

“One Rejection Too Many” by Patricia Nurse (1978)



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Writing Context & SF Setting: Parody, the Recent Past & Time Travel Paradoxes

- The story was published in 1978 and seems to be set during that time of the late 1970s – how do we know?
 - Real people who appear in the story: Isaac Asimov was Editorial Director of *Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine* and George H. Scithers was editor
 - The 'Gong Show' (mentioned in the story) was still on television, at that time
- The story parodies the difficulties authors encounter when trying to their stories get published, time travel scenarios, Isaac Asimov, and science fiction stories
- A PARODY is a very particular type of satire, making fun of, a specific person, art form, etc. (it is related to satire but is much more specific and does not necessarily involve the seriousness of satire)
- Ironically, this story was published in *Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine*!

SF Speculative Scenario in the Story

- What if a time traveller were angered in some way, what might they do to the object of their anger, given their ability to travel through time?
- What are the possibilities of what could happen in such a scenario?
 - **TIME TRAVEL 'PARADOX' USED TO ENACT REVENGE**
- The Title significance points to the speculative scenario
 - Rejection leads to revenge through the use of time travel = “necessary corrections to our timeline” (Nurse) = time travel paradox

Time Travel Paradoxes & Parody of Science Fiction

Time Travel Paradox (aka the grandfather paradox):

- The hypothetical travelling through time to the past is dangerous; one might unknowingly encounter one's own grandfather, for example, and just through the encounter, change the future and possibly erase your own future existence

Parody

- a very particular satire, making fun of, a specific person, art form, etc.
- **This week's story is a parody of science fiction in general, and in particular, of the scientific/philosophical and SF concept of time travel paradox, and also of Isaac Asimov (the real person, especially in his role as editor(ial Director) of *Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine*)**

SF & literary Devices in the story

- Title significance
- Epistolary Format (story is told in a series of letters written between two characters)
- Parody
- Humour
- Time Travel Paradox
- Cautionary Tale (it is not advisable to anger a time traveller!)
- Characterization (round & dynamic)
- Irony – all of the types: situational, dramatic, verbal
- Plot Conflicts (person vs. self, vs. person, vs. society, vs. nature)

SF & literary Devices in the story, cont'd

- **the Four Core SF Concepts:** Invention, exploration, discovery, transformation
- **Theme:** the main point, big idea the author is trying to get readers to think deeply about (can be explicitly stated or implicitly present – for readers to interpret)
 - *The story's theme is related to the parody of time travel paradox and science fiction publishing & to the title significance*
- **Open or closed ending?**
 - What is the significance of the magazine editor's name change at the end of the story?
 - It is a CLOSED ending because the 'problems' have been resolved through the time travel paradox

Deeper Thematic Issues in the Story

- *The story's theme is related to the parody of time travel paradox and science fiction publishing & to the story's title significance*
- *The parody of science fiction itself, and the humour, propel the theme*
- *Isaac Asimov is 'erased' and George H. Scithers is 'created' out of the time travel paradox*
- *'Justice' prevails for the SF writer, once the "timeline is corrected" by Val the time traveller (through the time travel paradox)*
- *A humorous theme: be careful when rejecting a science fiction author's or time traveller's story – because you never know when the science fiction devices will ironically take revenge on you (i.e. time travel paradox)!*

An Important Final Note about Academic Integrity

- ▶ **Do NOT use any form of generative AI (ChatGPT, advanced Grammarly tools, etc.)**
- ▶ **You are not supposed to ‘research’ the internet for ideas about our assigned short stories....(but if you do):**
 - ▶ **Make sure you quote and cite any and all external sources used in your submissions. (Again, you are NOT supposed to go outside of our course at all; there is no reason to go outside our course IF you are doing your own, authentic learning of the course materials).**
 - ▶ Try engaging what the internet source ‘said’ about the story—what does it mean, do you agree or disagree, etc.?
 - ▶ Always highlight YOUR OWN ideas about any story we cover in the course—if you are confused about a story, it’s okay to say so (asking questions and highlighting what is not understood are the best ways to learn something new!)
 - ▶ **Depending on the amount and severity of the uncited material and/or unauthorized use of generative AI, a zero grade, or a zero grade/failure in the course and a comment on the student’s transcript can result.**

THE END

