sculpture made of random metal parts. The stories lose their individual identity and become part of Ellison's collage, resulting in a whole that is “less than the total of the parts.” The reviewer calls Ellison “the world's oldest teenager,” noting that he is “about forty, give or take a hundred years,” and labels him an “indifferent writer” but also “prize-winningest” in the Science Fiction field. Ellison is described as possessing an old-fashioned “mesmer fluid” rather than modern charisma, and his personality operates on multiple levels that laugh at each other.

The reviewer claims Ellison's editorial interventions cause some good contributors to appear worse, and it is not always clear if the words in the introductions are Ellison's or Lafferty's. Lafferty says that several Catholics are made to seem like they are sneering at their Church, and some intelligent people come off as foolish. The reviewer calls this a “dwarfing process” and wonders how Ellison manages to manipulate the writers so they become characters in his “turgid novel.”

Specific examples follow. “WITH THE BENTFIN BOOMER BOYS ON LITTLE OLD NEW ALABAMA” by Richard A. Lupoff is deemed a decent story but padded and could be improved by cutting it to a fifth of its length. “GETTING ALONG” by James Blish is described as a patchwork of parodies supposedly in various literary styles but actually seems to be an unintentional self-parody of Blish. The reviewer remarks that Blish warns not to read any “Deep Meaning” into it, which the reviewer says was never a risk.

Further examples include “THE FUNERAL” by Kate Wilhelm and “MONITORED DREAMS AND STRATEGIC CREMATIONS” by Bernard Wolfe, both of which are said to accept “the straw universes of Harlan Ellison” as reality, resulting in “sticky” outcomes. Lafferty goes on to note that the rest of the stories often come from Ellison’s protégés—some promising, some not—or from established writers producing disappointing or forgettable pieces. Nonetheless, the reviewer points out that ten good stories can be found in the collection, a high number for any anthology.

The reviewer describes the general tone of the book as fulfilling a requirement for obscenity but no worse than mainstream (“Main-Stream” or “Rotten-River”) literature. Lafferty discusses “tetragrammata”—four-letter words used ritualistically that can summon “grubby little devils.” According to the reviewer, these devils appear confused but ready to serve, and those who evoke them fail to realize what they are doing.

Next, the reviewer laments the use of words to mean their opposites, saying there is actually nothing dangerous in these “Dangerous Visions,” as everything lies safely under a protective “anti-establishment.” The truly dangerous literary work, the reviewer suggests, remains undone by most of these writers, who instead stay “huddled together in the safety” of their shared assumptions.

The reviewer concludes that the book is not a crucial turning point (“kilometer stone”) in Science Fiction but remains worth buying and reading. Lafferty highlights that the anthology is “something different,” contains some very good stories, and has a unique editorial “Harlan Novel Conglomeration.” The closing lines apologize to “Harlan” but insist that he must be reviewed as a phenomenon because he made himself into one.

(Again, Dangerous Visions), (Bernard Wolfe), (Chaldee), (Conan Doyle), (DANGEROUS VISIONS), (Doubleday), (GETTING ALONG), (H.G. Wells), (Harlan), (Harlan Ellison), (James Blish), (Kate Wilhelm), (Lord Dunsany), (Main-Stream), (MONITORED DREAMS AND STRATEGIC CREMATIONS), (Richard A. Lupoff), (Rotten-River), (Science Fiction), (THE FUNERAL), (THE LAST DANGEROUS VISIONS), (WITH THE BENTFIN BOOMER BOYS ON LITTLE OLD NEW ALABAMA)

NO.	TITLE	MAJOR PREMISE	MINOR PREMISE	CONCLUSION
1	Entertainment Despite Imperfection	If a book contains many parts that are unintentionally or	The review states that “this is a very entertaining book”	Therefore, despite its imperfections, the book is entertaining.

		unconsciously entertaining, then it can be deemed entertaining overall.	because many parts—whether intentional or not—provide amusement.	
2	Price and Occasional Value	If a book's price is modest and it is presented during a promotional period (e.g., "be-kind-to-Science-Fiction week"), then its cost is justified.	The review notes that at \$12.95 the book is a worthwhile purchase, especially during a promotional week.	Therefore, the price of the book is justified for those inclined toward quality Science Fiction.
3	Inherent Imperfection in Nearly Perfect Things	If nearly perfect things are composed of imperfections badly stitched together, then a work that perverts the noble concept of SF can still be valuable.	The review asserts that <i>Dangerous Visions</i> "perverts the noble concept of Science Fiction" but reminds us that SF—like all nearly perfect things—is made up of imperfections.	Therefore, the book's imperfections do not detract from its overall value.
4	Surface Composition Versus Underlying Structure	If the surface appearance of a work differs from its underlying structure, then one must look deeper to understand its true nature.	Although on the surface the book appears as 46 original stories by 43 authors with many introductions and afterwords, the reviewer reveals it is actually a large, rambling non-fiction collage assembled by Ellison.	Therefore, the true character of the book is found in its underlying, Ellison-shaped collage rather than its superficial parts.
5	Ellison's Editorial Method and Its Effect	If an editor blends and reassembles contributions in a personal manner, then many individual contributions may be diminished in the final whole.	The review explains that Harlan Ellison "blends and tacks Laffertys together" so that many good contributors seem worse than they really are, producing a "dwarfing process."	Therefore, Ellison's editorial method causes the final product to be less than the total of its parts.

6	Varied Quality Among the Stories	If a collection contains stories of differing quality, then one must assess each story individually to gauge the collection's overall merit.	The review points out examples: Lupoff's story is good but overlong; Blish's "GETTING ALONG" is an unintended parody; some pieces by established writers are disappointing; yet at least ten stories are very good.	Therefore, the collection exhibits a wide range of quality, with some stories standing out despite others being less successful.
7	The Role of Humor in Softening the Supernatural	If humor can prevent even the most outré supernatural tales from being truly frightening, then a writer's humor is a valuable tempering device.	The review notes that Pei's humor "keeps creeping in" and prevents his supernatural tales from being really frightening.	Therefore, Pei's intermittent humor is a beneficial element that softens and humanizes his supernatural narratives.
8	Pei as an Entertainer Rather Than a Gore-Monger	If a writer is judged not by raw horror but by his ability to entertain, then his work should be appreciated for its overall engaging quality.	The review asserts that Pei is "not a flesh-crawler" but an entertainer, and that his book "comes to much more than the totality of its parts" with a pervasive sunniness.	Therefore, Pei's work is valued primarily as entertaining and uplifting rather than purely horrifying.
9	The Absence of Overt Propaganda	If a writer is known for strong personal views, then one might expect overt propaganda unless he deliberately refrains from it.	The review notes that Pei slips no direct propaganda into his tales, except indirectly through the "pleasant sanity" running through them.	Therefore, despite his strong views, Pei's storytelling remains free of overt ideological bias.
10	Overall Critical Appraisal	If a collection is both diverse in quality and enriched with traditional flavor, humor, and engaging entertainment, then it	The reviewer concludes that despite unevenness, Pei's collection—combining the best and worst of his fictional tales—is "pretty good."	Therefore, the overall assessment of Pei's collection is favorable.

		is considered “pretty good.”		
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“The Last Western”

I. Introductory Observations on “The Last Western”

1. Opening Description of Willie
 - A. Willie’s unique heritage (American Indian, Irish, Chinese, Negro)
 - B. Willie’s appearance (“red-headed, slant-eyed, copper-colored Negro”)
2. Initial Notes on the Book’s Style
 - A. The novel’s uneven mixture: satire, caricature, and “horse opera”
 - B. Symbolic mention of “four colors of straw,” highlighting the green
 - C. Critique of the title (misnamed, starts in Sandstorm, New Mexico)
 - D. Absence of real “Western” scenes or horses
 - E. Presence of “horses’ hooves” as background thunder (referencing the Koran)
3. Author Uncertainty
 - A. Reviewer mentions no info on Thomas S. Klise (“He may be a kid named Joe.”)

II. Synopsis of Willie’s Life and Rise

1. Willie’s Early Background
 - A. Willie is “simple-minded and slow-learning” but inherently good
 - B. Best friend Clio (a Negro boy), smarter and skeptical (“Do you really believe all that jive?”)
 - C. High school baseball stardom in Houston; contracts with New York Hawks
2. The Miracle Pitch
 - A. Willie’s pitching ability is called a “miracle pitch”
 - B. Greater than famous real/fictional pitches; leads to perfect games
 - C. Teammates resent Willie’s dominance
3. Departure from Baseball
 - A. Robert Regent (owner of NY Hawks/manufacturer of Regent wine) treats them poorly
 - B. Willie rejects a million-dollar deal; Clio rejects half as much
 - C. Willie enters seminary; Clio becomes a revolutionary general in Brazil
4. Willie’s Rapid Rise in the Church
 - A. Fails academically at seminary but is ordained for his goodness
 - B. Progresses from priest → auxiliary bishop → bishop → archbishop → cardinal → papal

- elector
 - C. Works miracles; on death of old pope, becomes Pope Willie by acclamation
- 5. Pope Willie's Global Mediation
 - A. Tours the world, seeing only very poor and very rich
 - B. Calls rebel leaders for safe-conduct discussions
 - C. Government leaders betray and murder the rebels
 - D. Willie's slowness in realizing the betrayals
- 6. Conspiracy Against Pope Willie
 - A. Willie proposes a world-wide day of prayer and reconciliation
 - B. Traditionalists and certain cardinals move to have him murdered
 - C. Willie relies on The Silent Servants of the Used, Abused, and Utterly Screwed Up
 - D. A Silent Servant turns Judas, facilitating Willie's murder
- 7. Parallel Fate of Clio
 - A. Clio is murdered in South America at the same time
 - B. Clio's forces had observed Willie's proposed day of prayer by halting battle
 - C. Government betrayal leads to Clio's death

III. Writing Style, Tone, and Secondary Elements

- 1. "Pseudo-simple" Style with Overuse of "and"
 - A. Reviewer identifies it as "pseudo-simple"
 - B. Direct example of text with many "ands"
 - C. 559 pages of this style
- 2. Portrayals of Hypocrisy and Social Class
 - A. Wealthy characters speak "stage Texas"; hypocrites maintain Fatima shrines
 - B. Future setting glimpsed: "Black servants, dressed in colonial costume and white wigs..."
- 3. Herman Felder (the "Sinister Saint")
 - A. Described as best character: always smells of roses (drug use)
 - B. Possesses an expensive camera, possibly creating the scenes rather than recording them
 - C. A member of the Silent Servants, insane for most of the book
 - D. Formerly a Western movie producer; characters wonder if they are in his failed movie
 - E. Revealed as the Judas figure, betraying Willie

IV. The Sudden Shift in Narrative Power

- 1. Mid-Book Transformation
 - A. Reviewer warns "Hold on!"—a jolt occurs halfway through
 - B. Sticky satire disappears; a more forceful authorial presence emerges
 - C. Coherence, real power, flow, and hoof-beats of a "rushing narrative"
 - D. "Straw people" are imbued with real blood; presence of the Holy Spirit

2. Genuine Inspiration in the Latter Half
 - A. Reviewer insists real inspiration infuses much of the second half
 - B. Suggests half the book could be kept as a standalone, ignoring the weaker parts
3. The Holy Ghost as “Playboy of the Western World”
 - A. The Holy Spirit’s role outweighs the “three uninspired parts”
4. The Departure of the Holy Ghost
 - A. Holy Spirit leaves before the end, triggered by “L-Day chants”
 - B. Exact quote of cardinal’s chant: “Zap! Zing! Splat! Splash! The Holy Spirit will break their ass.”
5. Reviewer’s Verdict on the Final Pages
 - A. After that chant, the novel “sickens and dies”

V. Pope Willie’s Death and Final Scenes

1. Willie’s Accelerated Aging and Pilgrimage
 - A. Willie appears 80 years old though still in his twenties
 - B. Returns to the U.S. to beg forgiveness from Robert Regent, the one he “wronged”
 - C. Regent had once cursed him with a racial slur; Willie felt resentment
 - D. Willie seeks to atone, accompanied by Silent Servants
 - E. Murder on Regent’s hunting preserve (many old friends present, including manager Thatcher Grayson)
2. Last Words of Pope Willie
 - A. Willie’s final line: “It is the last of the ninth, Mr. Grayson.”
 - B. The end of Pope Willie

VI. Reviewer’s Closing Remarks

1. Overall Recommendation and Unexplored Characters
 - A. Encourages the reader to “Get it. It’s worth it.”
 - B. Mentions unIntroduced characters (George Doveland Goldenblade, Archbishop McCool, Joto Toshima, Truman)
 - C. Asserts there is “less to all of them than meets the eye, but there is something to all of them.”
 - D. Praises the several hundred pages where “the Spirit does move unmistakably.”

SYLLOGISM	PREMISE 1	PREMISE 2	CONCLUSION
1. MISNOMER	A “western” typically features significant western elements	<i>The Last Western</i> provides minimal “western” iconography and no direct cowboy	The title <i>The Last Western</i> is a misnomer.

	(horses, cowboys, frontier life).	culture (only echoes of horse hooves).	
2. UNEVEN MIXTURE	The novel blends caricature, pseudo-liberal satire, new-church Catholicity, and an inspired “horse-opera” style.	These stylistic elements clash in tone and do not integrate seamlessly.	The book suffers from unevenness in style and quality.
3. STYLISTIC FLAWS	The text uses a “pseudo-simple” style with excessive “and” constructions and simplistic syntax.	Overuse of such constructions becomes tedious.	The reviewer finds portions of the prose aesthetically off-putting.
4. SUDDEN SPIRITUAL POWER	Around the midpoint, the text shifts from satire/burlesque to a powerful, “Holy Spirit–infused” narrative.	This infusion of “real inspiration” elevates the story beyond ordinary satire.	Much of the middle/latter portion shows genuine literary and spiritual force.
5. SUBSEQUENT COLLAPSE	Near the end, disruptive elements (e.g., a cardinal’s “Zap! Zing! Splat!” chant) break the spiritual momentum.	Blasphemous or jarring notes drive away the sense of inspiration, causing the novel to wither.	The final segment fails to sustain the earlier inspired quality, “sickening” the narrative close.
6. OVERALL VALUE	Despite the unevenness, a “thunderously good” portion stands on its own merit.	A flawed novel with a powerful spiritual core can still offer great worth to readers.	The reviewer recommends reading it for its inspired sections, even though the rest is weak.
7. TAKEAWAY	The reviewer notes the rare presence of real “Holy Spirit” influence in about half the book.	Genuine inspiration is worth preserving or experiencing despite the surrounding flaws or satire.	<i>The Last Western</i> ultimately deserves attention for its extraordinary spiritual “long sweep,” offsetting its less successful parts.

“Review: *The White House Transcripts*”

Overview

Lafferty discusses *THE WHITE HOUSE TRANSCRIPTS* as though it were a “Heroic Comedy” novel marked by significant innovation and a strong moral center. It describes how the work combines various elements—characters, comedic situations, and a multi-media approach—to create something both universal and unusual. The reviewer contrasts comedy with tragedy, arguing that the comedic form here carries depth and importance. Lafferty focuses on the book’s originality, its portrayal of “fallen” characters seeking solutions, and its polarizing reception in the press. Ultimately, the reviewer finds it notable for displaying what they call “the only morality in town for a long season,” despite some negative or confused critical responses.

Summary

Lafferty begins by noting that *THE WHITE HOUSE TRANSCRIPTS* might be considered a “non-fiction novel,” “multi-media novel,” “folk novel,” or “morality novel,” and it is described as a “Heroic Comedy.” It says that some readers, especially those who view tragedy as superior, may not enjoy it, but the reviewer insists that comedy is the main form of human drama and *THE WHITE HOUSE TRANSCRIPTS* is “serious and important and significant” in this comedic mode.

Lafferty labels it “humor comedy” or “good-humor comedy,” and suggests that good humor should be retained even under extreme duress. The reviewer calls this part of “Heroic Comedy.” The work is said to be “innovative, seminal, spookily universal, and technically sound,” with unusual characters who are “intelligent, compromised, and of the fallen species,” looking for “contingent solutions.” The circumstance they inhabit is described as “murderously comic, treacherous, human-diabolical, infested, but kinetic,” and called “the world.”

It is deemed well done, with an ear for American sounds that even surpasses that of “O’Hara.” Because no author is listed, the characters take on qualities that are sometimes voluntary, sometimes automatic. The character “P” is compared to having “a Dostoyevskian depth” and “an O’Faoláian complexity.” The work’s style and ancestry are traced to sources like “certain Doré drawings, old vaudeville skits of the ‘Hogan’s Alley’ pattern, Irish novels by Samuel Lover and Charles Lever, rowdy ballad songs, [and] Belloc verses.” These influences are called “distant and doubtful progenitors.”

One multi-media device is the negative press that the work itself received, which becomes a “choral anti-strophe” rather than a Greek Chorus. The reviewer calls it at times a “parrot chorus” and sometimes a “Gothic horror chorus,” adding that it “illuminates the whole novel, from below, with a reeky light.” The press is deemed “execrable,” and the critics are called “cracked,” lacking credentials to judge such a novel.

The reviewer notes that readers project their own dispositions onto the book: “Dismal people say it is dismal,” “Dishonest people say it is dishonest,” and so forth, but insists that none of those descriptors truly applies. Instead, the reviewer claims that *THE WHITE HOUSE TRANSCRIPTS* is a “great novel” that reflects back whatever mindset the reader brings to it. It does not answer the question “What is reality?” but raises it in a manner that could make Lafferty a “landmark novel.” It is described as a “genuine morality novel,” meaning it must contain moral substance.

The review asserts that this work indeed has “battered but entrenched, and often rampant morality,” standing out in a context where nothing else around has any morality at all. The presence of morality in it angers those who believe “Morality is Dead,” who respond by labeling it immoral. The reviewer describes this morality as “devious and tortuous and human,” yet it shows “the only morality in town.” Finally, Lafferty mentions “the introduction of R.W. Apple of the New York Times,” calling it “silly.”

(Bantam Books), (Belloc), (Charles Lever), (Doré), (Dostoyevskian), (Greek Chorus), (Hogan's Alley), (New York Times), (O'Faoláian), (O'Hara), (P), (R.W. Apple), (Samuel Lover), (*THE WHITE HOUSE TRANSCRIPTS*)

I. Opening Classification and Heroic Comedy Claim

1. Introduction and Possible Genres
 - A. “*THE WHITE HOUSE TRANSCRIPTS* might be described as a non-fiction novel, a multi-media novel, a folk novel, or a morality novel.”
 - B. “In matter and treatment it is a Heroic Comedy.”
 - C. Reviewer’s Contrast of Comedy vs. Tragedy
 - a. “Those who hold the idea that Tragedy is more significant may boggle...”
 - b. “Comedy is the main and central form of the human drama... Tragedy is a derivation of a weaker sort.”
2. Seriousness of a Heroic Comedy
 - A. “It is a serious and important and significant Heroic Comedy.”
 - B. Reviewer’s Defense of Comedy’s Importance
 - a. “Humor comedy? Certainly humor comedy: good-humor comedy.”
 - b. Should not lose good humor under extreme torture—“But it sure should come close. That’s part of Heroic Comedy.”

II. Qualities: Innovative, Seminal, and Unusual

1. Technical and Thematic Strength
 - A. “As a novel, this is innovative, seminal, spookily universal, and technically sound.”

- B. “Characters seeking contingent solutions” in a “murderously comic circumstance”
 - a. The circumstance is “treacherous, human-diabolical, infested, but kinetic... one name for this circumstance is ‘the world’.”
- 2. Comparisons to Other Writers and Works
 - A. “Not even O’Hara showed as good an ear for American sounds as is found here.”
 - B. Mention of “no author evident,” characters become “volitional or autonomic.”
 - C. “Character P has a Dostoyevskian depth and an O’Faoláian complexity.”
 - D. Possible “doubtful progenitors”: Doré drawings, old vaudeville skits, Irish novels by Lover/Lever, rowdy ballad songs, Belloc verses

III. Multi-Media Device: The Execrable Press as Anti-Strophe

- 1. Unique Narrative Technique
 - A. “One multi-media device used here... the execrable press becomes the choral anti strophe of the novel.”
 - B. Not a Greek Chorus but a “parrot chorus” or “Gothic horror chorus,” casting a “reeky light.”
- 2. Credibility of Critics
 - A. “The execrable press itself is puzzling.”
 - B. “Not one of the cracked critics seems to have good credentials for judging novels at all.”

IV. “What Bucket Do You Bring to the Well?”: Reader Projection

- 1. Dismal, Dishonest, Sordid Reactions
 - A. “Dismal people say that the work is dismal. Dishonest people say that it is dishonest...”
 - B. “Morally bankrupt people say that it is morally bankrupt.”
 - C. “None of these things is true... but it is the mark of a great novel that people of such different sorts see themselves in it.”
- 2. Significance of This Reflection
 - A. The novel’s capacity to reflect various mindsets underscores its complexity
 - B. Links to the “Heroic Comedy” concept—people project their negativity onto it

V. Questions of Reality and Morality

- 1. Raising “What Is Reality?”
 - A. The work “raises, but does not settle, the question ‘What is reality?’”
 - B. Possibly a “landmark novel,” and “a genuine morality novel”
- 2. Core Morality Assertion
 - A. “It has a battered but entrenched, and often rampant morality.”
 - B. Reviewer states: “Nothing else around has any morality at all.”

- C. Infuriates the “Morality is Dead” nation, leading them to accuse it of immorality
- D. “Devious and tortuous, human though it is, this work shows the only morality in town for a long season.”

VI. Concluding Note on R.W. Apple

1. Brief Mention of the Introduction
 - A. “The introduction of R.W. Apple of the New York Times is silly.”
 - B. Implies dissatisfaction with Apple’s added commentary or framing
 - C. Ends the review abruptly on this dismissive note

NO.	TITLE	MAJOR PREMISE	MINOR PREMISE	CONCLUSION
1	Genre Classification and Form	If a work can be interpreted in multiple ways—non-fiction, multimedia, folk, or morality novel—and its treatment is essentially comic, then its overall character is that of a Heroic Comedy.	The reviewer states that <i>THE WHITE HOUSE TRANSCRIPTS</i> may be described as a non-fiction novel, a multimedia novel, a folk novel, or a morality novel, and in both matter and treatment it is a Heroic Comedy.	Therefore, <i>THE WHITE HOUSE TRANSCRIPTS</i> is fundamentally a Heroic Comedy.
2	The Primacy of Comedy Over Tragedy	If comedy is the central form of the human drama and tragedy is merely a derivative, then those who insist on tragedy’s superiority will be unable to enjoy a work whose core is comedic.	The review argues that while some believe Tragedy is more significant than Comedy, the fact remains that Comedy is the main and central form of human drama.	Therefore, readers who prioritize tragedy over comedy will not be capable of enjoying <i>THE WHITE HOUSE TRANSCRIPTS</i> .
3	Entertainment Value Despite Imperfection	If a work is unintentionally or unconsciously entertaining and remains engaging despite perverting noble concepts, then	The review notes that many parts of <i>THE WHITE HOUSE TRANSCRIPTS</i> are entertaining—even if they pervert the noble concept of	Therefore, <i>THE WHITE HOUSE TRANSCRIPTS</i> is highly entertaining despite its imperfections.

		its overall entertainment value is high.	Science Fiction—and emphasizes its price and uniqueness.	
4	Surface Composition Versus Underlying Collage	If a work appears on the surface as a collection of original stories with introductions and afterwords but is actually assembled into a continuous nonfiction novel by its editor, then its true structure is that of a personal collage.	The review explains that although the book superficially consists of 46 original stories by 43 authors, it is really a large, rambling nonfiction novel (the second of a trilogy) assembled by Harlan Ellison.	Therefore, the true nature of <i>THE WHITE HOUSE TRANSCRIPTS</i> is as an editor's collage—a continuous narrative that subsumes its individual parts.
5	Ellison's Editorial Influence and the "Dwarfing" Effect	If an editor blends and reassembles contributions in a forceful, personal manner, then even strong contributions may be diminished in the final work.	The review states that Ellison's method "dwarfs" the contributors—making some seem worse than they are—and that he tacks Laffertys together into something entirely his own.	Therefore, Ellison's editorial influence transforms the work into a product that is more reflective of his own style than the sum of its parts.
6	Varied Quality Among Contributions	If a collection comprises contributions that range widely in quality and intention, then its overall merit must be evaluated by isolating its very good stories from its weaker ones.	The review cites examples such as Lupoff's "WITH THE BENTFIN BOOMER BOYS ON LITTLE OLD NEW ALABAMA" (good but overlong) and Blish's "GETTING ALONG" (an unintended parody), while noting that at least ten stories are very good.	Therefore, <i>THE WHITE HOUSE TRANSCRIPTS</i> exhibits a wide range of quality, with some standout stories amid many uneven contributions.
7	The Role of the Press as a	If a non-traditional multimedia device (like	The review describes how the "execrable	Therefore, the repurposing of the

	Multimedia Chorus	the press) is repurposed to function as a choral commentary on a work, then it can illuminate the narrative in unexpected ways.	press” becomes a choral anti-strophe—sometimes like a parrot chorus or a Gothic horror chorus—that illuminates the entire novel.	press as a multimedia chorus adds an unusual, if reeky, layer of commentary to the work.
8	Divergent Critical Reactions as a Mark of Greatness	If a work causes critics of very different dispositions to see themselves reflected in it—even if they label it dismal, dishonest, sordid, or morally bankrupt—then it has achieved a universal resonance.	The review observes that dismal, dishonest, sordid, and morally bankrupt critics all claim the work reflects their own views.	Therefore, the fact that various critics see themselves in <i>THE WHITE HOUSE TRANSCRIPTS</i> is a mark of its greatness.
9	Originality and Unsettled Reality	If a work raises profound questions about reality without settling them, then it embodies an open-ended and stimulating creative vision.	The review states that <i>THE WHITE HOUSE TRANSCRIPTS</i> raises (but does not settle) the question “What is reality?” and is described as innovative, seminal, and spookily universal.	Therefore, the work’s unresolved inquiry into reality contributes to its originality and creative depth.
10	Moral Dimension and Its Controversy	If a work is a genuine morality novel that upholds a robust, though battered, morality in a context where few alternatives exist, then it will provoke strong reactions from those who claim “Morality is Dead.”	The review explains that <i>THE WHITE HOUSE TRANSCRIPTS</i> has a “battered but entrenched” morality—the only morality in American novels for a long time—which infuriates the “Morality is Dead” nation that accuses it of immorality.	Therefore, the work’s strong moral dimension is both its defining feature and the source of controversy.

11	The Role of the Introduction and Its Weakness	If an introductory piece does not meet the overall quality standards of a work, then it detracts from the work's overall presentation.	The reviewer criticizes R.W. Apple's introduction as "silly," suggesting it weakens the overall presentation.	Therefore, the introduction by R.W. Apple is a notable flaw in the otherwise strong work.
12	Overall Evaluation and Recommendation	If a work, despite its structural oddities and uneven contributions, offers significant entertainment, innovative presentation, and genuine moral inquiry, then it merits recommendation to readers.	The review concludes that <i>THE WHITE HOUSE TRANSCRIPTS</i> is a serious, important, and significant Heroic Comedy that is innovative and technically sound—and the reviewer urges readers to buy and read it.	Therefore, despite its imperfections, <i>THE WHITE HOUSE TRANSCRIPTS</i> is recommended as a valuable and engaging work of Science Fiction.

“Review: *Sioux Trail*”

Overview

In his review of *Sioux Trail* by John Upton Terrell, Lafferty emphasizes the book's exploration of all the Sioux tribes through history and pre-history. It highlights how Terrell outlines various cultures (such as Folsom and Hopewell) that may have contributed to future Sioux identities. The book's narrative “tour” moves from tribes that vanished to those still vibrant, ultimately returning to the most “essential” Sioux, the Dakota Sioux—particularly the Teton and their Oglala subgroup. The review stresses that these people symbolize the unalloyed essence of “Indianness,” pointing to famous figures like Red Cloud and Crazy Horse. Finally, the reviewer recommends the book to both dedicated “Indian buffs” and newcomers alike.

Summary

Lafferty says that *Sioux Trail* is “an essential book” because it sifts through “a cloud of derivatives” and uncovers the essential nature of Sioux history. It describes the book as “an outline of all the Sioux Indian tribes in all their ages.” It then notes that this work does not match the energetic style of *APACHE CHRONICLE* or other books by John Upton Terrell, partly because its tables and résumés dampen the narrative liveliness. Nevertheless, these tables are said to be “handy.”

The reviewer explains that Terrell presents a “fair case” connecting the Folsom, Cochise, Hopewell, Indian Knoll, Effigy Mound, and Radin cultures to peoples who either were or became Sioux. This pre-history portion carries a “crisp” characteristic of most pre-history. Lafferty asserts that doubts and difficulties begin with “the real history” of the last three hundred years or so.

Next, the narrative is shown to move “inward from the fringes” of the more “traveled” and “mixed” Sioux tribes, converging on “the center where are found the stubborn and fundamental peoples of the Dakota Sioux.” The review describes a “tour” of “the old Sioux who traveled to their extinctions” across a dozen present-day states, followed by a tour of tribes who traveled just as far but survived, such as the Poncas, Omahas, Kaws, Quapaws, and Osages. These groups, referred to as “mixed-blood Indians,” are noted for their “hybrid vigor” in spirit and intellect; they have college degrees, ballerinas, authors in book clubs, and painters featured in the Smithsonian. They are described as Sioux Indians who navigate “two worlds.”

The tour then “ends pretty much where the Sioux began,” focusing on the essential Sioux of the “Yankton and Samtee and Teton branches,” collectively termed Dakota Sioux. The reviewer states that the Tetons are “probably the most essential” branch, and within them the Oglala represent the distilled core of the culture. These individuals are said to be “as Indian as it is possible to be,” having refined out all “foreign matter.” They exist in the present tense of their history, representing the war-bonnet Indians and iconic figures of Indian-head nickels, with names such as Red Cloud, Smoke, Man-Afraid-of-his-Horse, Sitting Bull, and Crazy Horse.

Concluding, the review calls *Sioux Trail* a “good tour,” urging those with an interest in American Indian history to read it. It insists that even those not already interested should “become” Indian buffs in order to appreciate the material.

(APACHE CHRONICLE), (Cochise), (Crazy Horse), (Dakota Sioux), (Effigy Mound), (Folsom), (Hopewell), (Indian Knoll), (John Upton Terrell), (Kaws), (Man-Afraid-of-his-Horse), (McGraw-Hill), (Oglala), (Omahas), (Osages), (Poncas), (Quapaws), (Radin), (Red Cloud), (Samtee), (Sioux Trail), (Sitting Bull), (Smoke), (Teton), (Yankton)

NO.	TITLE	MAJOR PREMISE	MINOR PREMISE	CONCLUSION
1	Essential Nature of the Book	If a work successfully works through a cloud of diverse derivatives and distills them into an essential core, then it is an essential book.	The review states that “Sioux Trail” works through a cloud of derivatives and arrives at an essence—providing an outline of all the Sioux Indian tribes in all their ages.	Therefore, “Sioux Trail” is essential because it distills diverse historical elements into a coherent outline of Sioux history.

2	Coverage of Sioux History	If a work outlines the entire span of a people—from pre-history to recent history—then it provides a comprehensive tour of that culture.	“Sioux Trail” outlines both the pre-history (Folsom, Cochise, Hopewell, Indian Knoll, Effigy Mound, Radin cultures) and the real history of the Sioux tribes over the past three hundred years.	Therefore, the book offers a comprehensive tour of Sioux history across all ages.
3	Impact of Structural Devices on Narrative Livelihood	If the inclusion of tables and résumés makes a narrative less lively yet provides practical information, then the work will have a trade-off between liveliness and utility.	The review notes that while the tables and résumés in “Sioux Trail” inhibit narrative verve, they are nonetheless handy.	Therefore, the book sacrifices some narrative liveliness for practicality.
4	Pre-History as the Crisp Foundation	If the pre-history of a people is marked by a crisp, unaltered quality, then that portion of the narrative remains distinct from recent history.	The review states that the part of Sioux history touching on Folsom, Cochise, Hopewell, and other ancient cultures “carries the crisp of most pre-history.”	Therefore, the pre-history portion of the book has a clear, distinct quality compared to later, more complicated historical periods.
5	Narrative Progression from Fringes to Center	If a narrative moves from the more traveled, mixed margins toward the stubborn, fundamental core, then it follows a journey from peripheral to essential elements.	“Sioux Trail” works inward from the fringes of the more mixed Sioux tribes to the center, where the fundamental peoples of the Dakota Sioux reside.	Therefore, the book’s narrative is structured as a journey from the peripheral to the essential aspects of Sioux culture.
6	Diversity Among Sioux Tribes	If a work includes both extinct and surviving groups, as	The review describes a tour of Sioux tribes—some	Therefore, the book reflects the wide diversity among

		well as those of mixed blood and modern adaptation, then it demonstrates the full diversity of a people.	that traveled to extinction in a dozen states and others (e.g., Poncas, Omahas, Kaws, Quapaws, Osages) that persisted and flourished as modern Indians.	Sioux tribes, from extinct remnants to those living in two worlds.
7	The Centrality of the Dakota Sioux	If a narrative concludes by returning to the most fundamental, essential branch of a people, then that branch represents the purest form of that culture.	The tour ends with the essential Sioux of the Yankton, Samtee, and Teton branches—especially the Tetons, with the Oglala tribe singled out as most essential.	Therefore, the most authentic or “pure” Sioux are those of the Dakota Sioux, particularly the Oglala, which serve as the narrative’s center.
8	Pure Essence of Sioux Identity	If the essential identity of a people is that which is stripped of all foreign admixture, then the purest form is one that is refined like oil.	The review asserts that the central Sioux are “as Indian as it is possible to be”—the oil of Indian with all its foreign matter refined out, represented by figures like Red Cloud, Sitting Bull, and Crazy Horse.	Therefore, the core Sioux identity is presented as the pure, unadulterated essence of Indian culture.
9	Overall Evaluation and Recommendation	If a work offers a comprehensive, essential, and well-structured tour of a people’s history, then it is an invaluable resource for enthusiasts of that culture.	The review concludes by affirming that “Sioux Trail” is a good tour and that if you are an Indian buff, you cannot pass it up; if you are not, then you should become one.	Therefore, “Sioux Trail” is highly recommended as an essential and comprehensive resource on Sioux history.

APACHE CHRONICLE: A historical account by John Upton Terrell, published in 1972, detailing the history and culture of the Apache people.

Cochise: (c. 1805–1874) A prominent leader of the Chiricahua Apache during the 19th century, known for his resistance against Mexican and American expansion into Apache territories.

Crazy Horse: (c. 1840–1877) A renowned Oglala Lakota war leader who played a key role in the resistance against U.S. federal policies, notably participating in the Battle of the Little Bighorn in 1876.

Dakota Sioux: A group of Native American tribes comprising one of the three main divisions of the Sioux people, primarily residing in the northern plains of the United States.

Effigy Mound: Earthen mounds constructed in the shapes of animals or symbols by Native American cultures, particularly prevalent in the Upper Midwest of the United States between 600 and 1200 AD.

Folsom: Refers to the Folsom tradition, a Paleo-Indian archaeological culture that existed approximately 10,000 to 8,000 BCE, known for their distinctive fluted projectile points.

Hopewell: A pre-Columbian Native American culture that flourished from about 200 BCE to 500 CE in the east-central area of North America, recognized for their construction of elaborate earthworks and extensive trade networks.

Indian Knoll: An archaeological site in Kentucky, representing a shell midden from the Archaic period (3000–2000 BCE), notable for its extensive burials and artifacts.

John Upton Terrell: (1900–1988) An American author known for his works on Native American history, including *Sioux Trail* (1974) and *APACHE CHRONICLE* (1972).

Kaws: Also known as the Kaw or Kansa, a Native American tribe originally from what is now Kansas, belonging to the Siouan language family.

Man-Afraid-of-his-Horse: (c. 1806–1889) A notable Oglala Lakota chief during the 19th century, recognized for his leadership and diplomatic skills.

McGraw-Hill: An American publishing company established in 1888, known for educational and professional publications; the publisher of John Upton Terrell's *Sioux Trail* in 1974.

Oglala: A subgroup of the Lakota Sioux Native American tribe, primarily associated with the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota.

Omahas: A Native American tribe of the Siouan language family, originally from the Ohio River Valley and later migrating to what is now Nebraska.

Osages: A Native American tribe of the Dhegihan Siouan stock, historically located in the Ohio Valley and later migrating to the present-day Missouri and Arkansas regions.

Poncas: A Native American tribe of the Siouan language family, originally residing along the Niobrara River in Nebraska.

Quapaws: A Native American tribe of the Dhegihan Siouan-speaking peoples, historically settled in the Arkansas River area.

Radin: Paul Radin (1883–1959), an American anthropologist and ethnologist known for his studies of Native American languages and cultures.

Red Cloud: (1822–1909) A prominent Oglala Lakota chief who led a successful campaign, known as Red Cloud's War (1866–1868), against the United States military in the Powder River Country.

Samtee: Likely a misspelling of Santee, referring to the Santee Sioux, a division of the Dakota Sioux comprising the Mdewakanton, Wahpekute, Wahpeton, and Sisseton bands.

Sioux Trail: A comprehensive history of the Sioux tribes authored by John Upton Terrell, published in 1974 by McGraw-Hill, covering their origins, culture, and historical movements.

Sitting Bull: (c. 1831–1890) A Hunkpapa Lakota leader and holy man who played a significant role in resisting U.S. government policies, notably at the Battle of the Little Bighorn in 1876.

Smoke: (1774–1864) An Oglala Lakota chief during the mid-19th century, known for his leadership and efforts to maintain peace among the Lakota bands.

Teton: Also known as the Teton Sioux or Lakota, the westernmost division of the Sioux tribes, comprising seven bands including the Oglala, Hunkpapa, and Brulé.

Yankton: A division of the Dakota Sioux, consisting of the Yankton and Yanktonai tribes, traditionally residing in the region that is now southeastern South Dakota.

“The Case of the Moth-Eaten Magician”

Overview

Lafferty contrasts two fundamental types of people—those fixated on themselves and those who

look outward at the world—then applies this distinction to science fiction (SF). He traces the origins of SF from magazine pulp days under Hugo Gernsback, through John W. Campbell's editorship, and onward to later developments like *Galaxy* and *Fantasy and Science Fiction*. Along the way, he criticizes many so-called "Golden Age" writers for producing formulaic, backward-looking work, yet acknowledges that some authors do inject genuine wonder into the genre. He highlights SF's unique capacity to juggle multiple "categories" of thought and even bridge the gap between art and science, while lamenting the persistent "moth-eaten" failures that plague much of it. Ultimately, he expresses cautious optimism that, despite its flaws, SF can still deliver the authentic magic readers crave.

Summary

Lafferty begins by saying that there are "two kinds of Science Fiction" but that one kind is incomprehensible to Lafferty. It then generalizes that "there are two kinds of people in the world," differentiating between those concerned only with themselves and those who focus on the world and its contents. Lafferty remarks that some self-oriented people command cult followings despite offering a "universe with only one person in it." He distinguishes these categories from "introvert" and "extrovert," asserting that self-centered people highlight themselves from both internal and external viewpoints, whereas outward-looking people examine the world both objectively and subjectively.

He states that he belongs largely to the outward-looking group, describing his clumsy qualities—such as struggling with a simple right-face in the Army and never learning to whistle—and his lifelong excitement with the larger world. He asserts that the difference between self-centered and world-centered individuals underlies everything, including SF.

Moving to science fiction specifically, he characterizes his favorite SF moments as "planet-falls," or the sensation of arriving on a new world, comparing that sense of discovery to exploring Earth daily. He praises Earth's complexity and "superior fauna" of humankind, calling it "more delightful than all tribbles and fuzzies." He also mentions that Earth contains real dangers and "ghostly levels," which bring an element of spookiness and multi-layered aliveness to life itself.

He discusses how "social complexity" and "industrial complexity" are part of Earth's condition, dismissing the notion of "pure nature" as too limiting. He compares different forms of human communication—electronic media, the arts, and language itself—to "conversations" that belong intrinsically to nature. Among these forms is SF, a "favorite 'conversation'" for certain people.

He poses questions about what science fiction is and where it might be going. To illustrate how difficult it is to define SF, he cites items from Troy Gordon's column in the *Tulsa World*—including humorous "eternal truths" about fat dogs and large biscuits, a cannibal joke involving Texans, and Glenn Ford's wife's anecdote about omelet-flipping—as a lead-in to the idea that it's "even harder to clean SF than to clean a Texan."

He then describes a letter he supposedly wrote to “Brad Balfour” about language and the difficulty of explaining “SF” to an alien from “Ganymede.” The alien breaks down the roots of “Science” (from *scire*, “to know”) and “Fiction” (from *figere*, “to shape”), ironically noting that “fact” and “fiction” share the same sense of “something made.” The alien also notes that “SF” can stand for “Science Fantasy” or “Speculative Fiction,” but this yields even more puns about “watched pots” and “mirrors.” Eventually, Lafferty admits the Ganymede detail was a “hook” to make the anecdote seem like SF, revealing the friend was actually from Jenks, Oklahoma.

Next, Lafferty summarizes prior attempts at defining SF: *Hugo Gernsback* emphasized “scientific fact and prophetic vision,” *Peter Haining* described SF’s diverse content (time travel, alien beings, catastrophes, etc.), and *Mirra Ginsburg* called SF “a literature of play” ranging widely over topics like man’s relationship to himself and others. Yet, Lafferty says these definitions overlook the vital elements of “excitement” and “wonder.”

He references *Adventures In Time And Space*, an influential anthology by *Healy and McComas*, as a title that hints at SF’s essential excitement about dimensions like time and space. He then credits the ancient Greek thinker *Zeno* for introducing paradoxes of time, space, and motion, calling *Zeno* and *H.G. Wells* the “real father figures” of SF, with all other contributions being “commentary.”

Lafferty explores how “wonder stuff” can manifest in SF: time travel, world-building, weird biology, ghostly phenomena, and so on, all emanating from those same paradoxes. It notes that the “moth-eaten magician” of pulp SF was born in the 1920s in the United States—particularly in New York—through small magazines, referencing *Hugo Gernsback* and magazines like *Amazing Stories*, *Science Wonder Stories*, and *Weird Tales*. Although the covers and occasional reprints (e.g., *Poe*, *Verne*, *Wells*) hinted at magic, the inside content was often dull or substandard.

Lafferty explains his own background, describing his Irish-American ancestry and rural upbringing in Iowa and Oklahoma, mentioning that he missed early pulp SF because he mainly read classic works in good books and magazines rather than purchasing the “gaudy” newsstand periodicals. He references authors like *Poe*, *Verne*, *Dunsany*, *Wells*, *Bierce*, *Chesterton*, *Mary Shelley*, *Bram Stoker*, and *Machin* (presumably *Arthur Machen*), all predating or parallel to SF but not labeled as such.

He revisits *Gernsback’s* magazines, concluding they had covers superior to their contents and compares them to a bumbling “moth-eaten magician” who never quite performs real magic. Nonetheless, glimpses of magic occasionally appeared, especially through older writers or reprints.

He then recounts the rise of *Astounding Stories of Super Science Fiction*, launched in 1930, edited by *John W. Campbell* starting in 1938. This was deemed the “Golden Age of Science Fiction,” featuring writers like *Van Vogt*, *Heinlein*, *Asimov*, *Sturgeon*, and others, but Lafferty calls it “fraudulent,” contending that *Campbell’s* strong personality imposed a rigid, backward-looking approach on his writers, stifling genuine creativity.

After criticizing the so-called Golden Age for its “pomposity,” “fascism,” and “secular liberal premises,” Lafferty points to a “Little Golden Age” that began around the same time and extended through the emergence of *Galaxy* (edited by Horace Gold) and *Fantasy and Science Fiction* (edited by Anthony Boucher and McComas). He highlights good novels like *Canticle for Leibowitz* (by Walter M. Miller Jr.), *The Stars My Destination* (by Alfred Bester), *More than Human* (by Theodore Sturgeon), *Rogue Ship* (by A.E. van Vogt), and *Childhood's End* (by Arthur C. Clarke). He singles out Cordwainer Smith, J.G. Ballard, and Arthur C. Clarke as special “treats.”

The essay affirms that while 95% of SF might be lackluster, the remaining 5% can be magical and luminous. The “moth-eaten magician” can occasionally perform real feats and repeatedly resurrects itself despite attempts at strangulation by various commercial or editorial forces. Lafferty began writing in 1959, with his first stories appearing in 1960, and expresses the belief that his own work is good, though it sells poorly.

He broadens the discussion, calling SF “mostly a literature of kids and for those with the hearts of kids,” but laments that some SF “boy wonders” are senile from the start. He deems SF unadventurous in real science, behind on literary experimentation, but insists it remains a worthwhile pursuit—comparing it to jazz for its “subdivided and subordinate accents.”

He acknowledges two big negatives: “inferior pornography” creeping into SF and the contrived “apotheoses” of certain grand figures. He recounts attending a ceremony at the Muehlebach Hotel in Kansas City around 1976, where *Robert Heinlein* was celebrated in a manner akin to deification, complete with a near-expectation that the “Hand of God” would appear from the ceiling panel. When the panel stuck, it resulted in an awkward, “bad show.”

He lists major SF people—some as writers, some as personalities—and claims that among them, “guys with beards all write alike.” Lafferty jokes that this couplet alone covers 60% of SF authors. He says the rest can be told apart only by small quirks in style.

He notes that recent SF has regressed to “1946” due to editors like *del Rey*, *Silverberg*, and *Pohl*, but hopes the field will recover. Ultimately, he praises SF’s ability to serve as a “bridge” between two cultures—artistic/humanistic and scientific/technical—and to foster enjoyment. He encourages readers to pick out the “nuggets,” leave the “coprolites,” and glean the rare wonders SF can provide. Returning to jokes about large sacks of flour and cannibal recipes, he ends on an optimistic note: “We make new worlds, we make new skies.”

(Adventures In Time And Space), (Aldous Huxley), (Amazing Stories), (Ambrose Bierce), (Anthony Boucher), (Arthur C. Clarke), (Asimov), (Astounding Stories of Super Science Fiction), (Ballard), (Bellamy), (Bester), (Bierce), (Brad Balfour), (Bradbury), (Bradley M.Z.), (Bram Stoker), (Brian Clarke), (Brunner), (Buffalo Bill), (C.S. Lewis), (Campbell), (Capek), (Carr), (Chesterton), (Childhood's End), (Claude Smith), (Clio), (Cordwainer Smith), (Doctor's Dilemma), (Don Marquis), (Dunsany), (E.E.

Smith), (Edward Ellis), (Ellison), (Fantasy and Science Fiction), (Farfetched Fables), (Farnsworth Wright), (Galaxy), (Ganymede), (Glenn Ford), (Healy and McComas), (Heinlein), (Horace Gold), (Hubbard), (Hugo Gernsback), (J.G. Ballard), (Jenks, Oklahoma), (John Dos Passos), (John W. Campbell), (Kafka), (Kansas City), (Lafferty), (Le Fanu), (Leroux), (Lord Dunsany), (Machen), (Mary Shelley), (McComas), (Muehlebach Hotel), (Nick Carter), (Niven), (Olaf Stapledon), (Oliver Onions), (Poe), (Pournelle), (Rogue Ship), (Ron Hubbard), (Rossum's Universal Robots), (Rube Goldberg), (Shaw), (Silverberg), (Speculative Fiction), (Spinrad), (Star Trek), (Stapledon), (Sturgeon), (Tulsa), (Tulsa World), (Verne), (Walter de la Mare), (Weird Tales), (Wells), (Zeno).

SYLLOGISM NAME	PREMISE 1	PREMISE 2	CONCLUSION
A1: TWO KINDS OF SF	Lafferty says there are two kinds of Science Fiction, but he ignores one type that he cannot understand.	Any subject dividing into two kinds leads him to disregard the unappealing or incomprehensible kind.	Lafferty focuses only on the kind of SF he actually understands and enjoys.
A2: TWO KINDS OF EVERYTHING	Lafferty believes “there are two kinds of almost everything.”	SF merely follows this universal pattern of “two sorts.”	Therefore, SF is not unique; it also divides into two distinct forms.
B1: DIVISION OF PEOPLE	There are people who only care about themselves (“self-oriented”).	There are people who truly care about the world around them (“world-oriented”).	Humanity splits into these two fundamental categories.
B2: SELF-ORIENTED NOT ALWAYS IGNORED	Self-oriented people have “no real interest in others.”	Typically, you would expect others to ignore them—but paradoxically, these self-absorbed individuals often attract cult followings.	Hence, self-centeredness can become contagious or charismatic, even though Lafferty finds it baffling.
B3: SELF-ORIENTATION VS. INTROVERSION	“Introvert” and “extrovert” are superficial labels.	A self-oriented person may admire themselves internally and spotlight themselves outwardly.	Self-oriented vs. world-oriented is a deeper distinction than introvert vs. extrovert.
B4: WORLD-ORIENTED PERSPECTIVE	A world-oriented person sees external reality in both objective and subjective modes.	Lafferty identifies as world-oriented, having affection for external	World-orientation = genuine love of external things plus a personal lens.

		reality but no grand exaltation of himself.	
B5: ANONYMITY VS. EGOCENTRICITY	Self-centered people reduce anonymity by promoting themselves.	World-oriented people contribute to what anonymity remains in society.	Thus, we lack anonymity in part because so many people focus on themselves; the modest folks keep anonymity alive.
B6: EVERYTHING EXPRESSES ITS MAKER	Each person (self- or world-oriented) expresses that orientation in their creations.	SF, like all fields, therefore contains “two kinds” shaped by the creators’ different outlooks.	Hence, SF also splits into two categories reflecting the two human orientations.
C1: SF AS “PLANET-FALL”	Lafferty sees “great moments of SF” in the theme of arriving on new worlds.	Earth itself is always partially unexplored, giving a daily planet-fall experience.	SF’s wonder can mirror our constant sense of discovery in real life.
C2: DAILY EXPLORATION	Earth is “more than ninety percent unexplored” by each individual.	Humans have a “compulsion” to keep exploring this intricate, alive planet.	Our planet is effectively a daily SF setting, providing endless novelty.
C3: FRIENDLY, COMPLEX WORLD	Earth is a “masterwork,” full of complex phenomena, living beings, “spirits of the earth,” and social/industrial intricacies.	The word “happening” etymologically contains the notion of “happy,” implying constant delight.	The daily “planet-fall” is an ongoing source of wonder, paralleling SF’s essence.
C4: NATURE IS MIXED/IMPURE	Nature includes “impure” combinations of social, industrial, and ghostly/spiritual layers.	From these layers arise our arts, technologies, and literatures, including SF.	SF is not “apart” from nature; it is an extension of nature’s complexity.
C5: SF AS A “CONVERSATION”	Literature—including SF—is a “conversation” or “encoding” implicit in	SF appeals to an “anomalous minority” who particularly love its imaginative outlook.	SF is a natural outgrowth of human expression that resonates

	nature (like oak leaves implicit in an acorn).		deeply with certain readers.
D1: SF DEFIES SIMPLE DEFINITION	Lafferty asks, “What is science fiction? Where is it? Why is it?”	It is “harder to come up with eternal truths about SF” than about almost anything else.	SF resists neat definition, remaining elusive and multifaceted.
D2: EXISTING DEFINITIONS MISS THE MAGIC	Critics define SF as “prophetic vision,” “adventures in space/time,” or “a literature of play.”	All leave out the essential excitement, wonder, and magical spark at SF’s core.	Therefore, mainstream definitions fail to capture SF’s crucial sense of awe.
D3: TIME AND SPACE VS. WIDTH AND BREADTH	“Adventures in Time and Space” suggests real excitement.	“Adventures in Width and Breadth” would be dull.	SF’s special allure is tied to paradoxical aspects of time/space, fueling its wonder.
E1: ZENO AS FATHER OF SF	In the 4th–3rd century BC, Zeno formulated “Paradoxes of time, space, and motion.”	H.G. Wells, 22 centuries later, used the same paradoxes in defining SF’s definitive wonder fictions.	Zeno’s paradoxes + Wells’s “wonder stuff” = the true core of SF.
E2: EVERYTHING FITS THE PARADOXES	SF’s “uncanny creatures,” world-building, time travel, supernatural auras, and ghostliness all mirror or extend time/space paradoxes.	The magic in SF emerges from these foundational paradoxes “from the beginning.”	Thus, all wonder in SF stems from these original “enabling paradoxes.”
F1: 1920S AMERICAN SF	In the 1920s, Hugo Gernsback launched magazines (Amazing Stories, etc.) calling them “science fiction.”	This form “homesteaded” the SF concept, claiming ownership and shaping early perceptions.	Early American “scientifiction” took SF out of the public domain into a narrow, pulp context.
F2: PATCHWORK INFLUENCES	These pulps drew on comic strips, silent movies, reprinted classics, youth radio-gadget culture.	They formed a “cranky group” around big-city neighborhoods, forging a new but uneven genre.	1920s SF was an eclectic, urban patchwork rather than a purely literary evolution.
F3: GERNSBACK’S POOR CONTENT	Gernsback’s magazines had flashy covers and	Even future-good authors (e.g., Leinster)	The foundation magazines

	reprints of Verne/Wells/Poe, but original material was “shoddy.”	wrote subpar pieces under Gernsback’s editorial constraints.	delivered little genuine quality in their original stories.
F4: THE “MOTH-EATEN MAGICIAN” METAPHOR	Lafferty likens early SF magazines to a “moth-eaten magician,” failing trick after trick yet retaining a rumor of magic.	People (often young) kept hoping for real wonders inside those pulps because the covers and occasional reprints promised it.	Early SF sustained interest via illusions of magic, despite generally disappointing results.
F5: RARE GENIUSES WITHIN	The “genial cousin” metaphor stands for legitimate masters (Verne, Wells, Poe, Kafka, Shaw, Huxley, etc.) who sometimes appeared in reprints or influenced SF.	Their genuine magic reassured fans that SF might yet produce wonders.	The real artistry overshadowed the pulps’ mediocrity but also fueled fans’ optimism.
F6: LABEL DEVALUATION	Calling a work “science fiction” often lowered its prestige relative to similar works not so labeled (e.g., Shaw’s plays, Capek, etc.).	The pulps’ low standards created a stigma that bled into more literary works akin to SF.	Hence, the SF brand ironically degraded good material by association with shoddy pulp.
F7: COVERS VS. CONTENT	Those old magazines had “gaudy, garish” covers promising wonders.	The inside content rarely matched that grandeur, forcing readers into “self-hypnosis” if they kept hoping.	Early fans likely experienced repeated disappointment but kept yearning for the rumored magic.
G1: BIRTH OF ASTOUNDING & CAMPBELL	Astounding Stories began in 1930 with E.E. Smith and John W. Campbell among contributors.	Campbell became editor in 1938, launching the “Golden Age” of SF.	One magazine’s editorial shift profoundly shaped mainstream American SF for decades.
G2: GERNSBACK VS. CAMPBELL AS “DISASTERS”	Brian Aldiss calls Hugo Gernsback “one of the worst disasters” to hit SF.	Lafferty argues John W. Campbell was an even “worse disaster,” shaping	Campbell’s dominance, in Lafferty’s view, stifled creativity

		SF into a rigid, pompous form.	even more than Gernsback's.
G3: CAMPBELL'S "PROGRAMMED" WRITERS	Under Campbell, authors like Van Vogt, Heinlein, Asimov, Sturgeon, etc. all "wrote the same," lacking original personalities.	Lafferty suspects Campbell extracted their brains, or they succumbed to his strong personality.	The so-called "Golden Age" was a uniform, derivative set, "plain obscene" for having no real substance.
G4: POMPOSITY & TEDIUM	Campbell imposed "advocacy science," "secular liberalism," "fascism," and "pomposity" on these authors.	They produced formulaic, out-of-date science and "third-rate fiction," which ironically became popular.	Thus, success was possible through the "Campbell program," but it was artistically stultifying.
H1: POST-CAMPBELL MAGAZINES	Other editors started new venues: Galaxy (Horace Gold), Fantasy and Science Fiction (Boucher/McComas), plus many more.	These magazines allowed greater creativity outside Campbell's "authoritarianism."	A "Little Golden Age" of more diverse and occasionally brilliant SF emerged.
H2: BETTER SF NOVELS	Works like A Canticle for Leibowitz , The Stars My Destination , More Than Human , Rogue Ship , Childhood's End showed a higher level of craft.	Not all were "great" novels, but they stood above pulp formula.	Mid-century SF gained legitimacy via more ambitious storytelling.
H3: CORDWAINER SMITH, BALLARD, CLARKE	Lafferty names these three as especially "magical" or "elegant" contributors within the evolving SF scene.	Though fleeting, such sparks kept SF interesting and fresh.	Real wonder flourished sporadically, proving SF could be high art.
H4: THE "LITTLE GOLDEN AGE"	This improved era was "thinner" in raw percentage (only ~5% truly good), but the best works were genuinely excellent.	Consequently, the "moth-eaten magician" redeemed itself by occasional regenerations of real magic.	SF can succeed if one extracts the gems—these scattered wonders justify the genre's existence.

I1: LAFFERTY'S OWN UPBRINGING	He grew up reading Poe, Verne, Wells, etc., from good books/magazines rather than pulp newsstands.	He never encountered the big-city SF mania.	Thus, he did not imbibe the pulp tradition early on and feels he missed little.
I2: NO EARLY PULP EXPOSURE	Lafferty discovered the "classics" of weird/fantasy without hearing of "science fiction" as a labeled genre.	The local environment (rabbits in the streets, no big city "asphalt subculture") insulated him from pulps.	He avoided typical SF-fan experiences—no stunted or misguided teenage mania.
I3: LATE WRITING START	Lafferty began writing SF in 1959 at age 45.	Though he published from 1960 on, his sales and audience remained small, despite a devoted cult following.	His unorthodox background plus niche appeal limited his commercial success.
I4: NICHE APPEAL	Selling SF requires tens of thousands of fans to break even.	Lafferty can only find a few hundred "wonderful" loyalists who champion his work wholeheartedly.	He remains a cult figure, never crossing into mainstream popularity.
J1: SF'S HIGH FAILURE RATE	SF "promises more than it delivers," claiming magic and wonder.	Wonder is "rare and hard to come by," so 19 out of 20 SF attempts fail.	Even with a high failure rate, the successful 1 in 20 justifies SF as a "modified success."
J2: CHILDLIKE AUDIENCE	SF is largely "a literature of kids" or those with childlike enthusiasm.	Some "boy wonders" in SF become prematurely senile, recycling stale ideas.	Kid-energy can yield magic (true wonder) or yield childish drivel, depending on maturity.
J3: NOT FORWARD-LOOKING	SF is seldom truly futuristic; it tends to be behind real science (e.g. Wells was a generation outdated).	Writers also push "stale fascism" or "backward viewing," lacking actual innovation.	SF's "futurism" is often an illusion or marketing angle, not a real forward leap.
J4: ACTUAL SCIENTIST-	Most SF authors do not practice real, cutting-edge science.	Only a few (Hoyle, Clarke) had legitimate	True scientific expertise in SF is uncommon, so

AUTHORS ARE RARE		scientific chops and also wrote fiction well.	“scientific” aspects are often superficial.
J5: FANS VS. PROFESSIONALS	SF fans (often younger, open-minded) may be more discerning than many “professional” authors.	This phenomenon occurs in other popular arts too.	In SF, the audience often holds equal or greater insight than the creators.
J6: BEHIND MAINSTREAM LITERARY TECHNIQUES	SF lags behind main-line fiction in stylistic innovation, e.g., “New Wave” was 50 years behind Joyce/Proust.	So, despite claims of radical novelty, SF is rigid and conservative in form.	SF rarely leads formal experimentation; it mostly plays catch-up.
J7: SF IS STILL “AS GOOD AS” OTHER GENRES	Despite these failings, SF stands on average “as good as any other literature,” often better.	SF excels in “fine detail” and “subdivided subtleties,” akin to jazz’s intricate syncopations.	Thus, SF’s unique texture compensates for its lag in certain respects, making it valuable.
J8: THINKING IN MULTIPLE CATEGORIES	Hilaire Belloc says “genius is ability to think in different categories.”	SF folks (fans, writers) handle multiple perspectives—scientific, imaginative, literary.	This mental flexibility is a hallmark of SF’s audience and creators.
J9: INFERIOR PORN IN SF	Modern SF is sometimes marred by “trail of the serpent” syndrome (poorly done pornography).	This porn is “sub-teen,” with no humor or genuine adult insight, so it ruins anthologies/magazines.	SF plus bad porn yields an awkward mismatch, driving away intelligent readers.
J10: APOTHEOSES & CEREMONIAL HYPE	SF occasionally stages overblown tributes to authors (e.g., Heinlein’s “Godlike” ceremony in 1976).	Lafferty calls these “fulsome, tedious” events akin to Roman Emperor worship.	Such squalid apotheoses degrade SF with bombastic hero-worship.
K1: THE HEINLEIN BANQUET	In Kansas City, 1976, a massive ceremony lauded Heinlein with multi-hour tributes, culminating in an expected “Hand of God” moment.	The ceiling panel stuck; no divine hand emerged, making it “bad show.”	Lafferty deems it “the lowest moment in SF history,” turning Heinlein into a God in a farcical manner.

K2: ELEVATED TO GODHOOD	Heinlein was pronounced “one of the Gods,” pushing “fascism-for-boys,” in Lafferty’s view.	This coronation overshadowed rational criticism or nuanced appreciation of his work.	Lafferty mocks the event as a misguided attempt at Roman-style deification of a mediocre figure.
L1: LISTING MAJOR SF NAMES	Lafferty enumerates dozens of SF writers (Asimov, Bradbury, Ellison, Zelazny, etc.) as the “people who matter.”	Claims he left no one out; these are the significant voices (some for personality, some for writing).	Contemporary SF can be mapped to these authors, though not all are equally talented.
L2: “GUYS WITH BEARDS”	~60% of SF authors listed have beards.	“They prove the rule of Mike and Ike / That guys with beards all write alike.”	Lafferty humorously lumps them together, implying they’re indistinguishable.
M1: DRAGGED BACK TO 1946	SF is being returned to an older, staler approach championed by editors like del Rey, Silverberg, Pohl.	This reversion is “no accident” but suits these gatekeepers’ preferences.	As a result, SF’s forward momentum is stalled, recycling the year 1946’s mindset.
M2: PROFIT IN REVERTING	A man who bought 100k 1946 art calendars has “got it made” if 1946 returns.	Those who cling to old SF forms do well when the market backslides to outdated modes.	SF’s regression to 1946 arises from editorial or commercial agendas, not nostalgia.
N1: SF AS BRIDGE OF TWO CULTURES	C.P. Snow lamented the gap between “arty/literary” and “scientific/technical” cultures.	SF often unites these worlds, giving them a shared arena.	SF can serve as a “foot-bridge” rejoining the lively arts and the lively sciences, restoring them as “musics.”
N2: SF’S PRACTICAL VALUE	SF can “move mountains,” entertain a special group, and unify cultures.	It appeals to those who appreciate imaginative multi-view thinking.	Hence, SF is indeed “good for something,” bridging a cultural divide and

			delighting open-minded readers.
N3: PICK UP NUGGETS, NOT COPROLITES	SF is filled with worthless lumps (“coprolites”) and precious gems (“nuggets”) in close proximity.	Readers must learn to select carefully.	One can find great riches in SF by sifting out the dross.
O1: “500-POUND IDEA” TRUTH	“It takes a very fat idea to weigh 500 pounds, especially in SF.”	SF typically deals in small or recycled ideas, rarely hitting truly enormous conceptual weight.	This ironically underscores how big, profound ideas are quite rare in the genre.
O2: “100-POUND SACK OF FLOUR”	A 100-pound sack can yield “one short story or two tall stories.”	SF premises can be compressed or inflated from the same basic ingredients.	Lafferty’s humor points to how SF often over- or under-expands its ideas.
O3: CANNIBAL HUMOR	Cannibals in the anecdote say they eat SF people “all we can get,” with each brain containing oddities.	SF folks vary in flavor but remain “tasty” in their strangeness.	This highlights SF’s unpredictability and bizarre charm, even to “outsiders.”
O4: THROW-UP OMELET METAPHOR	Glenn Ford’s wife’s quote about “throwing up” an omelet and catching it in the pan is likened to pre-digested SF ideas.	Much SF rehashes worn ideas—“slurry”—though it is less common now.	SF is improving, gradually reducing the fraction of half-digested, derivative notions.
O5: WE MAKE NEW WORLDS	Despite all criticisms, Lafferty affirms “We are the special guys. We make new worlds, new skies.”	SF’s fundamental power is to create entire realities, capturing wonder and possibility.	This imaginative strength justifies SF’s continued existence and ensures its resilience.
P1: MOTH-EATEN MAGICIAN THESIS	The essay’s entire message is that SF repeatedly fails but occasionally succeeds, fueled by paradox and wonder.	Most definitions miss SF’s true magic; many influences warp or degrade it.	Nonetheless, SF remains valuable, bridging cultures and providing real enchantment for

			those who seek its gems.
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Adventures in Time and Space An anthology of science fiction stories edited by Raymond J. Healy and J. Francis McComas, first published in 1946. It is recognized as one of the finest early anthologies from the Golden Age of Science Fiction.

Amazing Stories The first American science fiction magazine, founded in 1926 by Hugo Gernsback. It played a significant role in popularizing the science fiction genre.

Ambrose Bierce: (1842–circa 1914) An American writer known for his satirical and macabre short stories, including "An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge." He disappeared in Mexico around 1914 under mysterious circumstances.

Alfred Bester: (1913–1987) An American science fiction author, best known for *The Demolished Man* (1953) and *The Stars My Destination* (1956).

Anthony Boucher: (1911–1968) An American author, editor, and critic, co-founder of *The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction* in 1949. He was influential in the development of science fiction and mystery genres.

Arthur C. Clarke: (1917–2008) A British science fiction writer and futurist, best known for *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968), developed concurrently with Stanley Kubrick's film adaptation.

Brad Balfour: A journalist and interviewer known for his work in entertainment and pop culture journalism.

Bram Stoker: (1847–1912) An Irish author best known for his Gothic novel *Dracula* (1897), which has become a cornerstone of vampire literature.

Brian Clarke: A British artist and architectural stained glass designer, born in 1953, known for his innovative work in stained glass and large-scale installations.

C.S. Lewis: (1898–1963) A British writer and scholar, renowned for his *The Chronicles of Narnia* series (1950–1956) and works on Christian apologetics.

Childhood's End: A science fiction novel by Arthur C. Clarke, published in 1953, depicting a peaceful alien invasion that ushers in a utopian age on Earth.

Cordwainer Smith: Pseudonym of Paul Myron Anthony Linebarger (1913–1966), an American author known for his science fiction works, particularly *The Instrumentality of Mankind* series.

Don Marquis: (1878–1937) An American humorist, journalist, and author, best known for creating the characters Archy and Mehitabel.

E.E. Smith: (1890–1965) An American science fiction author, known for his *Lensman* and *Skylark* series, pioneering the space opera subgenre.

Edgar Allan Poe: (1809–1849) An American writer, poet, and critic, credited with inventing the modern detective story and significantly influencing horror and science fiction. Notable works include *The Fall of the House of Usher* and *The Tell-Tale Heart*.

Edward Bellamy: (1850–1898) An American author and journalist, best known for his utopian novel *Looking Backward: 2000–1887* (1888), which envisioned a future socialist society.

Edward Ellis: (1840–1916) An American author who wrote dime novels, including *The Steam Man of the Prairies* (1868), considered one of the earliest science fiction works featuring a mechanical man.

G.K. Chesterton: (1874–1936) An English writer and philosopher, recognized for his Father Brown detective stories and his apologetic works in defense of Christianity.

George Bernard Shaw: (1856–1950) An Irish playwright, critic, and political thinker. *The Doctor's Dilemma* (1906) critiques medical ethics and the limits of human altruism.

H.G. Wells: (1866–1946) A British writer and one of the pioneers of science fiction, known for *The Time Machine* (1895) and *The War of the Worlds* (1898).

Harlan Ellison: (1934–2018) An American writer known for his prolific work in speculative fiction, including "I Have No Mouth, and I Must Scream."

Hugo Gernsback: (1884–1967) A Luxembourgish-American inventor, writer, editor, and publisher. He founded the first science fiction magazine, *Amazing Stories*, in 1926, and the prestigious Hugo Awards are named in his honor.

Isaac Asimov: (1920–1992) A prolific American author and biochemist, renowned for his works in science fiction and popular science. He is best known for his *Foundation* series and *Robot* series.

J.G. Ballard: (1930–2009) A British author known for his dystopian novels and short stories, including *Crash* (1973) and *Empire of the Sun* (1984), the latter based on his childhood experiences in a Japanese internment camp.

Jules Verne: (1828–1905) A French writer often considered one of the founders of science fiction, known for *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea* (1870).

Karel Čapek: (1890–1938) A Czech writer who introduced the word "robot" in his play *R.U.R.* (*Rossum's Universal Robots*) (1920), exploring themes of artificial life and automation.

Larry Niven: Born in 1938, an American science fiction writer known for *Ringworld* (1970) and his contributions to hard science fiction. He frequently collaborated with Jerry Pournelle.

L. Ron Hubbard: (1911–1986) An American pulp fiction writer and founder of Scientology. Before establishing Scientology, he was a prolific author in science fiction, fantasy, and adventure pulp magazines.

Lord Dunsany: (1878–1957) An Irish writer and dramatist, known for his early fantasy works and influence on later writers such as J.R.R. Tolkien.

Marion Zimmer Bradley: (1930–1999) An American author of fantasy novels, notably *The Mists of Avalon* (1983), a retelling of Arthurian legends from the perspectives of female characters.

Norman Spinrad: Born in 1940, an American science fiction writer known for *Bug Jack Barron* (1969) and his satirical, politically charged novels.

Robert Silverberg: Born in 1935, an American science fiction writer and editor, known for *Dying Inside* (1972) and *The Book of Skulls* (1972). He played a key role in the New Wave movement.

Rossum's Universal Robots: A 1920 play by Czech writer Karel Čapek that introduced the word "robot" to the world. The play explores themes of artificial intelligence, labor, and rebellion.

Rube Goldberg: (1883–1970) An American cartoonist, best known for his satirical illustrations of overly complex mechanical devices designed to perform simple tasks.

Theodore Sturgeon: (1918–1985) An American science fiction writer, known for *More Than Human* (1953) and for coining "Sturgeon's Law"—"90% of everything is crap."

Weird Tales: An American pulp magazine first published in 1923, specializing in horror, fantasy, and early science fiction.

Zeno of Elea: (c. 490–430 BCE) A Greek philosopher known for his paradoxes, which challenge notions of motion, space, and time. Lafferty credits Zeno as one of the intellectual forerunners of science fiction.

"That Moon Plague"

Overview

Lafferty comments on two contrasting inscriptions for the 1969 Moon landing, comparing the actual plaque's positive, unifying sentiment with a proposed version by I.F. Stone that casts a harsh, all-encompassing indictment on humanity. Lafferty highlights the Moon landing as a pinnacle of human achievement, describing it as the "highest and cleanest material thing ever accomplished." It goes on to argue that Stone's indictment is unfair, since humanity, though flawed, continually strives to improve itself. Lafferty cites the notion that man may be an "animal that rose" or an "angel that fell," but remains a creature that progresses through setting goals and accomplishing them. Finally, Lafferty invokes Chesterton's verse about faith in mankind, suggesting that while some may lose that faith, most people do not.

Summary

Lafferty opens with the heading "That Moon Plaque," referencing the statement actually placed on the Moon in July 1969. The writer presents the real plaque's wording: "HERE MEN FROM THE PLANET EARTH FIRST SET FOOT UPON THE MOON JULY 1969 WE CAME IN PEACE FOR ALL MANKIND."

Next, it introduces I.F. Stone's alternative proposal, which reads: "HERE MEN FIRST SET FOOT OUTSIDE THE EARTH ON THEIR WAY TO THE FAR STARS. THEY SPEAK OF PEACE BUT WHEREVER THEY GO THEY BRING WAR. THE ROCKETS ON WHICH THEY ARRIVED WERE DEVELOPED TO CARRY INSTANT DEATH AND CAN WITHIN A FEW MINUTES TURN THEIR GREEN PLANET INTO ANOTHER LIFELESS MOON. THEIR DESTRUCTIVE INGENUITY KNOWS NO LIMITS AND THEIR WANTON POLLUTION NO RESTRAINT. LET THE REST OF THE UNIVERSE BEWARE."

The commentary then states that the actual Moon landing represents more than a milestone—calling it a "star-stone on the way"—and labels it humanity's "highest and cleanest material thing ever accomplished." It remarks that the official wording was "fortunate and valid," whereas I.F. Stone's proposed inscription is not.

The writer contrasts these two statements as exemplifying "the two minds of mankind," noting that Stone's version amounts to a "total indictment of mankind" which the writer calls dishonest. Lafferty acknowledges that humans may be considered "an animal that rose or an angel that fell," yet insists that people often rise above their baser nature and are "improved by the added aspect" of achieving set goals, such as the Moon landing.

Continuing, Lafferty observes that humanity, "always divided, often at war," does not remain in those states entirely, for it is "tenuously united in only one faith," a faith in mankind. It quotes a line referencing Chesterton's words from Corinthians to address I.F. Stone's skepticism, suggesting that failures in faith should be seen as exceptions rather than the rule. Lafferty concludes that this faith "does not fail in most."

(Chesterton), (Corinthians), (I.F. Stone), (That Moon Plaque), (Washington)

I. The Official Moon Plaque

1. "That Moon Plaque"
2. Full Plaque Text
 - A. "HERE MEN FROM THE PLANET EARTH FIRST SET FOOT UPON THE MOON"
 - a. "JULY 1969 WE CAME IN PEACE FOR ALL MANKIND"

II. I.F. Stone's Proposed Plaque

1. Context of Suggestion
 - A. I.F. Stone, a political commentator, writing in his Washington newsletter
 - a. Introduces Stone's recommended text
2. The Proposed Text (Verbatim)
 - A. "HERE MEN FIRST SET FOOT OUTSIDE THE EARTH ON THEIR WAY TO THE FAR STARS. THEY SPEAK OF PEACE BUT WHEREVER THEY GO THEY BRING WAR."
 - a. "THE ROCKETS ON WHICH THEY ARRIVED WERE DEVELOPED TO CARRY INSTANT DEATH..."
 - i. "...AND CAN WITHIN A FEW MINUTES TURN THEIR GREEN PLANET INTO ANOTHER LIFELESS MOON."
 - b. "THEIR DESTRUCTIVE INGENUITY KNOWS NO LIMITS AND THEIR WANTON POLLUTION NO RESTRAINT."
 - i. "LET THE REST OF THE UNIVERSE BEWARE."

III. Evaluation of Both Plaques

1. Significance of the Moon Landing
 - A. The moon-landing as "more than a mile-stone, a star-stone on the way"
 - a. Described as "the highest and cleanest material thing ever accomplished"
 - i. The official plaque is "fortunate and valid," while Stone's is "not"
2. The "Two Minds of Mankind"
 - A. One mind expresses "goal and accomplishment" and "faith in man"
 - a. The other is "a compendium of all the tired and stereotyped dishonesties"
 - i. "For Stone's total indictment of mankind is a dishonesty."

IV. Reflections on the Dual Nature of Man

1. Question of Man's Origin

- A. "Whether man is regarded as an animal that rose or an angel that fell (very compromised beginning)"

2. Why the "Total Indictment" Fails

- A. Man rises above his "bestial or diabolical underlay"
 - a. He improves by "setting up goals and then reaching them"
 - i. The moon-landing as a concrete example
 - (a) "Mankind is improved by the added aspect that comes with this."

V. Chesterton's Verse and Conclusion

1. Mankind's Persistent Dissatisfaction with Dissolution

- A. "Always divided, often at war, most often dissolute..."
 - a. Yet he is never satisfied to remain in these states
 - i. United by "only one faith... the faith in man"

2. Failures and the Chesterton Quotation

- A. Verse addressed "to a bigger man who often busted badly"
 - a. Chesterton's lines referencing Corinthians:
 - i. "There's a great text in Corinthians... Yet in you, perhaps, it fails."
 - (a) Suggesting that something never faileth
 - b. Final Affirmation: "But it does not fail in all, and it does not fail in most."

"True Believers"

Overview

Lafferty says he is not a "True Believer" in Science Fiction and only partly so in Fantasy. He argues that many fans treat Science Fiction with an intensity that borders on false religion, pointing out that 95% of it is unconsciously comic yet taken far too seriously. The writer warns that "True Believers" may react violently if someone laughs at their cherished genre. Ultimately, Lafferty criticizes the "rancid seriousness" and "intensity for the sake of intensity" that dominate much of modern Science Fiction. Throughout, it underscores the idea that genuine belief should be reserved for ultimate realities, rather than for what Lafferty deems mere "toys."

Summary

Lafferty opens with Lafferty stating that, concerning Science Fiction, he is not a “True Believer,” and in the case of Fantasy, he considers himself only about ten percent a true believer. Next, Lafferty explains he respects “True Believers” solely with regard to real and ultimate things, not in what he refers to as “toys.” Lafferty then notes that “True Believers” in such toys hate Lafferty if they truly understand their position. After this, Lafferty claims that while more than half of humanity may not believe in ultimate realities, only about five percent of Science Fiction People hold any genuine belief in what is real.

Continuing, Lafferty characterizes most Science Fiction as serving as a surrogate “True Belief,” deliberately drained of truth. He says it amounts to a false religion lacking dimension. Lafferty then notes that all science fiction is comic, with five percent consciously so and ninety-five percent unintentionally so, but remarks that laughing at the unintentionally comic portion of the genre can invite danger from these “True Believers.” Lafferty further asserts that most Science Fiction takes itself seriously in a grotesque manner, driven by intensity for its own sake—akin, they say, to loudness or pomposity for its own sake. Finally, Lafferty concludes by mentioning that such intensity, seriousness, and hatred are popular but should not be.

(Fantasy), (Science Fiction), (Science Fiction People), (True Belief), (True Believers (Prose Statement))

I. Science Fiction

1. **Sentence 1**
 - A. "As to Science Fiction"
 - a. Speaker's stance: "I am not a “True Believer”."
2. **Sentence 2**
 - A. "As to Fantasy"
 - a. Degree of belief: "no more than ten percent true believer."
3. **Sentence 3**
 - A. Scope of respect: "I respect only “True Believers” on the real things"
 - a. Real things listed: "eschatologies," "ultimates," "basics"
 - b. Emphasis: Only these fundamentals matter for true belief.
4. **Sentence 4**
 - A. Rejection: "I do not respect the “True Believers” in toys."
5. **Sentence 5**
 - A. Hostility from "True Believers" in toys: "hate me completely"
 - a. Condition: "when they really know what I am."
6. **Sentence 6**
 - A. Comparative belief scope: "more than half of mankind does not believe in the ultimates"

and basics"

B. Statistical note on SF People: "less than five percent have any belief at all in what is real."

7. **Sentence 7**

A. Definition: "Science Fiction is ... a surrogate "True Belief""

a. Percentage: "for ninety-five percent of the people who indulge in it"

b. Key phrase: "in things from which the truth has been carefully removed."

8. **Sentence 8**

A. Additional characterization: "It is a "True Belief" in a false religion"

a. Quality: "one without dimension."

II. Science Fiction II

1. **Sentence 1**

A. Statement: "All science fiction is comic."

2. **Sentence 2**

A. Proportions: "Five percent ... consciously comic"

B. "ninetyfive percent ... unconsciously comic."

3. **Sentence 3**

A. Warning: "to laugh at the often very funny ninetyfive percent of it is to be put in mortal peril."

4. **Sentence 4**

A. Threat: "The "True Believers" would kill us if they could"

a. Possibility: "and perhaps they can."

III. Science Fiction III

1. **Sentence 1**

A. Critique: "Most Science Fiction takes itself seriously"

a. Judgment: "which is grotesque."

2. **Sentence 2**

A. Core trait of seriousness: "Intensity is a characteristic of this inexcusable seriousness."

3. **Sentence 3**

A. Intensity for its own sake: "on par with loudness for the sake of loudness ..."

a. Equated with: ugliness, pomposity, phoniness, hatred, tedium

i. Each is singled out as negative for its own sake.

4. **Sentence 4**

A. Trend: "rancid seriousness, intensity, loudness, ugliness, pomposity, phoniness, hatred and tedium are all presently red-hot items in the market place."

5. **Sentence 5**

A. Final verdict: "But they should not be."

NO.	TITLE	MAJOR PREMISE	MINOR PREMISE	CONCLUSION
1	Lafferty's Stance	If one respects only those who hold true belief in fundamental, real matters (eschatologies, ultimates, basics) rather than in trivialities ("toys"), then one will distance oneself from superficial adherents.	Lafferty declares he is not a "True Believer" in Science Fiction and is only about ten percent a true believer in Fantasy; he respects only True Believers in the real things and disdains those in toys.	Therefore, Lafferty values genuine belief in fundamental realities and deliberately rejects superficial, toy-like belief systems.
2	The Prevalence of Superficial Belief in SF	If less than a small fraction of a community holds belief in what is truly real, then the majority are clinging to a substitute belief system.	Lafferty states that less than five percent of Science Fiction people have any belief in what is real, so for ninety-five percent, SF is a surrogate "True Belief" in a false religion from which the truth has been removed.	Therefore, most people in SF embrace a false, surrogate belief system rather than a genuine belief in reality.
3	The Nature of Science Fiction as Comic	If all of a genre is inherently comic in its expression, then its humorous aspects are built into its very fabric.	Lafferty asserts that all Science Fiction is comic—five percent is consciously comic, and ninety-five percent is unconsciously comic.	Therefore, humor is an inherent characteristic of Science Fiction.
4	The Danger of Laughter in SF	If laughing at a work's humor provokes the ire of its True Believers to the point of lethal hostility, then such laughter is dangerously provocative.	Lafferty warns that laughing at the often very funny, unconscious 95 percent of SF may put one in mortal peril because the True Believers would kill us if they could.	Therefore, indulging in the humor of SF may be perilous due to the extreme fanaticism of its True Believers.
5	The Problematic Seriousness in SF	If a genre takes itself seriously for its own sake—manifesting intensity, loudness, ugliness, pomposity, phoniness, hatred, and	Lafferty criticizes most Science Fiction for taking itself too seriously, equating intensity for its own sake with other	Therefore, the excessive seriousness in SF is a fundamental flaw that undermines its inherent comic nature.

		tedium—then it displays a self-defeating and grotesque quality.	negative qualities that are currently “red hot” in the marketplace, though they should not be.	
6	The Contrast Between Genuine and Superficial Belief	If genuine belief in the ultimates and basics is rare and valued, then the predominance of surrogate belief in SF indicates a serious deficiency.	More than half of mankind does not believe in the ultimates, and less than five percent of SF adherents believe in what is real, leaving most to adopt a false religion devoid of true dimension.	Therefore, the prevalence of superficial, surrogate belief in SF highlights a major deficiency in genuine faith among its followers.
7	Overall Critique of the SF Culture	If a cultural field is dominated by a false belief system that takes itself overly seriously and obscures the truth, then that field is fundamentally in error.	Lafferty argues that Science Fiction, for ninety-five percent of its practitioners, is a “True Belief” in a false religion, characterized by excessive seriousness and a surrogate nature that has removed the truth.	Therefore, the overall culture of Science Fiction is fundamentally flawed, dominated by superficial belief and unwarranted seriousness.

The Audifaxes

I. KICK THAT PIGEON (November 1989)

1. Context and Primary Communication

A. Date and Location

- a. Dated “November 1989,” referencing “October 16, 1989” in Tulsa, OK
- b. Addressed to “Son of The Great Pagoda Insurance Company,” c/o Warren Brown (1223 S. Evanston Ave., Tulsa)

B. Purpose of the Letter

- a. Urges the publication to adopt the CAUSE: “National Kick-A-Pigeon Day”

- b. Credits Troy Gordon (late Tulsa World columnist) for first promulgating the idea
 - c. Seeks to memorialize Troy Gordon's cause, treating him as a "martyr"
- 2. Characters and Supporters
 - A. Troy Gordon (Deceased Columnist)
 - a. Said to have introduced "National Kick-A-Pigeon Day" concept
 - b. Allegedly died of heartbreak when idea failed to catch on
 - B. Science Fiction Activists who once supported the cause
 - a. John Steakley of Granbury, TX
 - i. Famous quote: "You're sure there's no dues to this?"
 - b. Rosemary Swift of Norman, OK
 - i. Concerned about kicking gamecocks because "They kick back with spurs."
 - c. Connie Willis of Greeley, CO
 - i. "I always liked to kick pigeons. I'm glad others out there share my perversion in this."
 - d. Patrice Duvic of Orsay, France
 - i. "Sure, I'll support it, whatever it is, but I don't have any idea what you're talking about."
 - e. Peggy Ann Dolen of Miami, FL (University of "Miama")
 - i. Follows her "like pigeons"
 - C. Mike McQuay ("Father of Us All")
 - a. Refuses to join because he can't see a profit in it
- 3. Events and Proposed Action
 - A. Lafferty's Push for "Kick-A-Pigeon Day"
 - a. Suggests each Science Fiction convention worldwide declare Saturday as "National Kick-A-Pigeon Day"
 - b. Urges more participants to join, seeking voices of varying vocal ranges
 - B. Audition at Warren Brown's Address
 - a. People can come day or night
 - b. The comedic notion of "crying in the wilderness"
 - C. Assertion of Being a Small Number of Voices
 - a. "We are no more than a small number of voices crying in the wilderness."
 - b. Hopes a few more voices can make the cause universal
- 4. Notable Quotes and Minor Asides
 - A. "Every great publication ... must have a CAUSE to push."
 - B. "Troy died suddenly and much too young."

- C. "I always believed that he died of a broken heart at the failure of his great idea..."
 - D. "We will be heard! This grand idea must come to fruition!"
- 5. Micro-Details and Comedic Tones
 - A. Emphasis on "CAUSE" and "MARTYR"
 - B. Lighthearted guilt-tripping about Troy's death
 - C. Running gag of pigeon-kicking as outlandish crusade

II. FABULOUS MORALITY (January 1990)

- 1. Letter Setup and Address
 - A. Headed "Fabulous Morality (January 1990), Tulsa, OK, November 13, 1989"
 - a. Mailed to "Son of GPIC (OSFW), c/o Warren Brown"
 - B. R.A. Lafferty (or "Audifax" in some signatures) asks if the publication prints moral fables
- 2. Main Content: "Determination – A Moral Fable"
 - A. The Flood Scenario
 - a. A frightened driver tries to get through rising floodwaters
 - b. Finds an old man, his son, daughter-in-law, and three children on a roof
 - B. Rescue and the Lucky Seven
 - a. Old man throws a lifesaver to the driver and pulls him onto the roof
 - b. Family is stuck at the roof's peak overnight
 - C. The Grandfather's Action
 - a. Grandfather insists on going underwater in the morning to mow the lawn
 - b. Bubbles appear where he disappears
 - D. The Felt Hat and its Odd Movements
 - a. Old man's disreputable hat spotted floating downstream
 - b. Then it is seen moving upstream—explanation: "He said he was going to cut the grass this morning come hell or high water."
- 3. Characters within the Fable
 - A. The Frightened Driver (Narrator-like role)
 - B. Old Grandfather in Felt Hat
 - a. Quirky, determined personality
 - b. Ignores the flood to pursue lawn-mowing
 - C. Son, Daughter-in-Law, and Three Children
 - a. Daughter-in-law unperturbed: "He doesn't like to be interfered with."

4. Notable Quotes
 - A. "We are so glad you came. You bring our number to Lucky Seven..."
 - B. "He doesn't like to be interfered with."
 - C. "Ah, it's just grandpa mowing the lawn."
5. Comedic and Moral Emphasis
 - A. The moral is "determination": do what you set out to do
 - B. Contrasts the dramatic danger of a flood with a whimsical lawn-cutting obsession

III. EQUIS/ICHTHYS (February 1990)

1. Introductory Note
 - A. Sent to "Son of GPIC (OSFW), c/o Warren Brown"
 - B. Subtitle: "Do you ever use Shaggy Horse Happenings?"
2. The Shaggy Horse Story
 - A. The Advertisement
 - a. Narrator sees an ad in the "Nifty Nickel": "Good riding horse for sale damned cheap."
 - B. Purchase from "Sam's Second-Hand Horse Store" on East Second Street
 - a. Horse is \$20; saddle (worth \$25) included for free
 - b. Seller warns: The horse has a "fixation" for grapefruits
3. Grapefruit Fixation and the Unexpected Twist
 - A. Horse Sits on Grapefruits
 - a. Developed the habit because it was foaled in Grapefruit County, Texas
 - B. The Fish Discovery
 - a. Lafferty rides the horse through a shallow stream
 - b. Horse abruptly sits down—turns out it also sits on fish
 - C. Returning the Horse
 - a. Narrator demands a refund
 - b. Sam exclaims: "I forgot to tell you that he sits down on fish too."
4. Quirky Characters
 - A. Lafferty (Buyer)
 - a. Eager for a bargain
 - b. Exasperated by the horse's odd behavior
 - B. Sam (Store Owner)
 - a. Comically honest about the horse's weird habit—after the fact

5. Minor Asides / Quotes
 - A. "You may never run into the situation."
 - B. "I'll take him!"
 - C. "There must have been a grapefruit somewhere."

IV. NO KIDDING (March 1990)

1. Purpose of the Letter
 - A. Lafferty offers an "ANNOTATED SELECTION OF THE GREAT SEMINAL JOKES OF THE WESTERN WORLD AND ONE HONG KONG JOKE"
 - B. Hints that it is a "scholarly study"
2. Joke Highlights
 - A. Doctor-Patient Exchange
 - a. "I keep getting stiff in the joints. Wottle I do?" / "Stay out of the joints."
 - B. "Get an unlisted ear" gag
 - C. Ethnic Pun: "Gas Station Attendant: 'Juice?' / Juice: 'Well, vat if ve is?'"
 - D. "She was only an oyster-shucker's daughter..." series of jokes
 - E. "Hey Joe, what did you name your new zebra?" / "Spot."
 - F. Knock-Knock: "Machiavelli" → "Mach ee a velly good suit..."
3. Offers to House a Joke Book Collection
 - A. 8512 joke books
 - B. "It sure does take up a lot of room, but it makes a good conversational item."
4. Minor Observations
 - A. Emphasis on pun-based humor
 - B. Comedic references to old monthly joke periodicals

V. OH HAPPY DOUBLE-JOINTED TONGUES! (April 1990)

1. Frame Narrative
 - A. By Major Audifax O'Hanlon (Unretired)
 - B. A "forty-five-year-old child" asks Audifax about WWII memories
2. Series of Soldiers' Tall Tales
 - A. Corporal Lonnie Sweetwater
 - a. Expects a brass band when he returns home
 - b. Hometown story: 11 instruments saved from a flood—everyone learned them in a

day

- B. PFC Adolf Marin
 - a. Claims a “North American Elephant” exists in Louisiana salt-water thickets
 - b. Elephant “Aunt Emma” writes letters for his wife in French “fanatic spelling”
- C. Sergeant Robert Graygoslin
 - a. East Tennessee “three-mile-wide ravine” story
 - b. Locals shoot bullets with messages into each other’s “right round”
- D. PFC Benedict Boudreau
 - a. Wife’s “technicolor rash” breaks out in future-dated newsprint, comics, and a rewriting of WAR AND PEACE
 - b. Believes “it looks like Napoleon is going to win” in her version
- 3. The Listener’s Reaction
 - A. The 45-year-old child can’t handle the endless tall tales
 - B. Leaves exclaiming he has enough material
- 4. Key Quotes
 - A. “If this thing is ever over with and I get home, there’ll be a brass band...”
 - B. “He sits down on fish too.” (Alludes to earlier comedic line but used here differently)
 - C. “It’s the biggest and survivingest land animal...” (re: North American Elephant)
- 5. Comedic Edge
 - A. Stories are absurd expansions of normal soldier banter
 - B. Contrasts “double-jointed tongues” with reality

VI. DEAR EDDY (April 1990)

- 1. Address and Tone
 - A. Letter to “Dear Eddy,” referencing prior mention in GPIC or OSFW contexts
 - B. Written by “Audifax O’Hanlon, Sr., Manager, K-Mart #412B”
- 2. Foot-Chewing and “Blue-Light Specials”
 - A. “So what’s wrong with a little foot chewing now and then?”
 - B. Ties comedic tension release to protein intake
 - C. Hints that Sam Walton started rumors about “blue lights” being alien mind control
- 3. Minor Throwaway Gags
 - A. “Not only is it a healthy way to release tension...”
 - B. “Come in and check out our scheduled Blue-Light Specials...”
 - C. “Channeling Kits” and “Solid-gold pigeon-kickers”

VII. LETTER FROM THE FIELD (May 1990)

1. Audifax as a “Triple Agent”
 - A. Writing from “Soviet Armenia” (possibly code)
 - B. Explains sending “coded messages” through the “Most Obscure Publication in America”
2. Danger of the Quadruple Agent
 - A. Refers to a deadlier foe who might kill him
 - B. If Warren Brown receives a sandalwood box of ashes, those are Audifax’s remains
3. Comedic Spy Context
 - A. Mentions “firebombed” prior obscure publication
 - B. Hopes to keep channeling these comedic espionage messages

VIII. LETTER FROM THE FIELD (June 1990)

1. Outcome of the Quadruple-Agent Battle
 - A. Audifax claims he “technically won” vs. “Moth,” who was already dead
 - B. Moth appears as a ghost, can assume forms of others
2. Ghostly Espionage Threat
 - A. Moth can impersonate anyone instantly, cause illusions and fear
 - B. Audifax uneasy about Moth “buzzing overhead”
3. Comedic Tone
 - A. “He’s having more fun with this than I am.”
 - B. “He can appear anywhere in the world.”

IX. HOPE SPRINGS ETERNAL (June 1990)

1. A Short Poem by Major Audifax O’Hanlon
 - A. Verses about imminent death vs. dawn’s promise
 - B. References the “Moth” overhead: “What fun you’ll have when you are dead!”
2. Contrast of Night and Day
 - A. Moon shining, speaker expecting to die
 - B. Rosy dawn suggests he might not be dead after all
3. Upbeat, Humorous Conclusion
 - A. “It may be I will live all day.”

X. JUST THE FAX (July 1990)

1. Three Comedic Vignettes
 - A. Telephone Cost-of-Living Survey
 - a. Ends with the "Callee" revealing: "I'm a goldfish."
 - B. Restaurant Rare-Steak vs. Well-Done-Steak Scene
 - a. Waitress uses a "steer warmed by the sun" trick so all steaks finish at same time
 - C. OKON Saturday Declaration
 - a. Announces "Saturday at the OKON, July 28, will be NATIONAL KICK-A-PIGEON DAY."
2. Humor Elements
 - A. Surprise punchlines (goldfish revelation)
 - B. Bizarre logic for cooking steaks
3. Minor Asides
 - A. References to "every SF convention in the world"
 - B. Recurring comedic push for pigeon-kicking day

XI. QUIXOTIC QUOTES (August 1990)

1. Setup
 - A. Addressed to Warren Brown, references comedic quotes/citations
 - B. R.A. Lafferty laments that Warren hides author names on a different page
2. Collected Quotations
 - A. John Maynard Keynes: "The answer to a column of figures depends on how fast you add it up."
 - B. Snorri Sturlson: "Ten thousand Swedes ran through the weeds..."
 - C. Sir William Blackstone: "He is not drunk who from the floor can rise again..."
 - D. Thomas Parke D'Invilliers (gold hat reference)
 - E. James Branch Cabell, William Shakespeare comedic out-of-context quotes
 - F. "Silver" rhymes: "You can hang it on the wall, paint it green, maybe it'll whistle."
3. Humor in Attributions
 - A. Shakespeare "silver" limericks about "lilver," "flilver," etc.
 - B. R.L. Stevenson adage about happiness
 - C. Fake or misapplied references

4. Request for Funding
 - A. "Four million dollars" needed to print the entire monstrous collection of quotes
 - B. "Put the names right after the quotations and not on some other dumb page."

XII. LETTER FROM THE (FARA) FIELD (September 1990)

1. Audifax in "Baghdad-Between-The-Rivers"
 - A. Continues comedic spy storyline
 - B. Has an audience with Saddam Hussein
2. Saddam Hussein's Methods
 - A. Asks Audifax only one one-word question: "Why?"
 - B. Breaks off Audifax's eyeteeth with giant tools for fun
 - C. Claims to scare other world leaders with illusions of giant spiders
3. Imprisonment
 - A. Audifax held in a "jasmine-level" sewer prison
 - B. Blood drips from the ceiling, continuous torment
 - C. Audifax screams for 36 hours
4. Plea for Rescue
 - A. Offers 1,000,000 Iraqi gold dinars to anyone who can get him out
 - B. "Help, help, help!"

XIII. RETURN FROM THE FIELD (October 1990)

1. Sudden Escape
 - A. Audifax reveals he was freed by someone's "simple but brilliant" idea
 - B. Rewards that unknown OSFW-GPIC member with 1,000,000 Iraqi gold dinars
2. The Newly Wealthy Mystery Person
 - A. The winner is a "she" from the group
 - B. She complains about not wanting the money's complications
 - C. Acquires a half-meter-wide spider "advisor"
3. Humor Elements
 - A. "You can always grow more eyeteeth" from the invisible whisper
 - B. Audifax states he's relieved to be rid of the fortune

XIV. LETTER FROM THE FIELD (November 1990)

1. Creation of a "Center for the Practice of Unworldly Philosophy"
 - A. On a five-acre plot in Tulsa, declared to be "part of the Absentee Shawnee Nation"
 - B. Audifax sets up a 50-ft beer barrel building with seven stories
2. Philosophical Precedents
 - A. Thales living in an eagle's nest, Theognis in a wooden tub, etc.
 - B. Ties comedic references to ancient philosophers' unusual dwellings
3. Planned Duration
 - A. Wanted to spend seven years in the barrel, but decides maybe just 49 days
 - B. Hopes to post wise quotations on the barrel
4. Motivational Quotes
 - A. "He never eats his own dog" (Heraclitus misquoted?)
 - B. "May onions grow from your navel" (Yiddish blessing)
 - C. "It has pleased your Father to give you a Kingdom" (Biblical reference)

XV. ROLL OUT THE BARREL (December 1990)

1. Official Opening of the Big Barrel (Nov 21)
 - A. Diogenes Pontifex arrives at midnight with Samson the Python and Roxie the Raven
 - B. They invoke the "Aloysius Shiplap Equation of Subjective Space" → Barrel has 500 doors
2. Crowd and Magical Expansion
 - A. Many "mansions" inside the barrel, forming a hive of unworldly philosophy
 - B. Splendid People move into these mansions instantly
3. Mayor Randle's Outrage
 - A. He can't see the barrel, believes it's a hoax
 - B. Threatens arrests; Roxie and Samson combine legal powers to file counter-suits
4. Humor Contrasts
 - A. Subjective geometry = bigger on the inside
 - B. "Homey place" for mass philosophical gatherings

XVI. COILS OF CULTURE (January 1991)

1. Samson Agonistes (the Python) as Author
 - A. Writes directly to Warren Brown
 - B. Poses philosophical questions about whether concepts can exist if no physical universe exists

2. Key Comedic Inquiry
 - A. Asks if “down-to-earth” questions can exist with no earth
 - B. Mentions space, time, matter, and whether “numbers” would exist if there’s nothing to count
3. Tone
 - A. Mild existential puzzle in comedic form
 - B. “If we snakes do not get our hour of sleep, we get cranky.”

XVII. THE FAX IS BACK (March 1991)

1. Audifax’s Attempt at Another Obscure Publication
 - A. Tried using “Pottawatomie County Sheep Herder’s Gazette” (2-copy circulation)
 - B. Met 12-year-old “impacted minority child” Susie Kalusy
2. The Riddle and Humbling
 - A. Susie outsmarts Audifax with the riddle: “What hangs on the wall, is green, and whistles?
A herring.”
 - B. She mocks him: “No, it doesn’t whistle, but two out of three isn’t bad.”
3. Return to GPIC/OSFW
 - A. Audifax concedes defeat
 - B. Determined that “obscurity isn’t everything.”

XVIII. FAX POPULI (April 1991)

1. “Best of the Month” Highlights by Audifax
 - A. Funny Tombstone: “William Henry (Slow) Poke—Ran over by a herd of rampaging snails.”
 - B. News of Halley’s Comet outburst calculations from ESO astronomers
 - C. SFWA membership notes for Bradley Sinor & Kathy Wentworth
2. Roxie Teaching Kids to Fly
 - A. She leads them to jump off a building chanting “I can fly!”
 - B. Some break their legs on hay bales below
3. Sammy the Snake Joins a PTA
 - A. “Boogerville District” membership accepted
 - B. No law states PTA members must be human

4. Susie's Move to Massachusetts
 - A. Lecturing at MIT on "Thirteen Kalusy Paradoxes in Riemann..."
 - B. Holding "breakfast seminars" on living a fun life

XIX. FROM THE AUDSIDE IN (May 1991)

1. Audifax as "Spokesman for Outsiders"
 - A. Considers himself, Susie, Roxie, Sammy all "outsiders"
2. Roxie's Feud Plans vs. Susie
 - A. Raven wants to prove she's younger and smarter; threatens to teach Susie to fly
 - B. "And if it doesn't work, that fat little girl will make a big splash."
3. Susie's Reply
 - A. Working on "the perfect sonnet," then dying at age 12
 - B. Admits a McDonald's boy found flaws in her Riemann geometry paradoxes
 - C. "I'm serious to get Roxie to teach me to fly."

XX. AUD LANG SYNES (June 1991)

1. Preparations for OKON
 - A. Audifax, Roxie, Sammy, Susie all plan to attend in disguise
 - B. Roxie wants a con-suite demonstration of children chanting "I can fly!"
2. Sammy's Disguise
 - A. Attempts walking upright on his tail
 - B. Wears a cloak with scarecrow arms, uses a British accent
3. Susie's Disguise Unknown
 - A. Possibly more out-of-body illusions

XXI. AUDITORY NERVE (July 1991)

1. Roxie Narrates Meeting Susie
 - A. Susie appears to "really fly" with loops and rolls
 - B. Roxie discovers it's an out-of-body trick: Susie's body remains on a bench
2. Susie's Reaction
 - A. "Who cares if it's an illusion? We can build a flying school on illusions!"
 - B. Roxie calls it "bogus," but Susie remains undeterred

XXII. BOLSHEYFAX (October 1991)

1. "Petrograd, Mother Russia" Setting
 - A. Audifax rebrands himself "Tsar Nicholas the Third, Grand Duke O'Hanlon"
 - B. Claims lineage from Tsar Nicholas II
2. Quirky Historical "Proof"
 - A. Says father is Prince Oleg (who married Claudine O'Hanlon)
 - B. Evokes the comedic notion that Tsar Nicholas I & II invented Santa Claus persona
3. Launch of a Comic Monarchy
 - A. Gains more than 300 followers, calls it a big joke "done with style"
 - B. Emphasizes giving "Grandeur and Opulence" to the Heartland of Europe

XXIII. SMESHNOIFAX (November 1991)

1. Formation of "Soviet Mnestrov" (Cabinet)
 - A. Roxie the Raven = "Korolevskia Koldunya" (Imperial Witch)
 - B. Susie Kalusy = "Knyazhna (Princess) Kalusie"
 - C. Samson Agonistes = "Graf (Count) Zhmeya"
2. Popularity as Comic Strip Characters
 - A. "Smeshnoi" = "comical," "funny"
 - B. Citizens in places like Vitebsk laugh uproariously, though Audifax can't see why
3. Ongoing Regal Comedy
 - A. Tsar Nicholas III / Audifax sees "thousands of followers"
 - B. The monarchy is enshrined in comedic newspaper strips

XXIV. HOPE SPRINGS ETERNAL (June 1990, Reprinted November 1992)

1. Reprise of the Same Poem
 - A. "The moon is shining full and bright, I feel like I will die tonight."
 - B. Repeated comedic sense of near-death vs. morning optimism
2. Final Upbeat Twist
 - A. "May be I'm not dead at all... I will live all day."

3. Reflective Coda

- A. The poem reappears as a gentle comedic/spiritual note
- B. Highlights "The Moth" as an overhead presence