

U.M. PRESS

The Boomer Flats Gazette



早川書房

HELLO again and welcome to issue two of the Boomer Flats Gazette. This has taken a wee bit longer than I had first envisioned. Material has been exceeding slow in arriving and the month long heat wave has made it very uncomfortable here in my third floor aerie. But enough of that because 'Here We Are!' In this issue I examine the multiple extant endings for RAL's MORE THAN MELCHISEDECH. We have a piece of short fiction "Oh Happy Double-Jointed Tongues" reprinted from 'Son of GPIC' (the Oklahoma Science Fiction Writers newsletter) by one Major Audifax O'Hanlon (Unretired), of whom RAL says "He believes that I am one of the characters he created, and I believe that he is one of the characters that I created." There's also a short bit by our friend Mr. Michael Swanwick and comments from some of our subscribers. Hope you enjoy it.

Steve Pasechnik has asked me to alert you that Edgewood Press (see address adver. page 21a) is seeking scholarly essays on the fiction of RAL for a collection, THE ASTROBE PAPERS. Essays can be on a novel, a story, a series of works, recurring themes or motifs, almost anything as long as it pertains to Lafferty's work. Payment is \$35 and two copies of the book. So come on readers and try your hands and imaginations. If the essays aren't long enough for book publication there is a certain small fanzine publisher who'd be glad to get them. You're a winner either way.

Dan Knight
Weston, On.

OH HAPPY DOUBLE-JOINTED TONGUES!

By Major Audifax O'Hanlon
(unretired)

"Of the great war of the 1940's, what do you remember most?" a forty-five year old child asked me today. "Was it the heroism, the pageantry, the blood and death? Are these what you most remember?"

"No, I don't remember those things hardly at all," I said. "If they happened, and I doubt it, they didn't leave much impression. I remember hard work, and tedium interspersed with it, and I remember the happy double-jointed tongues that made it all bearable. Oh, those tongues!"

"I don't understand you," he said. "Do you mean real tongues that people have in their mouths and talk with?"

"Yeah, those," I said. "Our guys kept them in their mouths most of the time, except when they took them out to sharpen them with emery stones. Oh, those double-jointed tongues and their double-jointed talk!"

"Could you give me an example of that double-jointed talk?" he asked.

"Yeah, Corporal Lonnie Sweetwater is an example," I told him.

"If this thing is ever over with and I get home, there'll be a brass band playing for me there," Lonnie told me one day. "I bet there's not one guy in three who'll have a brass band playing for him when he gets home."

"There's many a slip between the stops and the mouthpiece, Lonnie," I said. "Maybe

the brass band won't be there the day you return. Maybe they won't know you're coming. Maybe somebody else will have your celebration crowded out at the railway station."

"We don't have a railway station in my town. It'd be stupid to have a railway station when we don't have a railroad. We don't have a road either. We don't have a post office or a telephone. What we got when we want to send a message up from Flatland to Our Town is a female crow named Roxie. She can talk up a storm. I'll just ask her to tell my folks that I'm home, and she'll fly up that steep air to my place and tell them with embellishments. And I'll bet you that our eleven-piece band will be blowing and banging when I get there."

"An eleven-piece band, Lonnie? That's an unusual number. What are the instruments?"

"We don't know the names of the instruments in our town. They're just horns and drums. There was a bunch of people having a festival in Green Peach Valley a few years ago, and they had a brass band. A quick flood came up and swept them and all their things away. 'Save them!' my grandfather bawled out, and each of us (there were only eleven of us in our town besides my old grandfather) ran down the mountain and each of us saved one of them from the torrent. Then we carried them up to the mountain-top and were mighty pleased with ourselves. 'I meant for you to save the people, not save the damned drums and horns,' my grandfather hollered. 'Well, it's too late to do anything about it now. Maybe this will work out better anyhow,' grandpa said.

"So we had eleven instruments from the

brass band and we learned to play them that very day. But there were twelve of us in town, including grandpa, and only eleven instruments. We hoped grandpa would die to make it come out even, but he never did. Then I went down the mountain and joined the army, so that made everything even behind me. I'm going to try to bring my bugle home with me if I ever go, and then we'll have a twelve piece band for the twelve of us."

"Lonnie Sweetwater was the bugler for our company," I said. "And he was good. He could jazz a bugle, or rag it, or swing it. There is much more to Lonnie's account, but I don't believe you're quite ready for it."

"I begin to get a hint of what you mean," the forty-five year old child said, "but only a hint. Could you give me another example?"

"Adolph. PFC Adolph Martin," I said. "Adolph had a letter in his hand, and I knew that he was going to show it to me, when he gave me the story that went with it. Adolph did tell some pretty tall stories. One of them was about thirteen feet tall at the shoulder."

"A thing that many people don't believe is that the North American Elephant still survives in the salt-water thickets of Louisiana," Adolph told me this day. "This creature is halfway between the Mammoth and the Mastodon, and 'North American Elephant' is as good a name as any for it. People who don't know their way around the salt-water thickets don't believe that it still survives, but it's the biggest and survivingest land animal in the world. We have one at home. Her name is Aunt Emma. She is the sweetest natured beast in creation, and the most intelligent. My wife,

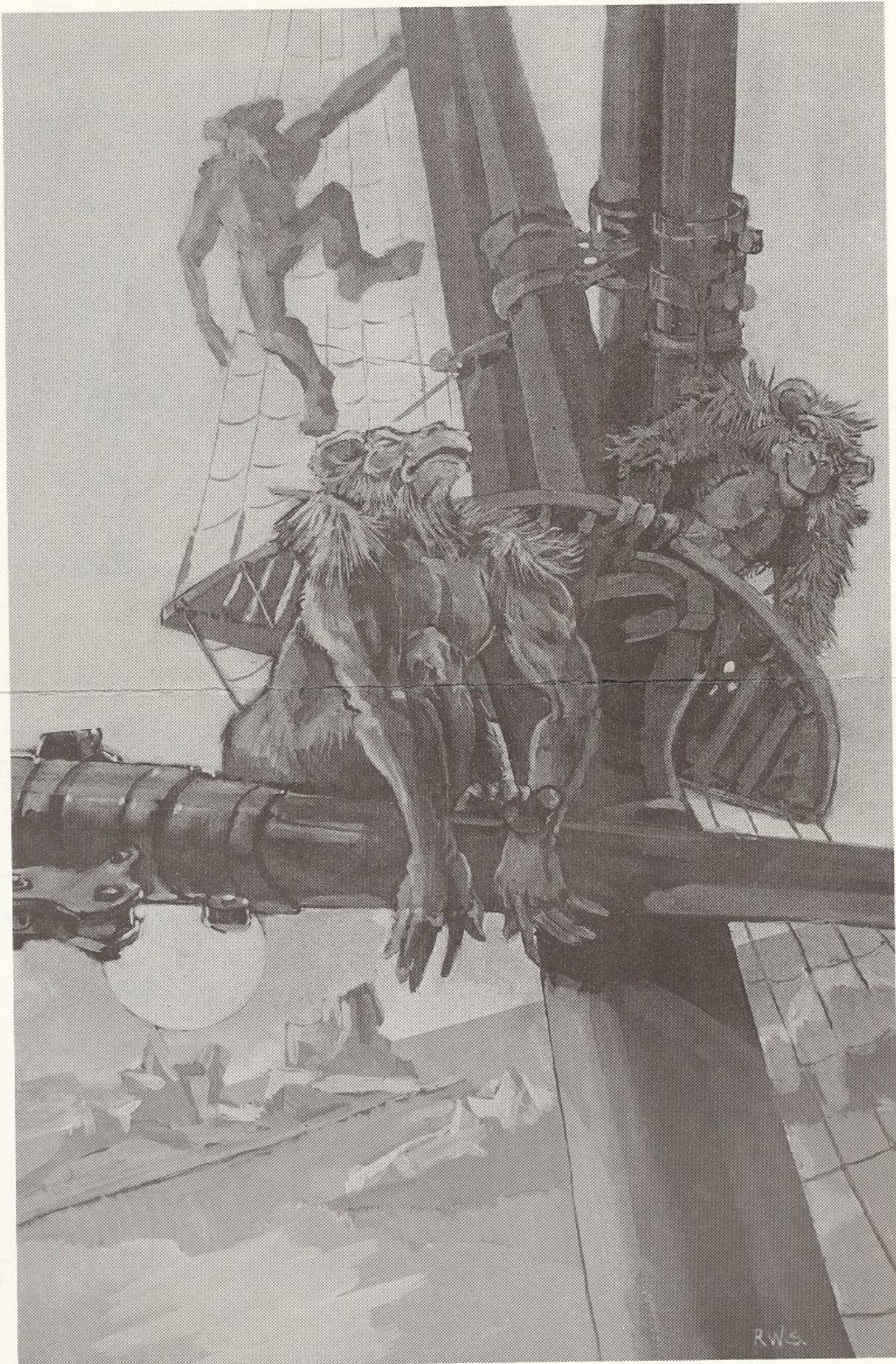
I'll confess it, is off to the brush-arbor honky-tonks most of the time, to the neglect of our children. But big old Aunt Emma takes care of our kids perfectly. My wife, I'll confess it, can't write; but Aunt Emma writes her letters for her. Aunt Emma, she'll take a pencil in the end of her trunk, and write. And she writes a fine hand, or maybe I should say 'a fine trunk'. Here's one of the letters now. Look at it. I want you to be convinced of this. Isn't that good writing for an elephant?"

"Uh, in French? I didn't know that the North American Elephant could write French. But Aunt Emma isn't a very good speller, is she?"

"That's what they call 'fanatic spelling,'" Adolph said. "She spells it just the way that my wife pronounces it. My wife, I'll confess it, isn't a very good pronouncer. But Aunt Emma knows that I want to hear my wife's voice, and I sure can hear it in that fanatic spelling. There are experts who analyze handwriting. Show this to one of them. A real expert would look at this and immediately say that it was written by a female North American Elephant. Look at the way she makes those T's. She's all elephant."

I did give the letter to a fellow in Battery C who had a book on Handwriting Analysis and who said that he was an expert. And this was the analysis of the handwriting that he came up with:

"This was written by a female in her mid-twenties. She is an up-beat, uncomplicated, unworried creature, happy and high-spirited, probably given to joking and pranking. Look at the way she makes those



R.W.S.

T's. Perfectly well-adjusted. Nothing wrong with her at all."

"But the handwriting analyst didn't know that she was an elephant," the forty-five year old child protested when I had quoted the report to him.

"Probably didn't think it was necessary," I said.

"I begin to get a little more of the flavor," the child said. "Do you have another example of this double-jointed talking?"

"Then there was Sergeant Robert Graygoslin," I said.

"Hey," Graygoslin told me one day. "They're talking about keeping me in the army after the war is over to be a special rifle instructor. Well, I am the best rifle shot in our company, and ours is the best rifle-shooting company in the world. And I could teach the guys to shoot as well as I do, but I'd have to take them back to East Tennessee to do it."

"Tell me about it, Robert," I said.

"We have a ravine three miles wide in our county," Graygoslin said. "That's too far to holler across. So we talk across the ravine with a rifle. We'd cut a message in the nose of a bullet. In our county we all have good eyes and can read the leastest writing there is. Then we put the bullet in the rifle and shoot it across the ravine, and we take the fellow we're trying to talk to in the right round. Then he..."

"In the right round, Graygoslin? What's the right round?"

"How do you get along as well as you do when you don't know the name of the most fundamental thing there is? In the right

round of the rump. Or we shoot him in the left round if he's left-arsed. Then he cuts the bullet out of his round with a pocket knife, reads the message on it, scratches the answer on a bullet of his own, and he shoots it off and catches the first fellow in his right round, and then..."

"At three miles, Robert? That's shooting!"

"That is shooting. We're all good. We can really shoot where I come from. You shoot the bullet anywhere else and the fellow's going to have trouble finding it. But you shoot it into his right round, and he knows where it is. We used to carry on conversations like that for a long while. They were a fine bunch of fellows around there, on both sides of the ravine. They had only one defect."

"Oh, what was that, Robert?"

"They all walked a little bit tender. Hey, I courted a girl by rifle that way all one summer. She was quite a talker, quite a talker. You might say that I got just about full of her talk by the time the summer was over. She wasn't a very original thinker, and half the time she shot unmarked bullets. But I appreciated the thought of them."

So was Robert Graygoslin quite a talker.

The forty-five year old child began to look as though he had eaten too many green apples. "Yes, I begin to get the flavor," he said. "Maybe too much flavor. Could you give me another sample of the stuff?"

"There was PFC Benedict Boudreau," I said. "Boudreau's wife broke out in technicolour rashes every time she ate the special local variety of ramps. Ramps are ugly cousins of onions, but of a much greater power and scope."

"That rash that breaks out on her, it's special," Boudreau said. "You look at it close and it's newsprint, or it's news picture. Well, it's really newsprint from the Camptown Daily Delineator. She even breaks out in funny papers. That's a fact, and they're funnies that nobody ever saw before. They're pretty good too. Well, people come from miles around to read the newsprint and pictures on my wife after she's eaten some of our special ramps. But, due to her extreme modesty, there's always a couple of type inches on her that she won't let anybody look at. And it's always interesting and critical news where they have to break it off."

"Are they ever curious enough to get the paper themselves for that day and see what it says there? The Camptown Daily Dineator, you say?"

"That's the hitch, Major," Boudreau said. The atlas doesn't even show any Camptown, Louisiana. And the dates on the paper that rash out of her are always quite a few years in the future."

"That would be interesting to read."

"Come down to our place and see us after the war then. It's Roanoke, Louisiana in Jeff Davis Parish. We had hopes for a while that my wife was cured of her rash. A new doctor thought he had her well from it. Then she broke out all over again. She's got to quit eating those ramps or there's no cure for her in this world. She promises to quit, and then she backsides again and breaks out even worse than before. I think she's clear out of control now that I'm overseas. Come see us sometime, though. The chances are that she'll really be backslid when you get

there., and you can read all the futuristic news you want to, and read the best comic strips in the world, and read that novel too."

"What novel?" I asked him.

"WAR AND PEACE, the longest novel in the world, unless there's a Japanese novel somewhere that's longer. People have begun to grumble that she should be prosecuted for plagiarism. But she's got a lawyer now, and he says not to worry, that nobody can do a thing to her for it, that the copyright ran out decades ago. Besides that, the version that breaks out on her is a little bit different. She's syndicated now and making good money, so she'll probably divorce me. The big money I make as a PFC in the army isn't nothing to her now. She'd got the running futuristic news working for her, and those comics which are at the same time the funniest and the raunchiest in the world, and the novel WAR AND PEACE that nobody knows how it's going to end. She's rich from the syndication."

"Isn't WAR AND PEACE going to end the same way Tolstoy made it end?"

"I don't think so, Major. The way she's rashing out with it, it looks like Napoleon is going to win in her version."

The forty-five year old child began to look as though he had eaten too many road-apples. "How many soldiers were there in your company?" he asked me.

"Two hundred and forty-six," I said, "and they were all masters of that double-jointed talk. Except me. I never could do it. But let me give you a couple hundred more examples of their talk."

"Ah, thank you. I have enough material

now," the forty-five year old child said. He put his notebook in his briefcase and walked away.

But it's nice that the children of today still take an interest in things like that.

*

A RICHNESS OF ENDINGS

Dan Knight

First off I'd like to make it clear that I do not profess any talent for textual analysis. Nor do I indulge in much literary criticism. A man who eats with his fingers has no business playing with knives. With that off of my chest let's see if we can have some fun here.

"One of the strangest of predictions states that part of the thirty-ninth life of Melchisedech (the part of the thirty-ninth life after his twenty-third year) shall be several times repeated. This happening shall be the coincident effector of the last fifty years or so of the World being several times repeated. Let us consider what this would entail--"

MANTIC PRELUDE (Enniscorthy Prophecy)

How I came to possess so many different endings to MORE THAN MELCHISEDECH (hereafter referred to as MTM) is a story in itself. How there came to be so many endings is also another tale, though it's one that only RAL

can tell. Let it suffice to say that by the time I sat down in the summer of 1991 to prepare the manuscript for publication I found myself with no fewer than five different endings (and before long would have a total of six!). The Mantic Prelude was true in a very literal sense. RAL had written what he'd promised.

Sharp readers (and good customers) will have recognized that chapter thirteen of MTM, the last part of ARGO, is a reworking of the novelette "Episodes of the Argo", published by my United Mythologies Press in 1990. There are some interesting differences though and here would be as good a place as any to start our tour.

The book version is a few thousand words longer than the "Episodes". Most of the extra wordage is accounted for by the telling of the incident at Wien on the Donau River and by the four page long puffer-fish story which loses the puffer fish and three pages of text when it shows up at the bottom of page thirteen in "Episodes". Though these two events account for the greater portion, it is the smaller differences that are the most interesting. In an extra page MTM's version tells us more about the Argo herself. We discover that she was once Dana Coscuin's ship 'Catherine', thus establishing a link between the four volume Dana Coscuin Chronicles and the Argo Mythos. You can find these interconnections throughout RAL's work. We meet Finnegan in the novel DOTTY and Dotty in DEVIL IS DEAD and "An Apocryphal Account of the Last Night of Count Finnegan on Galveston Island". And Enniscorthy Sweeny -- ah, well, we'll get back to Ennis in a bit.

In MTM we learn how it is that the

Laughing Prince of Tartary could be a power claimed neither by God nor by the Devil, an explanation we never receive in the shorter version (and no, I'll not tell you here. Read, or reread. It'll be fun). We also learn that the Argonaut's main strategy against evil is to slip into the probable future and effect changes there so that when the World arrives the obstacles will have already been dealt with. They can sail into probable futures but they can not go backwards in time. "It sounds like a science fiction idea or a blatt brained notion," Duffey gasps out when St. Brandon's wife (and that little theological difficulty is addressed as well) asks.

Though the greater part of extra material is in MTM there are things unique to the shorter version as well. The bulldog, Gunboat Smith's, exclamation that Casey is anticristos. Casey's profaning of Holy Argo, magically changing her name to Ship of Fools. Duffey's first encounter with his doppelganger (pp26-29). An encounter that does not take place in MTM.

Some of you may have also noted the effigy seamen Their origin is described in MTM and in one section we are told that Casey has mutilated the ones who stand in for Finnegans two holy companions. In both versions it is an effigy seaman who points out that Casey has become magnetic center of the world. This required RAL to add a couple of parenthesized comments in "Episodes" to smooth the intrusion over since all other references to the effigies are omitted.

From the "?" symbol in MTM onwards the two versions are identical. RAL and I had

both agreed that the "Episodes" ending was the one we preferred of the bunch. For my part I liked its strong optimism and atmosphere of hopeful expectation. And that would have been that.

Enter Gene Wolfe.

In the course of our regular correspondence I had mentioned to Gene my dilemma of the multiple endings and he had responded earnestly encouraging me to include them all. I had never seen a book (with the noted exception of those gaming books of a few years back) that had multiple endings and I have to admit I hesitated. But this is small press, I said to myself. Small press, the only place where "doing it the way it has always been done" doesn't yet have the power of a collapsed sun's gravity well (I am reminded of the motto emblazoned across the letterhead of Bryan Cholfin's Broken Mirrors Press- "random acts of senseless publishing"). I considered including them under separate cover but balked at the expense. I reread the endings. I spoke with RAL. Though he didn't see a problem with having multiple endings he did think it best to combine the strongest of the ideas into a single additional ending. I concurred and that was how the additional ending to be found in MTM, hereafter to be called M2, came into being.

Differences between MTM and M2

The addition of 'The Short Notes on Time and Related Things' is the first difference you encounter in M2. It's important. It is Duffey's manipulation of time that allows for the 'Seven Roads' phenomenon in the chapter of the same name and in the stand alone

version of the story published in 1975 as "From The Thundercolt's Mouth". Because eternity has infinite depth and time is only a way of measuring change, one might conceivably slice the moments thinner and thinner and live, as it were, between them. One would still be in time. There is no getting out of the thing as long as you're even partially material (embodied). But it would be similar to living the moments twice (or more). The soul skimming over the previously 'used' portions or fragments of time to establish additional or adjacent sequences of action. The kicker of course is that you can skim them but in another sense you are also in them and the more fractured you make the situation by this cutting up of the moments continuity the more fractured you make yourself. RAL foresaw this and attributed Duffey's confusion to it.

Instead of a dialogue with pseudo-Melchisedech on the shore in St.Louis, in M2 Duffey meets a young member of the Stranahan family. Sadly, he discovers that Vincent Stranahan, who would become one of his closest friends, has died in this future as a mere infant. A short time later he discovers that he, too, has never been born and is only a ghost (of a chance, or a probability, as it were). A very young and very precocious Teresa Piccone agrees to have Duffey born to her in another twenty years (which would seem to me to be a very un-Melchisedech thing to do; being born in a recorded historical sense, that is). We are left with a situation in which many parts of the world are in danger of becoming unreal should Duffey become fleshed. From our previous readings we know that these things never

happen in the Argo universe without a fight of some kind. There is a great battle coming and Duffey's existence is not assured.

It seems to me that there is a question here regarding the nature of time and the ability of a future event reorganizing in a literal sense all that came before.

Christians have always believed this, but it was a reorganization (as far as we know) along spiritual lines. Entire ancient civilizations didn't just disappear from the memory of the universe at Christ's birth (or did they?. How would you know?). I am thinking here only of MTM's own declared logic as represented by that remark of Duffey's to St.BRANDON'S wife that I quoted earlier in this essay. Something tells me that there's a stone in here somewhere. Whether it is the foundation stone of scripture remains to be seen.

It should be mentioned that in one ending the book closes abruptly at the point where Duffey leaves the river in 1923.

"Everything was before him. What adventures would there not be. The morning was bright with grace, and the tug-boats were chirping like birds. Melchisedech was out of the water. He slogged up a little shore to a town or city. He was twenty-three years old, and he had many sections of many lives still ahead of him."

No young Philip Stranahan. No Teresa Piccone. No pseudo-Melchisedech. We'll hereafter refer to this as the 'short ending'.

The young Stranahan of M2 comes from an unpublished ending that combined both the boy and the angel of MTM and "Episodes". Because only Duffey, of the two, can see the angel

that he's talking to the boy becomes a little confused. It's interesting to watch Duffey ride along the two simultaneous conversations. The following is excerpted from this version:

"Holy cow," the boy said. "How far did you swim?"

But Melchisedech was holding a conversation of his own, with God perhaps, or with his Angel, or with his own inner consciousness.

"It will be the same years over again," he said, "only better. I wonder how many times I have lived them, and how many more times I will live them?"

"This is the last and only time," his voice told him. "And it is not sure that you will live many of those years."

"But I can't die," he protested. "I died once, killed by the Laughing Prince of Tartary, and I have my own ashes here in a tobacco canister that once belonged to the King of Spain to prove it. I keep it always strapped to my body when I have a body, and strapped to my bones when I have bones. I can't die again."

"For he who lives more lives than one, More deaths than one must die," the voice said.

"Thou'rt not God," Melchisedech protested. "It would be very ungodly of God to be quoting Oscar Wilde. Maybe you are my angel and maybe you are myself. Is it the last time for the World, or for myself only?"

"The World lives its years only once. All the rest is your imagination, and your imagination will not be at all like the reality."

"I know better," Melchisedech said out loud with a touch of anger.

"Better than what, man?" the boy on the little pier questioned him. "I asked you how far you had swum."

"Oh, about eight thousand miles," Duffey said easily, "but the current was in my favor."

It is from this alternate version that the fact of Vincent Stranahan's infant death is also culled. Although Duffey asks about Teressa Piccone (we are told she is alive and six years old) we do not meet her. The story ends with Duffey doubting his kingship and existence. A doubt he puts to rest after contemplating the ashes of his own dead self in the canister strapped to his leg.

"Ah, yes, there are still my aromatic ashes in it, and the little flames are licking in and out of them. I love the smell of them. I always did smell good, as a king should."

RAL replaced the angel and the ashes with the meeting of Teressa and the promise of future mayhem already mentioned. In the unpublished alternate there is no mention of a threat to Philip's existence at its end. Duffey knew Philip, even in the version of reality where Vincent lived; so why it is that he appeared waivering in his probability in M2 is again a question that only the author could answer.

So far we have brushed over "Episodes", MTM, M2, the short ending, and this unpublished alternative that provided so much of the material for M2. There is still a sixth version to consider. I have already given you a taste of the thing at the very beginning of this essay. I call it the "Enniscorthy" version.

In this version the Mantic prelude, which

appears at the beginning of this article, comes before the start of the first chapter of the entire book. The ending is identical to the short ending with the notable exception of the following line in bold capital letters: END AND BEGINNING OF NEW LIFE SEGMENT OF MELCHISEDECH, added at the finish. There follows a space and then:
MANTIC EPILOG

"We have considered it. It entails a concept that can only be called 'The Eniverse*' as incredible amusement'. But it also entails rather chilling things. Melchisedech may not have many lives ahead of him. He may have two, or one, or only part of one. And the Last Fifty Years of the World will not be repeated an endless number of times. And how many of its several times are already used up? The World does seem rather too familiar, as though we have been here more than once before. And its last fifty years may be several years short of fifty.

"And why is that sad-faced sheep standing on the little shore that Melchisedech is climbing? This isn't sheep country. And why does it say in a human voice 'You know not the day nor the hour'?

"Sheep, you are a good omen," Melchisedech says. "Every time I live a sequence it gets better." But does it really? We can only hope that it does."
END OF ENNISCORTHY PROPHECY

(*- This is the spelling used in the manuscript. Whether it's a typo or intentional: Eniverse= Creation of Enniscorthy, I don't know. I've left it as is- ed.)

Enniscorthy Sweeny is the central figure in the short novel THE THREE ARMAGEDDONS OF ENNISCORTHY SWEENEY, found in the Pinnacle paperback of 1977, APOCALYPSES. If you reread the list of guests at Duffey's big party in MTM (the one where Casey is badgered into attending) you'll find Ennis' name mentioned. It seems to me that at one time RAL toyed with the notion of having all of MTM turn out to be another of Ennis' reality-bending (creating?) librettos, but later thought better of it. I have only ever seen the first and last pages of this particular early version of MTM and so can't say whether this thread or intrusion of Enniscorthy is maintained throughout the entire text. Personally, I'm happy that Ray decided to expunge it. In my estimation it is MTM that is the primary power here and that Enniscorthy Sweeny is only a reflection that has attracted to itself a number of the concepts and ideas that fell off of the edges of this greater thing. It isn't right that the tail should wag the dog. Even a tail as tricky as Ennis. And, after all, it's an awfully big dog: ARCHIPELAGO, DEVIL IS DEAD, MORE THAN MELCHISEDECH, PROMONTORY GOATS, HOW MANY MILES TO BABYLON, "Episodes of the Argo", "The Casey Machine", "From the Thundercolts Mouth", "Last Night of Count Finnegan", DOTTY, and, as we now know, the distantly related Coscuin Chronicles.

That pretty much concludes our quick assessment of MTM's multiple endings. One final thing I'd like to add however is a listing of the chapter titles to MTM. Partly through absentmindedness and partly by design, many of these were not used in UMP's

three volume edition of MORE THAN MELCHISEDECH. The thirteen chapters were titled as follows:

- 1- Early Boyhood of a Magus
- 2- Late Boyhood of a Magus
- 3- Hog-Butcher and Gadarene Swine
- 4- Tales of Chicago
- 5- Wilder Than Beggars
- 6- Tales of New Orleans
- 7- Tales of the Noontime
- 8- Tales of Midnight
- 9- The Future Begins Right Here
- 10- And Seven Roads Before My Feet
- 11- From The Thunder-Colt's Mouth
- 12- But Not Yet
- 13- Argo

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Michael Swanwick, award winning authour of STATIONS OF THE TIDE, is one of RAL's more visible supporters as this short piece attests. Look for another, much longer, essay by Msr. Swanwick in the October issue of AMAZING.

MYTHOLOGY

Michael Swanwick

I've spoken to R.A.Lafferty several times at conventions. But as he is a soft-spoken man and the surroundings were invariably noisy, I've only heard him speak once.

This one time occurred at Worldcon--I forgot which--in Chicago when I sat on a panel on "Mythology in Science Fiction." There on the dais were: Gene Wolfe, R.A.Lafferty, (Clive Barker), ME!, and (somebody else)*. I was pretty damned impressed.

Through most of the discussion Lafferty said nothing, apparently feeling he had nothing to add. Then somebody in the audience asked a question that engaged his interest. He reached for the microphone.

Holding the mike at arm's length, Lafferty launched into a long and serious reply. But he spoke so quietly that his voice did not carry to the microphone. Sitting two chairs away, straining to hear, I could not make out a single word he said.

Nor could the audience. By degrees it grew restless. It's ruder elements began shouting, "Louder!"

Finally--and this is an image I will carry to my grave--Gene Wolfe gently and with infinite respect took the microphone from Lafferty's hand and held it near his mouth and to the side, so that he could be understood. Lafferty smiled sweetly then and spoke the only words I've ever actually heard from his mouth: "Well, that was all I had to say."

There's a religious allegory to be milked from this incident, but I refuse to attempt it. This is what really happened and you can imagine how I felt.

*(The fifth man was Joseph Mayhew of the Library of Congress. I was there too-ed.)

Also heard from since issue one quietly (stealthily?) slipped into the world:
Al Doty of Monroe, CT. who says of RAL--
"...My first exposure to RAL came in 1972. I came across THE DEVIL IS DEAD in Mrs.Peterson's english class in high school. The copy was a battered paperback jewel that I found in a box. What gave it it's shine?

PHILIP K. DICK AWARD FINALIST

IRON TEARS

R. A. Lafferty

"No qualifications are necessary in recommending R. A. Lafferty's *Iron Tears*...a wonderful collection of Lafferty's uncategorizable short stories...*Iron Tears* gathers more first-rate Lafferty stories than I would have thought remained uncollected, and manages it in an attractive, affordable edition. This is a significant publishing event."

— Gregory Feeley
The Washington Post Book World

"The stories in *Iron Tears* are alive with the strange combination of beauty and inexplicable terror and wonder usually found only in dreams."

— James P. Blaylock

"Lafferty's quirky humor infuses most of these stories, as does his decidedly strange view of the world...A must buy for serious fans of Lafferty, or for that matter, anyone serious about being entertained."

— Don D'Ammassa
Science Fiction Chronicle

"In these wonderful stories Lafferty unfailingly puts us, in his own words, 'into a different juxtaposition with all things else in the world.' Nobody else does it better. In fact nobody does it at all — not like this. Lafferty is one of a kind, a magician of strange images made fleetingly recognizable, of familiar emotions made strange and new and haunting. A delight."

— Nancy Kress

"Lafferty belongs to a select group that includes James Joyce and Amos Tutuola, of writers who have reinvented the language of literature for themselves from the ground up."

— Michael Swanwick
from his Introduction

"Lafferty is...a word-slinger totally out of synch with today's slim-fast reductive rhetoric; a sly old buzzard who conjures up fables as lurid as Bible stories and tells them in a tornado of words wild enough to drive wood splinters through a windshield."

— Terry Bisson

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Edgewood Press P. O. Box 380264, Cambridge, MA 02238

Who knows? Who can say? It was by far the most unique reading experience I had encountered to that time.

Some things are so rich and flavourful that one can survive on them for years. Such was THE DEVIL IS DEAD. While the next twenty years were lean in literary calories, THE DEVIL IS DEAD was never far from thought and offered sustenance. It was a story that hit the spot, filled the void, said something that occupied the days with wonder and thought. It became the yardstick with which to measure a great deal. Many say 'I don't understand'. I say 'Who cares?' Get out that old moon whistle and blow. Blow hard. I may not know what he's talking about sometimes, but I know what he says and always love the way he says it. You're a slippery one sometimes, Mr. Lafferty."

Ned Brooks of Newport News, VA. had this to say:

"...The thought of translating Lafferty in Japanese really boggles my mind — first you would have to translate it into English! I am very doubtful about the explanation of why "Camels and Dromedaries" had to be translated as "Crocodile and Alligator" — I doubt if many of the American readers had any more idea than a Japanese what the difference between a camel and dromedary is. I myself am not at all clear on how alligators and crocodiles differ."

And that about ties things up for issue two. Hopefully there will be an issue three. That depends on you guys. So come on. Don't be shy. Send those cards and letters, essays short or long. (I would especially like to

hear from our European friends). I suppose that I should mention that MORE THAN MELCHISEDECH won the Readercon award for Best Novel by small presses for 1992. I'm quite proud. Also that my reprint of FALL OF ROME, restored to it's original title ALARIC, should be ready shortly (it's sitting next to my right elbow, packaged, addressed, and ready to go to press). In other news - Greg Ketter is still threatening to start publishing again (Hurray, Greg!) and if he does we may all finally get to read the conclusion of the Coscuin books. And both Edgewood Press (IRON TEARS) and Broken Mirrors Press (LAFFERTY IN ORBIT, SINDBAD) are looking at the remaining unpublished novels (as am I, for that matter). Patience and all will be revealed.

Until next time-

Correspondence should be addressed to Box 79777, 1995 Weston Rd., Weston, ON., Canada M9N-3W9 Write soon.

Dan

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