

# The Book of Gold

THE BOOK OF GOLD # 2

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All contributions by the editor unless otherwise stated.  
All correspondence must be sent to the editor. This  
includes letters of comment (locs) and submissions to  
TBOG.

**Purpose.** TBOG is a fanzine largely devoted to Gene  
Wolfe and his works. It is not intended to be overly  
academic or serious, or to completely limit itself to  
wolverine matters. You think you can do better? Write  
me.

**Availability.** Copies are \$2 in stamps or money  
order, or 5 IRCs. Copies are (preferably) available for  
"the usual," i.e., a trade for your zine or a loc.

**Contributions.** I do welcome all contributions.  
Although the main theme of this zine is GW, I also  
include more general articles.

I use a number of abbreviations in the zine. Books get  
their words abbreviated to the first letter and capitalized:  
*The Soldier of the Mist* is SOTM, *Castle of the Otter* is  
COTO, etc.

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This issue dated June 1989.

## On the Front Cover.

There is shown a map of the battle of Salamis ("Peace"),  
in which the Greek forces decisively beat the invading  
Persians (about 8am, 16th September, 479BC).

Latro hears the story from Hyperides the leather  
merchant and captain of the *Europa* in Chapter VII of  
*Soldier of the Mist*. The map is taken from N.G.L.  
Hammond (1956) who says the battle was more famous  
in Greek history than the defeat of the Spanish Armada  
in English history (Simonides called it "that noble and  
famous victory").

The standard story is given in Plutarch (*Themistocles*)  
and Herodotus. When it had become clear that Xerxes,  
the king of Persia, was going to attack Athens, his people  
sent envoys to Delphi to ask for guidance (Hdt. 7:141).  
This was the famous "wooden wall" oracle, which ran, in  
part:

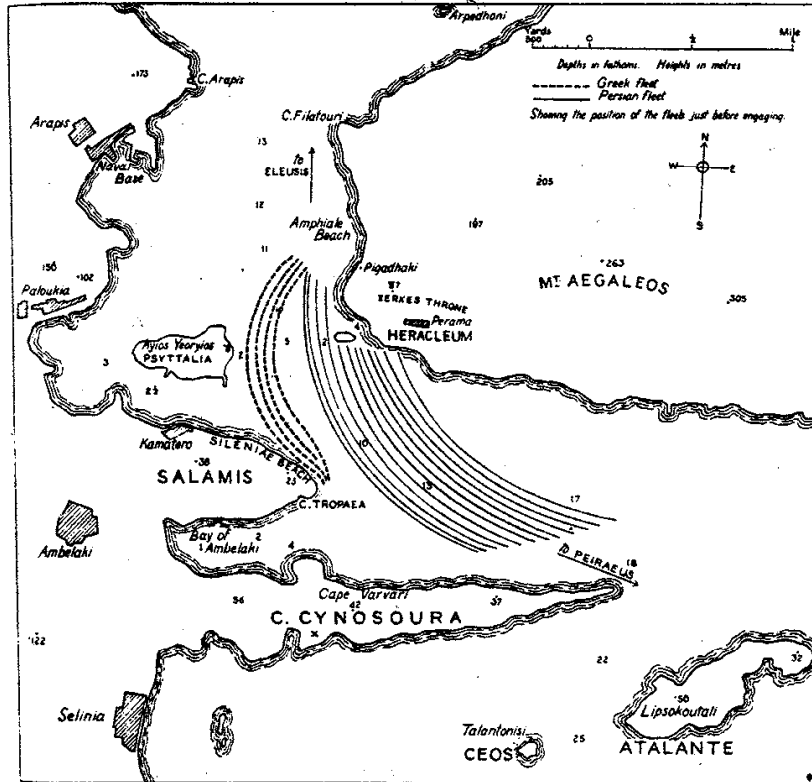
*Yet Zeus the all-seeing grants to Athens's prayer  
That the wooden wall only shall not fall,  
But help you and your children.*

While some Athenians thought the wooden walls referred  
to the Acropolis, Themistocles argued that it could only  
mean their ships. Whether this is right or not, it was  
good advice; the Acropolis was burned by the Persians,  
and the small number of dissenters guarding it killed.

Although the Persians had a contingent of Phoenician  
sailors, reputedly among the best in the ancient world,  
the straits of Salamis were too narrow for them to be  
effective. In addition, only a small part of the Persian  
fleet could engage at once. A larger Greek disadvantage  
was the respective size of the fleets; according to  
Hammond 1,207 Persian and 310 Greek. (Hyperides  
also claims there were more than a 1,000.) Themistocles  
sent a Persian POW (loyal to Athens) secretly to Xerxes  
telling him that Themistocles was ready to give up and  
that some Greeks (possibly Corinthians) were deserting  
(see chap. VII). Xerxes bought the story and landed  
men on Psyttaleia (Hdt. 8:78) who were later killed (Hdt.  
8:95) and also sent a contingent of ships around the  
other end of the island of Salamis. Then, in the battle at  
sea, with the Greek ships keeping formation against the  
disorganized Persians, a breeze swung the higher Persian  
ships round broadside on, and the lower Greek ships  
eagerly dashed in with their rams (Plutarch, *Themistocles*  
14). It is said that Xerxes watched the whole battle  
from his throne on the mainland, taking down the names of  
good fighters, and executing the poor ones (Hdt.  
8:90).

## Reference

Hammond, N.G.L. (1956). The battle of Salamis.  
*Journal of Hellenic Studies*, 76, 32-54.



No.

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## Editorial

An Offer.

Well, hello again folks, and welcome to the (de facto) biannual issue of TBOG. I apologize for its tardiness. To tell you the truth this is not a good issue. Oh, the articles here are fine; it is what is *not* here that isn't fine. Namely, more stuff from the readers. Look, I know what I think about Wolfe or whatever, or if I don't I'm at least there when I do (if you see what I mean). What I don't know is what you guys think. TBOG was originally conceived to air out these opinions, and its frequency and quality is going to be pretty highly related to the amount of input that I get. I know complaining about submissions is traditionally a fane'd job (second only to apologizing for tardiness of delivery), but in this case it's especially relevant. So I'll make a deal. Anybody sending in a news item or piece of information that gets used will get a free copy of the next TBOG. The same goes for articles or letters of course. I can't promise more than one issue, because that might be pushing the bounds of realism too much. And you get to see your name in lights (or at least laser print!)

The New Look.

Speaking of laser print, how do you like the new look? Our department has recently made available one of its LaserWriter® Plus printers to us lowly grad students. This enables me to choose font and point size (I use Times Roman 9 point for the text, TR Italic for subtitles, and a few others such as Bookman Light Italic for the cover, etc). And if you think that's a small point size, perhaps you'd like the 6 point of *Fact Sheet 3*? It lets me get more words per page (this issue has a lot more than #1 despite its reduced page count). All this has its costs and you will notice that TBOG is now \$2 an issue (unless you take advantage of the offer above).

Cyberpunk Redux.

One of the things that has happened to me since last time is getting my computer account. This allows me access to a number of things, not least of which is Usenet or newsgroups. This is a selection of some 450-odd newsgroups ranging from recreational to educational. Some of the ones I look at are sf-lovers, books, movies, Dr Who, rumors (did you know that the Mormons own both Coke and Pepsi? That's because they don't...), psychology, and sports (cricket and soccer). Ironically, there is also a cyberpunk group (mostly just white noise, occasionally interesting). Don't worry, I'm still ambivalent about technology as I hinted last time, in fact our site was recently responsible for a homophobic and racist message that was seen by an estimated 25,000 people around the world. And such a means of information dissemination offers plenty of chances for

indoctrination, control, and limited access (not at university? Sorry, no access). One of the interesting developments is the use of electronic media for distribution of fanzines. There are at least two on Usenet, OtherRealms (which also appears as a regular fanzine) and a shared world forum called Dargonzone. I have also come across SubGenius subscriptions, as well as more regular news summaries. OR is closest to being a traditional fanzine (the zine as well as its editor Chuq Von Rospach has been nominated for a Hugo), although it's mainly review oriented (i.e., not a fanish or perzine). Although we are nowhere near the "net" or cyberspace popular in some of our fiction these days, you can definitely get a feel for where these ideas come from. Paradoxically, although electronic communication of this sort is "instant," there have been very few things that I have first learnt from the nets. The things that come to mind are pretty "small" such as the cancellation of Bloom County, sporting scores, and the like. The most major event was someone telling me about the Sheffield soccer disaster. So we are not entering the world of corporate data structures and ICE just yet; and indeed our fiction is anyway turning toward "steampunk" (a droll term coined by K.W. Jeter in *Locusts*) or Victorian style locales. Technology is a tool, we are often told, and it's up to us to regulate it and use it wisely. Well, ok, but it's not a neutral thing. It's neither guns that kill people or people who kill people. It's people with guns who kill people.

News.

I have had requests to list all of the critical writings on Wolfe, information on *The Fifth Head of Cerberus* (see lettercol) and so on. I've been thinking about such a listing, but suspect that there's a lot more out there than I wot of. So here again I call upon the faithful readership to send me copies of interviews and critical pieces on Wolfe. More subscription extensions! To answer the more immediate question on *Cerberus*, the tapes I mentioned in #1 cover this as well as two interviews: one in Lane, D., Vernon, W., & Carson, D. *The Sound of Wonder* (1985) from Gryx Press; and one in *Weird Tales* (spring, 1988) with Daryl Switzer. Both of these cover things like the switch from the narrator to the abo in the last story (and whether it really happened). I would also recommend John Clute's *Strokes* to any serious wolverphile. And my offer to get you *Otter* for \$15 still stands (dollars only, no personal checks).

But perhaps the most exciting event is a forthcoming book of essays on Wolfe from Serconia Press. Edited by Clute, most of Wolfe's work will be discussed by a

collection of authors, including Nicholls, Greenland, Feeley (and me). If John ever replies to my letters, I'll even let you know the title!

As I said in the reprint edition, the news on the Lero books is not that great. As far as I know, the second, called *Soldier of Arete*, will be published this year, most likely sometime in June. I have read an advance copy, and, without giving anything away, it is possible that the series could go on. Wolfe has said in public that he would like to do more, and has been kind enough to tell me that the next would be called *Soldier of Sidon*. However, his publisher (Tor) is not obliged to buy it, which makes the writing of it a speculative business at best. And as of March 1989 it was not written. So the series will for now end with *Arete* (especially given that it's taken three years for the second to come out).

However, in the meantime we have a couple of new short story collections to read. A rather large collection, *Endangered Species* (Tor, \$19.95) gathers some of his previously uncollected stuff, including two stories set in the Urth framework, "The Map," and "The Cat." The former gives some insights into what happened to Esta, one of Severian's friends in the guild. Wolfe has taken to moralizing in introductions these days, sounding more and more like Greg Feeley's description of him as having both a crusty mien and being a redoubt of morality in fatuous times (not entirely admirable I must say, but a great description). The other I but mentioned last time, is *Stores From the Old World* (Kerosina, UK), which again collects little known (but not always small) stories. Some are "two-finger exercises" as the reviewer in *Interzone* noted, but you can't help liking them anyway. And there's a treat; I think Wolfe's funniest story ever, "The Rubber Bend," a Nero Wolfe pastiche. Nero Wolfe is a detective invented by Rex Stout. Fat and brilliant.

Stuff Received.

Thanks to all those who sent me stuff in exchange for TBOG. I can't mention them all here, but one of two things caught my eye. The first is a fanzine called *Fuck the Tories*, edited now by Joseph Nicholas and Judith Hanna in London, UK. From the title on down these folks exemplify (without quite knowing it) that spirit of cheekiness and tweaking of the noses of authority that the German author Sloterdijk calls *kynicism* (see *A Critique of Cynical Reason*). Not cynicism mind you, but a deliberately more positive attitude, that undermines those in power, resists marginalizations and has fun at the same time. The best piece this time is by Joseph Nicholas "On the Mall of Memories" (and was this really the same guy who theorized in a letter to *Interzone* that the cold war is responsible for the rise in fantasy...not techno-weenie hard sf, but *fantasy*! Yes, it was). Anyway, his visit to the US produces chills in all the right places, including a shifty-eyed John Tower promising to help out those fundamentalists if he's confirmed as Secretary of Defense. A close call indeed.

I also received the latest *Interzone* (May/June 1989) 'tho' that's because I subscribe (I'm not boasting but I have #1 lying around here somewhere...). This is the so-called "Sex Wars" issue, though exactly who they're warring against (it does imply that the sexes are warring) is not clear. Each story, male or female, is so PC I began to wonder which censor they'd passed. Their sentiments are admirable, but it was like cracking a nut with a sledgehammer. I don't know, perhaps it's just me, but I prefer things to be a bit more subtle, and not wear your morals so conspicuously on your sleeve. (It damages the story as well.) Still, *Interzone* is British (chauvinist!) and much better than its American counter-parts so it's worth buying. *Asimov's* I fear is declining after a brief resurgence under the editorship of Gardner Dozois--too much time on blockbuster anthologies, Mr Dozois? Not that I don't like them, myself. They're (*Interzone*) making a big deal out of their new distributor too, which puts them on the shelves of W.H. Smith's (compare Waldenbooks or B. Dalton's?) infamous for its past hostility to sf/mags.

*Lan's Lantern* is an odd zine. With special issues on Clarke and soon on Asimov it's like something from the 50s. Perhaps they're being unearthed from a time capsule from some 3rd fandom's back yard. If you want to go back in time to fandom at it's most innocent (and most uncritical) check it out.

The BSFA (British Science Fiction Association) is supposed to number me among their many members, but you'd never know it. I get more frequent and timely communications through the US postal service. (Just a little joke guys, don't tear up my zines.) I must say that *Vector* sure looks great though. Anyone want to be an editor? Unpaid of course. Apply to Bosfa. (Ob. rumor: bosfa is going to collapse through lack of interest very soon. Shh!)

And here we have an interesting piece. *The Optimistic Surgeon #1* is from Dan'l Danehy-Oaks, aka The Roach, a reviewer from *OtherRealms*. It seems to be more of a place for commentary rather than literit at present, but perhaps that will change with future issues. Dan'l has been working on a piece for TBOG, and hopefully will be ready for #3. I've been working on a piece for *him*, which hopefully will be ready for #2. So it goes.

Bruce Gillespie has just sent me some stuff too. I haven't had much of a chance to look at it, but in *SF Commentary #67* he pretty much pans both SOTM and TUOTNS. He claims that SOTM isn't understandable and that *Urth* was unnecessary. I can't blame him for the latter opinion (and am doing something about the former) because I felt the same way when it was first published. The fifth book is certainly different from the first four. It's a controversy I don't feel strongly about however. It's all hypothetical now.

Written on Wolfe's birthday. Many happy returns!

Some Greek References in *Soldier of the Mist* (Part 2)Disclaimer.

I feel obliged to issue another disclaimer about the following. A lot of this is what you might call an exercise for well-tempered speculation. I prefer the word over explanation as that implies some kind of passage from one who knows (me) to those who don't (you). What I do here is more of a two-way process. I would rather imagine a whole set of people; those who have read this book, each in their minds sitting down and coming up with speculations that are meaningful to them about this book. And mine is just a member of that set. Therefore, for those of you who find that your speculations are different than mine (a large number hopefully) I would ask you to present your voice. Not because we are gradually working toward some "truth" however. All fiction is a lie anyway. Writing *about* fiction is just secondary lying. And although our fictions can become truths, as Severian was wont to argue, these will be local, unhomogenized truths.

The second thing is just a feeling; don't take what I have to say as a substitute for delving into ancient Greece yourself. If you enjoyed this book at the story level, the level of the adventure it contains (the plot and character) think how much more enjoyable it is as the context, the world it's set in, comes out of concealment. I called my overall review of this book "vicarious enjoyment." The best way to do that...is yourself.

Introduction--Soldier of Arete.

"The gods are not at all like us, little lo."

--Latro.

Before I get started on the next few chapters of *Mist*, I'd like to make a few comments about *Arete*. I suppose I ought to point out that if you haven't read it yet, or it's not yet published in your country, you ought to decide whether to read this right now. This is called a spoiler warning in the trade, and though I don't usually give them (they're too demeaning) I probably ought to make an exception in this case since the book has only just been published, or perhaps even not yet if you get an early copy of this zine.

So, for those who are still here, I found *Arete* to be quite a different order from *Mist*. There is a lot of unregretted bloody killing, especially from Latro, a fair leavening of sexist talk (e.g., Io and Latro calmly discuss who has "had" and how many times, a certain female character), and the whole thing seems to be shot through with a sort of morbid depression. One of the things that made *Mist* so exciting was the joy both author and reader were

having as we went through this country. This is all turned around in *Arete*. For one thing, most of the book does not take place in Greece itself, but the wild and "barbaric" kingdoms of Thrace, where the major characters spend most of their time on a pointless task. Second, a lot of the characters we knew in the first book are largely absent. This includes Pindaros, Hilaera, Kalleos, Drakaina, Pasirates, Pausanias and some others. To replace them we have a whole new set of characters, among whom are the Amazons. They appear as their name suggests, missing the breast where the drawing of their bows would cross, as the Greeks themselves thought (from  $\alpha + \mu\alpha\sigma\tau\omicron\varsigma$  breast). The Greek legend of the Amazons placed them as contemporaries of Hercules, Theseus, the Argonauts and Oedipus. No Greeks had actually had dealings with them for centuries, if ever at all. *The Oxford Classical Dictionary* doesn't hesitate to brand them mythical. So it is a little surprising to see them appear here, trading with kings, and competing in the games. We might expect Latro only to see them.

One of the keys to Wolfe's books is that Latro is reporting everything as the Greeks themselves reported it. Therefore, if someone claims to have seen a god or goddess, they are not thought crazy, but blessed. I have not cavilled at Latro meeting with any of the gods because I think it a particularly beautiful idea that the gods need our belief and our worship in order to be manifest. As an atheist, this seems like a great theological system; that religion is there when you need to call upon it. It also gets around the problem of absolutism inherent in religion, instead the gods depend upon us and our beliefs, so that when the Great Mother appears to the helots in *Mist* she is old, although she rightly points out that for other peoples she is yet young (because they haven't been worshipping her as long). I do like the idea too that there are many gods, it seems a system more accessible than one remote all powerful superbeing--and reminds us that ours is a shared world, and gives us respect for the environment and each other.

Most of the new characters and even the familiar ones, are different. Hypereides seems to "favor most whoever he's talking to at the time" as is said of another character. His loyalties are far different than in *Mist*. While (apparently) working for Xanthippos he promises to set some captured Persians free; worse he knows them well. Io too is no longer herself, she seems more sulky, and is largely kept in the background. Latro doesn't quite seem to love her anymore. It seems we're being set up for a parting of the ways, which (spoiler again) sure enough comes at the end of the book. All in all Wolfe seems to have lost heart in this project. Perhaps

he already knew that a third book was unlikely to be written. Or perhaps, and this is one possible explanation, *Arete* was purposefully designed like this so that it forms the middle book, and things turn out differently in *Sidon*. (Sidon is in Phoenicia, and Latro is aboard a Phoenician ship at the conclusion of *Arete* supposedly on its way to Rome, but perhaps blown off course.)

This "stages" idea I have kept in mind all through this, and indeed, a saga with several rites of passage fits right in. (Manly stoicism in the face of troubles in the first book, creeping depression as things don't get better--all sorts of opportunities to show our hero as sensitive and with all-too-human foibles--in the second, redemption and final triumph in the third.) As things stand however, we are left with the creeping depression.

Chapter VII.

"With the help of Boreas, we beat them in the strait of Peace, let me tell you. There was a battle! I wish you could see our rans, my boy; the bronze itself is scarred."

--Hypereides.

We now come to the second part of the first scroll--the first major hiatus (chapter VII). This is not to say that there are no other gaps of this size (several days, possibly weeks, are missing), but they are not marked explicitly.

We now also meet Hypereides, a leather merchant from Athens, and a kindly fellow indeed. I sometimes rather irreverently think that Hypereides is the character Wolfe himself might most identify with. Leather's a good trade to be in, the Assembly in Athens had him build three ships, as well as maintain them throughout the war (at a cost of 200 drachmas a day, or perhaps \$7,200). This is a very good idea incidentally, to make the wealthy outfit for the war, and have them lead men into battle (no Quayle-like draft-dodging here). What is the use of having wealthy citizens if you can't call on them in times of need? Still, Hypereides takes it all with grudging good grace. He's one of those men who can't stay angry for long. We also see (memories of *Famulus*, who speaks blank verse) how Wolfe can indirectly suggest characterization through speech. Read some of Hypereides' lines out loud. You may be reminded of little Severian's father; a "stamping good man." We should be aware though that Hypereides is not loyal in quite the ways we might expect. In *Arete* for example, it is pretty clear that he has had dealings (presumably trade) with the Persian satrap of Sestos, and even promises to try and free him. At the same time he is working for Xanthippos. He has his trade in mind in any dealings he has, I would say. Of course, this raises

the question of "loyalty" as a concept in more general terms. For example, throughout *Soldier of the Mist* Latro is generally seen aiding the Greek side (sometimes against his will, as with Pausanias, although he doesn't object too much) and he is certainly friends with Pindaros, Io, Hilaera, and the others. We see another side to an extent in *Soldier of Arete*, where the question is raised more sharply because of the title. "Arete" by the way means having the qualities of a soldier (Ares is the war-god), an honorable man, and so forth. Who should Latro be loyal to, or faithful to? His friends, surely. This means the black man (whose name is Hepta Leonas, or Seven Lions). Io definitely. But he fought on the side of the Persians, against the Greeks. We should not be too surprised if he works somewhere in the middle of the two sides, as he does in *Arete* (even to the extent of working with Hegisistratus, Mardonius' mansis).

It's an interesting diversion to figure out where they are now. It doesn't say of course, though it doesn't matter too much since they soon leave, but it would help suggest how much time has passed since Latro's last entry if we knew where they had been. The last we saw, they had been captured by the slaves of the Rope Makers (Spartan helots) in Cowland (Boeotia) and were being taken to Sparta. Cerdon was in command. Why were they captured anyway? Was it as I suggested last time because Sparta had groups of soldiers going round mopping up people from enemy cities--i.e., Thebes? So why were they "only" beaten, and Hilaera and Io raped, but not killed, especially as Latro seems to have killed at least six of the helots himself? Well, one possibility is that Pausanias has already begun looking for them, or at least Latro, and that when Cerdon fails to bring him in, he later sends out his own man (i.e., Eutaktos). This would explain the coincidence over Cerdon, who is later seen in Pausanias' camp, and is obviously one of his helots. Another possibility is that this is just that--a coincidence. Sparta was probably in general need of slaves, who, as Wolfe points out in the introduction, are often prisoners of war.

In any case, long before they get near Sparta, or even Laconia, they were met by soldiers from Tower Hill (Corinth). Io later says in Corinth "This is the place where the soldiers came from who took us away from the Rope Makers' slaves. You won't find that in your book, because I had it then. See that hill? Up there's where they kept us till Hypereides came and they gave us to him" (p. 216). Hypereides himself had just come from Dolphins (Delphi) as he remarks on page 74. How long they spent in prison, or how long Hypereides had them before giving back the scroll is impossible to assess; though I'd say shorter rather than longer (he doesn't seem like someone who would hold out on the scroll once he knew about it, besides, his boats are still being mended after the storms on Cape Malea). So if it has been only a matter of days, then the chances are that they are still near Corinth. They don't seem to be

actually in the city, as there are no references to it, (though Lyson does say something about Hyperides being a good merchant and "that's why we were sent here" on p. 41, which implies a town of some sort), but perhaps they are in its port. We will see later that they will sail anti-clockwise around the Peloponnesos (it appears to port) on their way to Salamis and Athens.

Latro's eye is certainly caught by Hyperides' boats ("I could never have seen anything made by men half so lovely" he says with bold confidence on p. 39) and there is evidence elsewhere (e.g., chapter XXXV, as well as his comment that he would expect horsemen to command ships on p. 41) that he loves the sea, and the life of the sailor. Then, too, he doesn't get seasick on the way to Sestos, unlike the others. Did he used to be in the Roman navy?

### Chapter VIII.

*I hesitated, but the child said, "Please, master!" and there was something in her voice I could not resist.*

--Latro.

I might as well point out that Latro does not lose all his memories each day. He can remember that he lost his memory "in a battle" (p. 42) and now we see that he remembers his home (p. 43). Later he describes it briefly, and at one point in *Arete* when he has his memory for a while, he visits it in a trance and sees his father ploughing and his mother sleeping inside (and because she is, he is able to speak to her briefly).

The chapter opens with a very full description of the *Europa*, one of the fullest Latro gives anything; the bow post, the ropes, even the ram at the front of the ship. Incidentally, these really were rams, especially the battering rams used in siege breaking. They were made to look like them, with a woolly neck and butting head. This is a warship; a trireme, with "triple-banked oars." Their exact form is not known with any preciseness, but the current emphasis is indeed on there being three levels of oars, one man to an oar (or "stick" as Lyson calls them; it has become slang for person too in his vocabulary). I believe a British group of historians and rowers has recently constructed a full size replica of a trireme, and has been conducting time trials in the Aegean; apparently they do perform as described. The oars were perhaps 12 or 13.5 feet long, the ships 111 feet long, 9 feet wide at the bottom and 18 feet at the top. Peter Connolly, in *The Greek Armies* (Macdonald Educational, 1977) tells us that according to Athenian naval records there were 27 *thalamite* ("those in the chamber") rowers (the lowest level) on each side. The second bank, the *zygite* ("those of the crossplanks or thwarts") also had 27 rowers a side. The top bank, the *thranite* ("those on the bench," and apparently having the most work) had 31 on each side. This would give a total of 170 rowers, whereas Hyperides has 195 rowers

(p. 39). His is obviously a large ship. Further description of the *Europa* can be found in *Arete*.

The usual speed of a trireme was about 6 miles an hour (over long distances and favorable conditions). They could go faster than this when necessary, Connolly estimates up to 10 miles an hour (a rowing 8 can hit 14 miles an hour).

The *kybernetes* Latro mentions is of course the oarsman. The word means something like "one who steers" or directs--it is where we get our word "cybernetic" from, and presumably we get "cyberpunk" from that. The prisoners in the same paragraph are presumably Pindaros, Hilaieira and Io. They are chained to mast where it goes through the deck because they are from Hill (Thebes) which fought on the side of the Persians in the war, and are therefore enemies, even though they're pure Greek.

We get some more description of the battle of Salamis from Hyperides (doesn't he get tired of repeating it?). You can use the map on the cover to see where the fleets were. The Dog's Tail is a sandspit that comes out of Salamis, the Cynosoura.

This chapter also heralds one of the more confusing set of encounters. This is between Latro and the Scythian archer Oior, first up in the hills on the coast of the Peloponnesos, and then later, at the end of the book, after the attempted escape from Sestos. It is confusing because it is not clear what the significance is of the events. Since it is all bound up with his relationship with Kore, the Maiden and daughter of Demeter (who took his memory away in the first place for reasons still unknown) it may be something that would be revealed later, in due time. Of course, if there are no more books in the series it will never be known.

### Chapter IX.

*"They beat you, and they treated me like a woman and made me bleed there, though I'm not a woman yet. Hilaieira says I won't have a baby, but she might."*

--Io.

The three ships, having completed their repairs and merchandizing at Tower Hill have sailed a long way round the Peloponnesos to a place called Teuthrone, which according to the map at the front (not Wolfe's doing but a game effort at locating places, even if cartographically unsound) is on the south coast. I believe there really was such a town here at this time. Oior ("man" according to Herodotus, 4.113) the archer arranges to meet Latro up in the hills that evening to tell him his fears, or actually to get him on his side, so that if his (Oior's) eyes give him away Latro will not say anything. Though it may be that he has seen another shape-changing Neurian in the hold as he says. There are certainly rumors about it later (p. 39).

### Chapter X.

*"Yes, that is best. To forget. But remember me when you meet my mistress in any guise. Remember that I helped you and would have helped you more, if you had been as generous to me as I to you."*

--The serpent-woman.

Up in the hills Latro again meets the serpent-woman (he first met her in chapter V and VI). She must be following him around at the behest of Artemis, who she calls her mistress. Her warning that one will die soon proves correct. She may be the serpent-woman who met Heracles (Hdt. 4.9) by whom she had a son, Scythes, who is supposed to be the founder of the Scythians. The account that Oior gives Latro of his people is roughly the one Herodotus provides for us at the beginning of Book Four.

Oior seals a friendship vow with Latro and asks him to pick out a Neurian werewolf from among the other archers, who he claims to have seen in the hold of the ship. I think it is obvious enough that Oior is himself such a werewolf, he says that he has seen such eyes as they have before; "when my sister died. Eyes that were like two white stones, cold and bright" (p. 61). Perhaps if his sister had such eyes, he does too. He certainly seems to avoid looking at Latro in a good light (p. 74) and Latro sees something funny about him after he has killed Spu ("eye" Hdt. 4.27). And of course, we see him as a wolf in the last chapter. There is nothing here that the Greeks themselves did not believe by the way. Herodotus (4.105) says "there is a story current amongst the Scythians and the Greeks in Scythia that once a year every Neurian turns into a wolf for a few days, and then turns back into a man again."

### Chapter XI.

*"You fear the dead," the tall figure told me, seeing my look. "You need not; no one will do you less harm."*

--The King of the Dead.

Oior kills Spu, who has attacked Latro. I suppose Spu thinks that Latro is dangerous; they have both overheard talk to the effect that Latro is blessed by the gods and can see things that other people can't. I suppose Spu also killed Kekrops and that Kekrops is the one who warned Acetes the kybernetes of the Scythian's plan (p. 67). Though it is also possible that Oior killed Kekrops; at least Spu denies that he killed anybody except in war. He also says "Spu would kill you, Neurian, in justice for him" (p. 67). I suppose he's referring to Oior at this point, and the "him" is Kekrops. At the close of the chapter Latro meets Europa and Athena, her shield writhing with serpents just as the statue of her in the Parthenon shows.

### Chapter XII.

*Kalleos looked at him. "Don't I know you, pig?"*

--Kalleos to Pindaros.

The merry band are now heading back to the ruins of Athens. Things must be picking up again, because Kalleos, a brothel owner and friend of Hyperides has decided to move back in. Hyperides sees this as a good opportunity to temporarily get rid of Latro & co. All in a good nature of course, and Pindaros also learns that Hill hasn't even been destroyed. If he still has money there, it may be possible to buy Latro's freedom as planned (though he constantly denies his slave status).

### Chapter XIII.

*"Because we chose to surrender," Pindaros told her. "And lost even when we fought for the Great King. They chose to resist, and won even with us against them. We were wrong, and they were right. Their city was destroyed; ours deserved it."*

--Pindaros.

It is in this chapter, as Kalleos and her women are trying to put some semblance of order back into their ruined house, that we first meet Eurykles the Necromancer. He has an association with Latro for parts of the rest of the book, turning into a woman on the way, after having given his life over to Artemis. Wolfe has said in the *Weird Tales* interview that he is based on a real necromancer of the time in Athens. It would be interesting to see where he got that information from. The guy must have been well reported, and perhaps had been thought to have raised a person from the dead, as Eurykles thinks he does (Latro does it really).

There is also reference to the "wooden walls" oracle (p. 80) that I mentioned on the inside front cover.

### Chapter XIV.

*Sleepily, she rolled her head from side to side. "The oracle sent Pindaros. The god sent me."*

--Io.

This is another fairly straightforward chapter. It gives us a chance to consider the manuscript that Wolfe has supposedly translated. We see several references here and there to the scrolls that Latro has been writing in; these scrolls we are told have recently turned up. If this were so, it would quite literally be the find of the ages. Our knowledge of the ancient writings are all from copies made later--only scraps of the originals remain. Yet here we have a number of such scrolls of the greatest historical importance, crowned with a chapter in

Pindar's own hand in *Arete*. I'd think you could get \$100 million for these, easy. So wherever they are, look after them!

### Chapter XV.

"Do you know, I think half of 'em would swallow the whole rigmarole as solid fact. Why, on this past voyage, there was talk of a werewolf aboard."

--Hyperides.

Eurykles is looking to drum up his old business again, and so persuades Phyc to tell her story, so he can lead in with his proposal. He duly has his bet going, and Pindaros, who isn't so dumb, asks that Latro be brought along too.

### Chapter XVI.

"Wolves and ravens win all wars."

--Thygatez.

After Latro has touched the dead woman, who seems to have been disturbed by a werewolf (Olor?) who wake the dead (as it says earlier), she tells him something interesting. The king of the dead is reminding him that he "must go as he was sent" presumably a reference to his trip to the shrine (which he actually does in chapter XIX). We certainly see enough of Eurykles' ambition here; he even asks if Xerxes will rule over Greece.

### Chapter XVII.

"This is so near Advent, where they have the mysteries of the Grain Goddess, and I'd love to be an initiate."

--Hilseira.

We make a lot of progress here in interpreting the oracle that Latro received. I talked about this at length before in Part 1, so I needn't say too much here. Pindaros realizes that it's to the temple in Advent (Eleusis) that Latro is to go, after noting that the Grain Goddess (Persephone/Kore) is the Great Mother, and the Earth Mother (Demeter) too. They are all aspects of the same thing, although they can be separated out. I see no reason not to trust what Pindaros says on page 108 regarding the wolf as one of the badges of the Great Mother. This is also perhaps why Kore has him kill the wounded Olor in the last chapter, while he is manifested as a wolf. We are still no nearer the "wolf's tooth" that Apollo mentions (p. 10) even after *Arete* (unless I am missing something). However, most of the oracle is fulfilled in these two books, except, perhaps, for "But you must cross the narrow sea" which may or may not be Helle's Sea (the Hellespont) and "There you shall learn why He's not seen." If anybody can offer further

elucidation of these lines, or the wolf's tooth, speak up.

### Chapter XVIII.

"If a barbarian learns our speech, he is welcomed."

--Polyhommes Eumolpides.

I like the bit about pouring milk into the bullock's ear, so that when it tries to get rid of it, it seems to nod. Many such tricks are used to uphold men's beliefs, it seems to me. If you ever get the chance, visit the British Museum and see some of the Roman statuary in the lower room. They have there a statue of Demeter just as she probably looked in the temple mentioned here. I have a rather nice photograph of her.

### Chapter XIX.

"It is the dead--trees and grasses, animals and men--who send you all you have of men, animals, trees, and grasses."

--The Queen of the Dead.

This is a very important chapter, but, readily understandable I think. As is intended by the movement of the statue's hand, Latro looks down, and sees a slab with a ring in it. Descending, he meets Kore, (the Maiden). It was her mother that cursed Latro, presumably in her temple near the battle of Plataea. As she tells him, "here is the hearth. You stand in the room below" (p. 119). It is also evident that we would do better to pay attention to Apollo's own words, because the sibyl has muddled her version. Note also her words "Here is the wolf-flower for you, who bear the wolf's tooth" (p. 120). The flower is important later, of course. Said like this, it could also mean something physical, as well as metaphorical. His sword, perhaps. That is crooked, and very sharp. But I think not; as she also says, it is only blessed by Asopus.

Because Kore did not inflict the curse on Latro she cannot do anything for him directly. Instead, she offers a choice out of three, to be healed, to be returned to his friends, or to be home again. Demeter has a hand in the choice, which is why Latro, who chooses to be with his friends, only meets them at last after the siege of Sestos, and then only for moments before his friend's death. This is perhaps weak, that Latro, who has been dying to know who he is, would not choose to have his memory restored. Wolfe could easily have arranged it so that Kore could not restore his memory, but could restore his friends or home, I believe. At the last she warns him against Auge, the Huntress (Artemis), though in truth the Huntress seems to be helping Latro, even if only to further her plans (she restores his memory a couple of times). But those goddesses are enemies; "How strange are the ways of the gods! How cruel!"

## The Life and Martyrdom of Saint Katharine

### A medieval legend

#### Introduction.

The following piece is part of the legend of St. Katharine, a virgin martyr. There are several accounts of her life (this is a 15th century version), but all agree on the broad points; she defeated a number of scholars in debate, she was tortured in various ways including by the wheel, she converted a number of the Emperor's subjects (including his wife, the empress, and Porphyry, the chief of the Knights). The first two episodes are mainly told in the present excerpts.

Although I am not a hagiographer, nor a student of medieval English, I decided to put the excerpts in for several reasons. First, I think they're fun; we don't usually get to read this kind of stuff and (in small doses) it's quite illuminating. Second, it gives me a chance to raise the question of Severian's relations, especially his mother. Third (and perhaps a bit outlandishly) we may even *learn* something (yes!) from an account of "a beautiful and glorious impersonation of feminine intellect, heroism, purity, fortitude, and faith" as it says in the preface. Especially with regard to the common (and justified) criticism of Wolfe's female characters as weak, and the sometimes near-sexist nature of his (characters?) observations.

Part of the legend of St. Katharine was used by Wolfe in TBOINS; she was, in fact, the patroness of the guild of torturers. But the connections run even deeper. As well as being the patroness of the guild, Katharine also happens to be the name of Severian's mother. For some time now, there has been a sort of game played by various critics to come up with scenarios concerning Severian's mother, his father, Dorcas, and even the autarch (see Peter Nicholls' review of *The Urth of the New Sun* in *Foundation 41*, and John Clute in his book of essays, *Strokes*). Most critics duck the question. Walter E. Meyers speaks of "unwriting incest" (Meyers, 1983, p. 154) but does not elaborate. Even the usually reliable Peter Nicholls raises the mother question only to duck it. Manlove (1986) also refuses to engage the issue.

It is time to put the matter straight. As most people anyway know by now, Dorcas is Severian's paternal grandmother (I pointed this out in TBOG #1); hence Meyers' remarks on incest. His father is Owen the waiter. Dorcas' husband, and thus Severian's grandfather, is the old man who poles the skiff on the Lake of Neverending Sleep (we see them reunited in the southernmost regions of Nessus in *Citadel of the Autarch*). What is less well known is the identity of

Severian's mother. According to John Clute, Greg Benford had plumped for Thecla, and Tom Disch jokingly mentioned Morwena. John Clute made some adventurous guesses himself, but has since moved away from them. (I won't spoil it by saying what they were, only that you should see for yourself if you haven't already. It takes your breathe away with the audacity!) The evidence now points fairly conclusively to the "maid" who assists in the elevation ceremonies each year in the guild of torturers. John had pointed this out, but had his own reasons for still being somewhat dissatisfied with it.

At first I had thought her (the maid) just a sort of symbolic mother figure allied with Katharine the patroness/mother of the guild's journeymen. But it now appears that she is actually Severian's mother. She is associated with the guild; and we know from Owen the waiter that his lover was caught and imprisoned while with child. That child is Severian. His particularly lucid memories of her are dealt with quite ably by Clute (pp. 167-168). But to clarify; John has now moved away from his position in the essay, and also reads the maid as Severian's mother.

We now come to the legend itself. Various parts are used in one of the two elevation ceremonies Severian describes, especially the tortures. Other parts are glossed in COTO.

The present ms is a 15th century English prose account of Saint Katharine published in 1884 in *The Life and Martyrdom of Saint Katherine of Alexandria*. In the preface, Henry Hucks Gibbs, the owner of the ms, discusses the reality behind the legend and has the following to say:

*not only did St. Katherine of Alexandria never exist at all, but her very name is as unhistorical and unreal as herself. The virtues and the maidenly purity which were attributed to her have made the Greek word κειραρος [pure, unsullied] appear a probable and suitable derivation for her name; but the truth is that it is most improbable that it could have anything to do with it, inasmuch as the name attributed to her by all early writers... is Αικατερινη or Αικατερινη, Ecaeterina, or Ekaeterin. The various attempts which have been made to prove Ecaeterina to be a corruption of Katherine--to be Katherine plus a prefix--seem to me scarcely to deserve attention.*

As I pointed out in TBOG #1, the exact etymology of the name is unknown, although both *καθάρω*, and, more fancifully, *καύω* ("torure") have been proposed. Gibbs points out, for our edification as well as his readers in the nineteenth century:

*that though no holy woman called Katherine may have lived and been martyred at that time by the Emperor Maximin, and though the words and deeds and sufferings attributed to her happened precisely to no one at all, yet the life of St. Ecaterina or Katherine was not a mere false coinage uttered to deceive the ignorant, but rather a romance, not consciously written as such, but growing gradually and by continuous development out of a description of what a holy woman under persecution should be or might have been, and read by the faithful "for example of life and instruction of manners."*

The preface also quotes parts of a 1380 poem about St. Katharine, including the following,

"Synt Kateryne of noble kurme came: by olde sawe  
Her fader King, her moder queene: both of the olde lawe  
Jhesu crist for the swete loue of Seynt Kateryne  
zeue vs the swete ioize of heuene: schilde us fram helle  
pyne."

The text given below is largely a straight reproduction of (samples from) the version in the Gibbs book. The fun part is reading the 15th century English, most of which is pretty clear in context. The letter "z" seems to mean "g" in "azeyn" (again). The "u" can sometimes be a "v" and vice versa. My interpolations (mostly quoting Gibbs' notes) appear in brackets.

### Life and Martyrdom of Saint Katherine.

The excellent and ryght gloriouse seynt Kateryn was of the noble kynrede of the Emperours of Rome by hir Faders syde. For the Emperour Constantyn and kyng Cooste seynt Kateryns Fader were bretheren bothe of oo [one] fader but not of oo moder as schall be declared synngly [in course] aftur. Hit is wyrite in Cronicles and openly known that the Romayns by gret wysdom and manhod made soget [subject?] to her Empire nyzhande [nearby] all the world. That tyme the Brytons whiche come of the noble blood of Troye and were cosyngs to the Romayns and now by vs are called walsh men regned in Engelond that was than named Brytayn and aftur hyt was named the moor Brytayn for difference of the lasse Brytayn that is on the toyer syde the See [i.e., Great Britain and Brittany]. These Britons were first subdwed to the Empire of Rome by the Emperour that was called Julius Cesar and so thay abode many dayes and zeres [years]. Bot in the tyme of the Emperours that were called Dioclician and Maximian so gret and cruel tyrantye was shewde in the world not oonly to

cristen but also to paynems [Christians and pagans] that many a Rems [realm] that were soget to Rome put away the zook [yoke] of here [her] seruage [servitude] and rebelled openly. Amongst whiche the Reem of Ernanye was oon that moost myghtly wythstod the tribute that longed to the Empire of Rome Wherefore there was chose to appease that rebellion a Senatour of Rome whyche was a lord of gret dignite and of the counsail that hyght Constaunce or [before, i.e., father of] Constantyne for before alle other he was manly in armys and thereto ryght discreet and ful of vertues.

*Constaunce puts down the rebellion, becomes king of Germany and marries the German princess. His son by her is Coste (Katharine's father). Constaunce returns to Rome, where the emperor Dioclician makes him Cesar, and after him his son Constantine, who reigns for a time in England. Constance then dies.*

Now begynneth the martyrdom of this glorious virgyn Seynt Kateryne. And first how the Emperour Maxence was ouercome of the Emperour Constantyn and come into Alysaundre and ordeyned solenne sacrifice to be do un to his fals goddess [Constantin was of course a Christian emperor, whereas Maxence would be pagan].

At this tyme the blessed zong queene Kateryne was xvij [18] zere of age dwelling in here paleys [in Alexandria] ful of richesse and of seruantes. And as she sat in hir study in contemplation of hir mooste dere lorde and truest spouse she herd out of the temple of ydoles [idolators] gret roryng of bestes and gret noyse of trompes many maners of organs and many other sownes [from the pagan sacrifices and rituals]. Than was this holye mayde wounded wyth gret sorowe of hert and thought that wyth free auctorite she wolde dampne that unleftful [unlawful] sacrifice. And also reпреte that cruel ordinance of that tyrant the Emperour.

*She goes to the emperor and argues theology with him, asking that he give up his beliefs and turn to Christianity. He answers as follows.*

These thyngis mayden that thou sayst schold be fayre and acceptable zyt they were suppowled [supported] wyth strenght of reson. Bot we knowe wel that alle the sectes of hethen religion & rites & customs of her holy obseruances are spronge of reasonable begynnynge. For the princes of Rome that passe [exceed] alle deedly [mortal] creatures in ryghtwinesse and religion haue made al the world suget vn to her lawes. Therefore hit is no veyn thing to vse the obseruances to the whiche longe of religion hath zeue [give] auctorite and the fayth there of kept by so many worldis stureth [stir] vs to folowe our faders lyke as they blessedly folowede thayres. Bot the secte of zoure fayth is so superflu and vnreasonable that hit semeth to be receuyed on noon [no-one] that hath his ryght mynd. For what is so inconuenient and so far from mannys reson as to say that iesu whom the iewes crucified should be the sone of god whom a virgyn

shold conceyue wyth oute knowleche of man and he bore of hir wyth oute openyng of hir wombe.

*Katharine answers that there is no god but the one God, to whom "alle thynges are soget." The emperor is so impressed by her reasoning, "hir merueylouse wysdom & wordes" that he has her taken to his palace, where she will be "worsheped wyth gret zyftes zyt thou assent to oure byddynge." He then sends off for "wyse clerkes" to come and debate with her. At the palace he tries to soft-talk her, but she answers him with modesty, saying, "for I herde the blessed voys of the gospel of my lord iesu crist to whom wyth stable bonde I haue vounwed me spouse and hand mayden." The emperor questions why she alone in the world is not in error, and that no man would believe her even if she were "an angel or an heuenty vertu...moche lesse whyte thow art bot a freat woman." After some more discussion (during which the fifty wise men complain to the emperor for bringing them in for such a "simple mayde") the debate begins.*

[Katharine affirms her belief in God.] Onethe had the virgyn sayde these wordes but that oon of the clerkes in a wode [mad] spilit barst out in launghynge and fylled alle the kynges court wyth a blasphemynge voys and sayde O ze Citezeyns o that hyze noblesse [nobleness] of tẽpire of Rome how longe schalle this foly presumption of cristen puple [people] doo suche wronge vnto oure goddys zyt these veyn skornes and errors of this mayde schold passe vnpunysshed. ... To thys the virgyn answered Ryght fully I toke the begynnynge of my speche of hym that ys the begynnynge of alle thynges and the welle and the sprynge of alle godes by whom god the Fader made this merueulous forme of this world when hit was not whiche also made alle thyngs and me and the amonge all other thyngs. And for to conclude many thyngs in fewe wordes he it is of whom are alle thynges by whom are alle thynges and in whom are alle thynges visibile & invisible [this is one of the most striking portions of the manuscript, in my opinion]. ... While the blessed virgyn spake these & many other thynges the clerke was astonyed and alle the clerkes wist not what to say azenst hir bot by the open power of god thay were troubled and asschamed and lokyd yche on other and helde her [their] pees.

[The clerks turn to christianity.] When the tyrant herde this he waxed nye wood [mad] by hody hastynesse and dyde make a gret fyre in the myddes of the cyte and bad that they alle schoide be bounde honde and foot and turmented to deth in tho peynfull floumes of fyre. ... And so among the floumes of that brennyng fyre they made vpon hem self the token of the cros and knowlached crist and his fayth and so were they crowned wyth holy martyrdom the xij [13] day of the monthe of Nouembre whos bodyes cristen puple toke and buryed wyth gret deuocion.

[Katharine resists further persuasions to turn from her faith.] Than in this mene tyme come the Mayre of the

Cyte that was called Cursates ["Cursaty, a false traytoure that was a grette yngenore" in another ms] to the Emperour and seynge hym gretly moued in yre stured [stirred] hym to a newe woodnes [madness] heepynge turmentes to turmentes and sayde O thou gret Emperour art thou not asshamed to be taryed so longe tyme wyth the resistance of a woman here therfore sir Emperour Kateryn saw not zett suche maner of turment as scholde make hir aferde for to assente vnto the end to do sacrifice to oure gret goddess Ordeyne therfore that foure gret wheles be mad wyth yme these thre dayes after myn aduys [advice?] so that bothe the vter [outer] and the ymer cerles of yche whele be mad full of scharp bytynge sawes. By these wheles [let] Kateryne [be placed] and beholde the hasty saute [leap] of her turnyng aboute that the horrour therof may make hir aferde and bowe hir to do worschep to oure goddes and so to lyue. And ellys [or else?] sche schall be caste in to the ferfulle engyne and on that oo syde wyth hokes [hooks?] and on that other syde wyth bytynge sawes sche schal be rent to peces and peryshe by a swerde ["this cannot be right, for it was not by the sword that she was to suffer. It seems to be miswritten for *unherde*, L. *inaudito exemplo*"] ensample [example] to fere and drede of alle cristen puple. The tyrant abode not bot anon he bad the wheles schold be mad afur the same deuys [device?].

The thydde day come and the tyrant bad bryng forth the peynfull turment of the wheles & take the mayden and bynde hir and sette hir amongst hem and for rende al hir tendir body but zyt she wyl assente vnto hym. Than the wheles were brought forth and sette in myddes of hys court and smoot gret drede to the hertes of those that lokyd vpon hem. For that peynfull engyn of wheles was made by suche craft that two turned oo way and two another was contrary to hem so that somme schoide rende drawynge downward and other schold deuoure [devour?] rendynge vpward. And the maydene of crist schold be sette in the myddes amongst hem that by twene the sawes and the hokes sche scholde by meunyng of the wheles be rent membre from membre by wonderfull and wretchedfull maner of deth. Bot the mayden of crist seenge al this lyte vp hir eyen into heuene and zaf out wordes of pryue vn to god and sayde ... graunt that this peynfull engyn be destroyed by the strook of heuenty thonder & leuen [lightning] that alle that stonden aboute may see the open virtu of thy power and worschep thyn holy name that ys blest wyth outen ende. The virgyn had not fully ended the wordes bot that loo the angel of god comynge doun from heuen smote that engyn wyth so gret a stroke that the ioynetes of the wheles al to brast a sonder and the partyes therof fel out vpon the puple wyth so gret a strengthe that iij thousand of hethen puple were slay at orys. And what moor? Sorwe and confusion of hethen men ioye and gladnes of cristen men. And the tyrant hym self grynted wyth his teeth troubled in his hert.

Here enden the legende of Seynt Kateryn virgyn and marir.

## Locjaw

## The lettercol

David Pringle  
Brighton, England

Just a note to say thank you for the unexpected *Book of Gold*. This kind of fanzine is always interesting to me! I'm not a dyed-in-the-wool Wolfe fan (I'm afraid I'm one of those people who's suspicious of his Catholicism), but I did include *The Fifth Head of Cerberus* and *The Book of the New Sun* in my *Science Fiction: The 100 Best Novels* (Kanadu, 1985). How could I have done otherwise? And, more recently, I included an entry on his *Peace* in my *Modern Fantasy: The 100 Best Novels* (Grafton, 1988). That last was John Clute's suggestion, actually—I had toyed with the idea of including *Soldier of the Mist*, but Clute advised me to sit down and read *Peace* (which I hadn't previously done, I'm sorry to say) and it did strike me as being truly a brilliant novel.

Well, Dave, that should be enough namechecks for you! Actually, since your books are of interest to readers in general, not just Wolfe fans, they deserve mention.

Joyce Day  
Science Fiction Foundation  
London, England

You will probably be pleased to know that when our Hon. Librarian saw your gift [TBOG #1] he brought it over to me and queried if it was truly a "fanzine" saying it seemed much too useful to be buried in the Fanzine Collection—we have therefore promoted it to an Academic Journal for record purposes. What do you think of that! Move over *Extrapolation* and *Science Fiction Studies*.

David Langford  
Reading, England

I seem to be failing rather to produce fanzines of late, i.e., since 1987, but TBOG is sufficiently interesting to make me wish I had something to trade. Yes, *Strokes* contains some of the best stuff I've read on Wolfe; for me, the best bit of the World Fantasy Con in London consisted of waiting for a train home from Paddington in the middle of the event (I commuted), savoring a glass of beer far better than anything the con hotel could offer, and reading *Strokes*.

I was amused by your quoting the non-sequitur about Wolfe and Catholics ["I distrust Catholics; Wolfe is a Catholic; therefore I distrust Wolfe"] since one or two US fanzines have of late perpetrated a mirror-image

variant of this illogic: it goes "I've met jolly nice Scientologists, so all those terrible things they say about L. Ron and his organization must be wicked fibs." Thus mere matters of public record and judicial precedent are as nothing in the face of being bought a drink by the nice man from Author Services Inc.

Re: Asimov. I don't quite see how you deny him "the basic scientific background of the disciplines." He did, surely, get his first doctorate by legitimate study and achievement, whether or not one can't take honorary Phds and professorships too seriously as academic qualifications. The trouble is that unless you plug constantly away at staying in touch, the pose of omniscience develops distinct rust spots. Nine years on from my old employment, I couldn't design you a planet-busting doomsday bomb to (coining a phrase) save my life, however much it was once at my fingertips.

Several people have pointed out to me that Asimov does indeed have a "legitimate" PhD, and I take your point about staying in touch—not because science "progresses" and you might get left "behind"—but because of just knowing what people are saying. Still, I don't think this really alters my point: Asimov is set up as an arbiter of scientific validity, which I find objectionable on a number of grounds; namely that he isn't quite the scientific guru he is supposed to be; that he seems unaware of how science actually gets done (as opposed to the rational, normative way he thinks it should be done); and lastly that we need an arbiter of scientific validity at all. A case in point is the work of Duesberg in AIDS research, who has proposed that HIV does not cause AIDS (citing the fact that HIV is not even found in 20% of AIDS cases, and a bunch of other stuff). However, since he doesn't have a PhD or a faculty position he is largely disregarded by people like Gallo (despite his many years of clinical experience). His voice is "disallowed," and thus the system legitimates itself by marginalizing certain threatening discourse.

From another letter:

[After my offer to obtain *The Castle of the Oter*] What can I say? Only this: all the wretched book dealers whom I've interrogated over here about it must presumably have been making their usual assumption that the punter could only possibly want a mint first edition, preferably signed. ("You want to read it? But...but...you'd have to take it out of the plastic bag, and what about the resale value?") Many, many thanks

for pointing out the alternative.

For those who didn't see my offer in the reprint of TBOG #1, I am willing to obtain copies of *Oter* from the US of club (the only place they're available) for \$15. This may seem rather high (though it just about covers my postage) but compare that to dealers editions of \$170. Deal?

Not feeling fit enough to travel to Jersey for the Eastercon this year I spent that weekend rereading *The Book of the New Sun* with its fifth volume in context. I also had in mind John Clute's extremely ingenious theory about the Autarch's name, sex and relation to Severian, and was interested to see whether a hint one way or the other would emerge as I ploughed straight on into book 5. As usual it's ambiguous: we get another reference to the Autarch's head on the coinage looking like a woman's, but we also have an explicit use (however filtered through Severian's selective narrative and layers of inherited memory) of the word "unnamed" to describe what happened to said Autarch. Which looks like a definitive refutation of the Clute theory, but there again one can imagine Wolfe still not wanting to commit himself (as the word "unsexed" virtually would have), and reserving the right to make deviously unprecedented extensions to the old "male includes female" convention.

What was vaguely disappointing was to find JC himself dead wrong on a minor and merely suggestive point concerning syntax. He asserts near the end of *Strokes* (apparently quoting Gregory Feeley) that a particular phrase is given special emphasis by being the only one in the tetralogy to be put in elliptical parentheses. I felt that was obscurely incorrect at the time; now I've noted that unless the text of my edition is hopelessly corrupt, Wolfe has the same speaker (the Autarch) use precisely the same construction a couple of pages before, and what's more, it's used three times (again by the Autarch) in the chapter of *Conciliator* called "Hydromancy." So much for that point! Maybe one can be too subtle.

Indeed. I too had thought this an overdrawn point when I went to the text after reading John Clute's piece. John was nevertheless willing to put himself on a limb, and I encourage that, even if it sometimes snaps off.

Richmond Hunt  
Exeter, England

I have a copy of *First Maitz* and to be honest his artwork for *The Book* is not as "fine" as you imply. The use of the figure and deportment of the central character as the cover art to any book has always displeased me and this is no exception. Wolfe's written descriptions leave details for the collaborative reader to fill in, making Severian conform in the reader's mind to that outer image that he or she feels fits best with the

character and inner image that the author portrays. Maitz has concretized Severian's physical image and so restricted the degrees of freedom for the author's imagination even before he starts on the text. I have the pictures here before me, and let us take one obvious facet of this, Severian: the Man of Destiny. In all four covers the motif of the image is that Severian is in control of events; here he stands master of the field of execution, there the creatures of the dark cringe before him. Deep down in the machinery of the plot of *The Book* we find that Severian (or at least a previous Severian—time loops become complicated) was/is ultimately responsible for buildings, meetings and situations that our hero stumbles across. But "stumbles across" is the correct choice of words, for as far as Severian the torturer is concerned things happen to him. He has no inkling that he is master of his own fate. His cogniscence of the situation changes only from random expectations of normal life to the feeling that his destiny is mapped out by others. To imply personal power as Maitz's covers do is to deprive the reader, just a little, of the joy of revelation of Severian's destiny.

Personally I prefer the cover art on the Sedgwick and Jackson UK editions by Bruce Pennington (the same artist was also used on the paperbacks, but with slightly different variations of the same paintings!). Here the juxtaposition of exotic splendour and baroque decay convey the texture of Wolfe's Urth: A world where time has left many marks, many artifacts but nothing is destroyed; only left to settle over the centuries. In Pennington's covers Severian is a distant figure, cloaked and ill-defined, dwarfed by the power of the landscape yet there—an important element of the world. And so he is, as we know from the text: A god-hero who is unaware of his importance (for most of the time) subtly guided through his domains.

I haven't read my copy of *Soldier of the Mist* (I'm waiting for the second book so I can go right through) but I liked the de-mystification. I already knew from other sources that there was a lot of real history/mythology to be found in it, so your article is hardly a spoiler. More a useful reading aid.

And that was how I conceived it. I do feel the need to repeat that I don't mean it to stand in for finding out about ancient Greece yourselves; after all I have little real authority or training in that area (although not none). In the end it is only my idea of what Wolfe was saying.

Your letter raises a number of points, some obviously beyond the aesthetics of Maitz's covers. I suppose I did imply that I liked the covers (though I did not think them totally unproblematic). If I remember correctly I was rather taken with the fact that Maitz tried to use color in such a way that over the sequence of the four books we get the impression of a brightening dawn; until in the last one Severian's head is backlit by a bright light to

represent him as the New Sun. However, I agree with your point about solidifying Severian in our minds (though we should be careful not to imply that the way we came to Severian—before the Maitz covers—is the only way). It is usually the medium you come to first that you prefer (I saw The Unbearable Lightness of Being and thought it great, but I couldn't get on with the book at all). So others would doubtless argue that they rather liked the covers for bringing Severian to the fore. I was rather more annoyed to see that Maitz had drawn Severian's cloak with a checkered design on the inside, despite many descriptions of it as fuligin, the color darker than black.

Teddy Harvia  
North Richmond Hills, TX

Thanks for the copy of your newsletter. I am not a dyed-in-the-wool Wolfe fan, but I have read some of his stuff.

I particularly enjoyed your criticism of the aging Asimov. He is merely displaying the age-old fallacy of the rebel who, upon becoming part of the establishment, refutes all association with rebellion. "After I get my status, it's status quo!"

Hoho. Too right; the young turks turn into the old guard with astounding regularity. But *hmm*, what's this; "dyed-in-the-wool" again? Things must seem pretty conservative around here...or is there a conspiracy across the Atlantic?

Tony Ellis  
Chelmsford, England

I enjoyed the studies of SOTM and TBOINS. Whilst I'd got most of the historical, mythological and political subtleties of those books, the one thing I didn't have was the meaning behind the names. For future issues I'd like to see just about anything on TBOINS, but without having read *The Castle of the Otter* I don't know what's been done already. How about an examination of the *The Fifth Head of Cerberus*? God knows the book deserves some sort of recognition, and although I've pencilled notes to myself in the margins and read the whole thing about six times there are still one or two puzzles I'd like to see cleared up: Ditto the UOTNS: when Yesod is supposed to be the universe higher than our own, why are there so many references to it being previous to our own? For example, in Chapter XXII, "They are unborn. Surely you know that time runs backward when the ship sails swiftly." In the *Interzone* 17 interview Gene Wolfe mentions a chronology in the US edition of *Free Live Free*. If you ever need a space-filler how about printing that for us foreigners?

Well, we'll see. It's presumably copyright, although I

don't care about that so much as respecting people's wishes. See editorial for info. on TFHOC. As for Yesod, *hmm*, this is an interesting question. One thing to bear in mind is that Yesod is not part of our universe, so that to say it is "previous" or "ahead" doesn't necessarily make much sense. If you buy the explanation Severian gives in the "Key to the Universe" chapter of TCOTA, there have been a succession of universes, blooming like flowers. In one of those universes a race of beings akin to humanity discovered how to transcend time by opening up a passageway to Yesod. I would argue that Yesod is accessible from any time, previous or future to our own (I believe it is unclear whether the race which opened up the passageway was actually in this universe's past or future, leaving aside the question of whether or not Severian exists in our universe: I used to think he did, but that was just because I'd paid too much attention to book jackets. Now I would say "not necessarily," although it is certainly a similar one).

The sense in which I take Yesod to be "higher" is twofold. First, it is not subject to the regular rules of the universe. Severian hints that it will escape the heat-death of our own universe; it will go on existing, it has always existed, etc. You will notice the theological images in this, and indeed, the beings in Yesod could be described as at least semi-divine. The second is that energy in Yesod seems to be at a state of higher excitation than in ours (or however you want to put it). This is implied by the fact that the Urth's sun is rejuvenated by a "white fountain," along with the explanation that white fountains and black holes are just opposite ends of the same process, like water falling into and out of a hole or a stream flowing downhill (it also implies that there are universes lower than ours...or perhaps just parts of ours at lower levels of energy).

Joan Gordon  
Commack, NY

I liked TBOG very much, and appreciated very much your sending it. Gene is both very modern (deconstructing plot, narrative, time, reality like mad) and old fashioned (a definite, non-negotiable ethical and spiritual stand). Not enough is written about him, fans don't pay enough attention to him. He makes himself impossible to pigeonhole. Your zine is very welcome. Gene told me--and no doubt you--how impressed he was by this effort.

Václav KHEŽ  
Brno, Czechoslovakia

Though it's really impossible to find or buy fiction in English published in the USA or Great Britain (science fiction and fantasy included) in this country, I just happened to be given a January issue of *Locust* with your fanzine mentioned. I'm truly a great fan of Gene Wolfe,

or more specifically, of the work by Gene Wolfe. I'm 36, have a diploma in English and Czech language and literature, and am now a part-time freelance translator.

It's really a shame when the one of someone you admire is not available freely. I hope your job as a translator provides you with access to Wolfe. Have you ever translated Wolfe into Czech?

Julian Todd  
Cambridge, England

Gene Wolfe is a writer who has never had to write very fast for a living, and has had what appears to be a very stable lifestyle (no divorces etc), has always been willing to take his time over his fiction, and put in a lot of effort in his research, in the style, and in erasing out all the non-deliberate traces of his personality from his art. And I find that a shame in some ways, because it would be interesting to see what he would come up with if he was short of time, and had to rely on just his wits to write. Like Phil Dick in many of his spurious books, where he kept re-using his older ideas which were good. Wolfe is exceptional in that after writing less than ten books he was considered a master, and everyone respected him unquestionably (though maybe that was just because of his age, or being very charismatic). I read his interview in *Science Fiction Studies* the other week and I thought it was great. I have personal philosophical disagreements with him, in particular the contradiction that one should explore the universe, never stop thinking, never stop discovering new things that you didn't know before and that there are certainly invisible spiritual entities that are not the product of someone's deranged mythological imagination, that we know an unexplainable quantity of information about, and be a flexible Catholic to the point that you don't know what parts of it have been invented in your own mind. I criticize Wolfe's beliefs because I've had too many of my friends in college becoming Christians recently, so I'm a little sensitive toward that sort of thing. There is a danger that Wolfe, the expert in mythology, becomes a myth himself, and no longer a person who writes. Don't let this happen in your magazine, I liked the stuff very much.

Certainly some very personal feelings. I don't want to appear churlish in the face of praise, but actually I have recently been noting how a "darker" more troubled aspect of Wolfe has been appearing. Look at the introduction to his collection of poems for Rosemary for example, where he says how much he has wanted to do, and how little he actually has done. Or the very depressed sections of *Arete* where *Latro* contemplates suicide. Does this reflect something from the author's personal life? Who can say. On your point about contradiction, I don't have so much of a problem. People are strange, most of us probably have contradictions. With Wolfe this is all the more likely

because he doesn't adhere to positions you might expect (e.g. he's a Catholic but loves the pagan gods). At the risk of sounding sick, I believe this is due to his willingness to think for himself. He's not the only one of course, and as you say, isn't beyond criticism for his beliefs. I've always thought of him as a "writer's writer," remembering his famous comment about writing on the back of a pick-up truck if necessary. I did like the comment about Wolfe as myth...

Mark Feber  
La Honda, CA

If any author deserves a fanzine, it is Gene Wolfe (except, perhaps, for Jack Vance—but maybe there already is one for him?) I must confess to not having read the chapter by chapter commentary in *Soldier of the Mist*; that will have to wait until I finish unpacking all my books, and my own copy sees the light of day again. However, I enjoyed the rest of it sufficiently to subscribe (or whatever it is that one does with a fanzine). Being a fairly rabid Gene Wolfe fan, you can probably expect some sort of submission from me in the future, but for now I have to get settled in my new home. Since you seem to have tracked critical writings on Gene Wolfe; it would be useful (at least to me) if you were to publish a bibliography of critical writings on him to date.

Some critical writings are listed in Joan Gordon's book on Wolfe (*Starmont House*), but nothing recent. At the moment I don't have any plans to list such writings; perhaps readers could send in information which I could collate? Incidentally, Gordon Benson Jr (who did the Wolfe bibliography in *Otter*) is compiling an updated list. For a new version of *Otter* coming?

Charlie Mills  
Trumansburg, NY

In general I was favorably impressed with your effort. In particular I appreciated your research on ladies' names, hagiography, et al.; the whole has a literary quality appropriate to its subject. I was amused however, to find what's-its-name in Greece confronted with the same problem (essentially) as the protagonist of Effinger's *The Wolfe's of Memory*. (No, just kidding, it was really *Wolves*.) I shall have to read that one as soon as I can find a copy.

We have also been discussing (over bitnet) whether Peace is a genre work or not. Charlie had said it was *sf* because "though the explicit content of the book is pretty mundane, Wolfe is a science fiction author." An interesting question that needs more space than I've got, however.

WAHF: Peter Iizerott, West Germany, who notes that SOTM will be published there in September 1989.



## A Reader's Warm and Temperate Love for Gene

Peter Itzerott

Part 1: Conditio Humana.

"Children do not, like adults, distinguish between the daily and the unusual and therefore often choose a middling path. They find interesting what is hardly noticed by adults and pass over the most unlikely events." The Fifth Head of Cerberus, p. 10.

Well, I do not speak from out of the blue. Surely you have loved (that's pretty frequent, after all). You know what it means to make love; the stroking, the touched warm or cool skin, it's firmness or softness, its tender, almost superphysical or grasping, perhaps painful touch, the playful wet gliding of the tongue.

This, in the craft and art of writing (in an extensive sense) is the style; the selection and order of words, which triggers the fantasy of the reader (providing he is not just just wasting his time). It works as a psychological preparation (akin to tenderness) for the reader to be given over to the string of letters. Allowing oneself to be enchanted by the author's fantasy is a submission which unleashes one's own, transforming the pale framework of letters into an opulent and shining picture breathing with new life.

Gene, how can I make plain what I want to say? So many thoughts on my mind. So complex. I don't know where to start, where to go, and where to end.

"And though you remind me of the old man's kestrel, that sat on a perch for twenty years and then flew off in all directions..." Claw of the Conciliator, p. 78.

It is *not* the case that in the act of reading the reader only perceives an abstract string of letters. Rather, the only seemingly passive influx of information is accompanied by active imagination. Put the book aside. Which do you remember; the vivid scene or the printed page? Have a look through the books on your shelves. Do you remember (where you can remember anything) their contents or certain strings of letters—certain words on pages?

This theme in its unique combination of actual emotions in emotionally loaded images and sober flow of information is specifically human; part of our condition. There is no emotion without thought, and vice versa (here I assume that the feeling of having no emotions is an emotion itself). We have no word for the basic unity of emotion and thought; which makes it difficult for most people to accept the fact.

Didn't I want to tell you about my love for Gene's books?

"...the fluttering scraps of night came after us..." The Claw of the Conciliator, p. 93.

Among those who take hallucinogens or opiates and who often and intensively remember their dreams (and frequently experience this suggestive state on the verge of falling asleep or waking up) one can sometimes see their astonishment about the fact that down-to-earth-reality always gets its way over the more internal reality of such states. Why are these internal states not equally constitutive of being human? That hallucinations are a "lesser" reality is only an argument for superficial people; since everyday reality exists basically in the form of neuron activity in a nervous system of a given brain and nowhere else.

Similarly powerful and always asserting itself is the role of everyday language, the style of the usual narration, as compared to more experimental styles, such as Gene's writing. The conventional style imitates the account of events in an ordered, chronological way. Events are like beads on a string; unlike anything that really happens, or unlike any process in our minds. Thinking as a string of beads, not as voiceless speaking.

"Sometimes when all our attention is thus focused on memory, our eyes, unguided by ourselves, will distinguish from a mass of detail some single object, presenting it with a clarity never achieved by concentration." The Claw of the Conciliator, p. 21.

Relativity theories about the physical universe, for example, reject the basic element of this conventional style. That is, synchronicity and the common chronological ordering of events, or, the possibility of equating the process of experiences and feelings *within* oneself with those *within* different beings in a different referential framework.

Still, this conventional style is the most simple, most powerful, most self-evident, and most dominant way to communicate thoughts that is available on the market.

Part 2: Two Basic Styles.

"The brown book I carry says there is nothing stranger than to explore a city wholly different from all those one knows, since to do so is to explore a second and unsuspected self. I have found a thing stranger; to

explore such a city after one has lived in it for some time without learning anything of it." The Sword of the Lictor, p. 8.

In all "realistic" and, if we want to be precise, in all "experimental" writing, there are but two basic styles. A phenomenon like a beautiful sunset for instance can be labelled directly; "this beautiful sunset," or "she loved this beautiful sunset in the archipelago of the cormorans." Or it can be labeled indirectly; that is, by a description of the sunset that does not even have to be mentioned by name. Here the concept is to trigger a feeling of the sunset's beauty within the readers mind. And as you can see, reader, I don't believe I could depict a fitting example. It is understood in our voiceless dialog (me in my deep blue Biedermeier study sending out my monolog to you; to the unknown places where you are at this moment—wouldn't I want you to be somewhat older, and pleasant, and female, and I would know you—and we would silently converse) that there are more blends than pure forms, and that it is Gene's frequent stylistic trick to employ indirect labels in the guise of direct ones. Only after many pages, and sometimes even a few books, that the earlier and the later feeling can meet and embrace. (Are you waiting for an example? Then you haven't read carefully.)

"Its color was nearly indigo, and like the indigo shadows seen at evening on a snowy day, it seemed to slip silently along, sinuous and freezing; but..." The Sword of the Lictor, p. 13.

On the Natural History of Civilization.

"The past stood at my shoulder, naked and defenceless as all dead things, as though it were time itself that had been laid open by the fall of the mountain. Fossil bones protruded from the surface in places, the bones of mighty animals and of men. The forest had set its own dead there as well, stumps and limbs that time had turned to stone." The Sword of the Lictor, p. 87.

Gene's narration about the birth of a new sun, comprising of five volumes, is located in a future when artifacts of human culture disintegrate into geological layers. You don't believe?

"Deeper than those lay the buildings and mechanisms of humanity. (And it may be that those of other races lay there as well... ) I saw metals there that were green and blue in the same sense that copper is said to be red or silver white, colored metals so curiously wrought that I could not be certain whether their shapes had been intended as works of art or as parts for strange machines, and it may be indeed that among those unfathomable peoples there is no distinction." The Sword of the Lictor, p. 88.

If you and I stood by the weathered splints of bone of

an Australopithecine or a homo habilis, looking into the concrete gorges of New York or Tokyo, and you thought it rational to say that the path of history was from simple and primitive (and look, I am already threatening with my fist, the left one, with sparkling eyes) to more complex and higher (there you are with a balk eye, and another one) my reply would be: The first urban and complex cultures, so complex that they had covered drainpipes in their streets, were built on the Indus, long before Sumer, the Semite empire of Accade; before Babylon and the pyramids. The big Roman baths (and I am serious here) were perfect buildings of an urban civilization that was not equalled again until today, and will never be again. The simple vibrates in periodic interplay with the complex, and sometimes it is but a clever move of the complex to appear in a guise: simple and primitive.

"Yet as I walked, I saw it as an insect may be said to see the face in a portrait over whose surface it creeps. The tiles were of many shapes, though they fit together so closely, and at first I thought them representations of birds, lizards, fish and suchlike creatures...living forms seemed to appear in them as the forms of actual animals appear from the intricate geometries of complex molecules." The Sword of the Lictor, p. 88.

This leads me into Part 3, and Gene's angel-like beastly kaleidoscope of extraterrestrial life and the secret of the "analeptic alzabo."

"Revealing a face that was at once handsome, inhuman and familiar." The Urth of the New Sun, p. 34.

Coming next issue!

We should finally be able to finish off *Soldier of the Mist* and move onto *Soldier of Arete*.

Also up for grabs is a piece on holographic presentation, which looks at the issue of how Wolfe's writing often contains the sum of the whole in any part (like a hologram).

I also have an article on hand where I drew a map of the Citadel; the inner part of Nessus. It probably couldn't be used for wayfinding, but it's the first of its kind.

The rest? Well, that's up to you. TBOG is ready for articles or reviews and letters at all times, and in fact I would rather put your words in here than mine. Behind your efforts, let there be found your efforts!

I call it how I see it

A Column of Opinion

You know, this column is my breathing space. It's where I say things that might upset the pseudo-rational tenor of the rest of the zine (it also gives you a chance to snip this part off, and no-one need be the wiser). I had a similar column in a zine I used to "do" in the UK (quote marks are needed because it died with issue 2...which is where we're up to with TBOG in case you hadn't noticed). The title of this column is *very* disingenuous don't you think? It implies that here is this poor down-trodden person, simply *struggling* to keep his head above water while all around him the Forces of Evil wish to pull him down, and thwart his plans. I like that image, so I'll keep the title.

Last time you may recall that I sounded off about Asimov's lack of scientific know-how. The response, such as it was, came along the lines that Asimov simply *must* be scientifically literate because he has a PhD. I got a similar response when I quoted myself on sf-lovers on notewens. I've already noted the evidence that despite this, he still makes fundamental scientific errors, and seems to have no conception of the sociology or *practice* of science, as opposed to the idealistic theories he was taught in high school. (This latter is a sure sign in my book that he is not a practicing--i.e., researching--scientist; sure, he's interested in science; but he himself is not a scientist.) And I've already mentioned this whole appeal to authority thing in the lettercol. It may sound quite minor but it has larger implications; you have to realize that the elevation of the concept of "expertise" sometimes has to be challenged (like the issues that surround AIDS research).

Having an attitude.

Anyway, this time around I want to mention a new magazine that has appeared. This is *The New York Review of Science Fiction*, which is currently up for a Hugo in the best semi-prozine category. When it first came out last year I thought "oh, great, a really intelligent and articulate magazine with some interesting big names." I started subscribing with #2 (thus missing the Wolfe poem in #1...oh, well). Almost immediately of course, it attracted criticism (e.g., in *OtherRealms*) for being elitist, and more specifically for having an attitude of "we know best." Well, we've all met this before, and I must say that usually I'm among those who pan trekkie books, the latest fantasy garbage and so on.

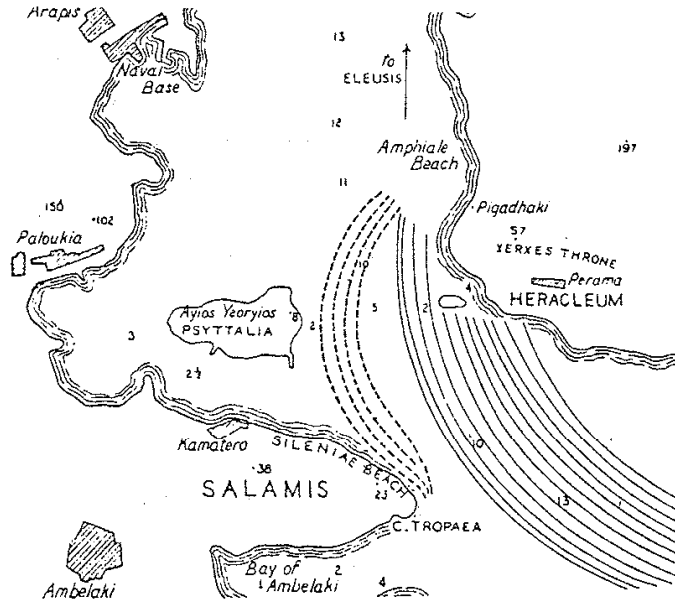
To a degree I wouldn't have thought possible though, they seem determined to live up to a stereotypical model of themselves as being part of the New York, East coast

glitterati, which I for one find suggestive of a lack of imagination. (Maybe it sells more copies.) Certainly in the "editorial" for #9 (May) they seem to be overly in love with themselves ("we're damn, freakin' good"--what kind of a word is *freakin'* anyway; surely they're being coy, *fucking* is the word anyone else would use). Now, this is all supposed to be funny you see. But really it's pretty tame stuff, certainly nothing more than the sophomoric humor of a school magazine. Another thing which is kind of strange are their own ads proclaiming that they are full of "impenetrable prose." Not really. Sure, their contributors are more likely to know the provenance of the phrase "the plot thickens" (the Duke of Buckingham), but their articles are not impenetrable, just longer than average. Don't confuse length with difficulty, folks.

Fortunately for us, the editors rarely contribute articles or reviews (with some exceptions) and rely instead on a wide-ranging group of reviewers like Chip Delaney, Brian Stableford, Tom Whitmore and Joan Gordan (who reviewed *There are Doors*). And in fact for a monthly magazine there's always enough to make you appreciate their effort (being an Ed. yourself helps). If you can get past the aura of self-congratulation that packages the contents and read what their contributors are saying, it ain't half bad.

For instance, the latest issue has an article by Brian Stableford on plotting (taken from his book on how to write science fiction?) You wouldn't think anything interesting could be made out of this (it sounds more like a subject for a workshop, doesn't it) but he does a pretty good job. I'm more inclined now than before, at least, to believe there's something interesting to be learned from thinking about these seemingly boring topics. A little.

As it happens, *TNYRSF* is in the same Hugo category as *Interzone*, the main sf mag in the UK. Stableford has a similar "how to" piece in its latest issue. Beyond that, the two mags aren't very comparable, even if we leave aside the fact that one's fiction and the other's licrit. *Interzone* has artwork, reviews (some by John Clute), a sense of politics. The *Review* is artless (pun intended) elitist, and has a sense of sales. There is less there than meets the eye, but it's not as bad as the critics say. Nevertheless, and though I've been talking about the *Review*, if you're voting for the Hugos this year, I ask you to mark *Interzone*. They're the good guys, at least theoretically. The *Review* can look after itself; bad guys are always interesting.



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