



Brought to you by: K.D. Wentworth, Uncle Guido and Simon McCaffery

Special "What's Your Star Wars Name?" Issue • July 1999

*** HELLO, OSFW! ***

The July meeting will be Friday, July 9th, at 7:00 P.M., at the Cyber Cafe in McFarlin Library at the University of Tulsa. Since the library is closed by 7:00 P.M., we will keep the door open until 7:30 P.M., then go downstairs to the cafe. If you arrive after 7:30, use the buzzer to alert us to let you in. Paul Batteiger and Amanda Gannon will be this month's hosts and will provide plates, cups, napkins, and ice. The rest of the goodies will be up to the membership and there will also be snacks and drinks available in vending machines.

Directions: Drive down Harvard to 5th Place and turn west. Park in the lot at the end of the street, even though it says it's limited to cars with campus permits. The library will be west, ahead of you on your left. Walk around to the south door and enter there. For further information or directions, call K.D. Wentworth at 523-9729.

*** UNLOCAL NEWS ***

Film rights to Isaac Asimov's *THE END OF ETERNITY* have been sold to Paramount Pictures. The movie will be directed by Ridley Scott.

*** LOCAL NEWS ***

The Oklahoma Arts Council is sponsoring two Writers Nights this summer at the Harwelden Mansion, "Borrowing the Muse: Creative Techniques for Taking Inspiration from Other Poets' Work" by Susan Michael on July 21st and "YA Fiction: A Discussion of the Young Adult Genre" by Barbara Snow Gilbert on August 18th. The sessions are free and open to the public. They begin at 7:00 P.M. For further information call Sarah Theobald-Hall at 584-3333.

Conestoga '99 was a rousing success, with attendance being up from last year despite competition from the Trek

Expo on the same weekend.

Paula Blais Gorgas sold *EARTH MAGIC*, a YA fantasy novel to Starlight Writer Publications (www.starpublications.com).

Melissa Koehn had two nonfiction articles published in law journals. They were titled "And the Word for Today is Immunity" and "The New American Caste System."

K.D. Wentworth sold two short stories: "Cat and Mouse" to 100 CRAFTY LITTLE CAT CRIMES and "Her Fair and Unpolluted Face" to *TREACHERY AND TREASON*, an anthology which will be published by Roc next year.

*** GOOD REJECTIONS ***

KDW: ASIMOV'S

*** WHAT'S YOUR "STAR WARS" NAME? ***

Contributed by Chris Merle

I can't say this is original with me, but my wife Patti told me that she heard on the radio how to determine your "Star Wars" name.

You take your mother's maiden name and combine it with the model of the first car you ever owned. It's scary how well it works.

Some of the names we come up with so far are:

Standridge Fairmont

Spirit Brown

Curtis Mustang

Corona Young

Kyle Fury

Nova Atkins

CRX Smith

Malibu Bolt

Skyhawk Pence

Higuchi Escort

*** THE TURKEY CITY LEXICON ***

PART ONE

A Primer for SF Workshops

Edited by Lewis Shiner

(Not copyrighted)

As graciously provided by Ojvind Bernander and supplemented by Critters.

This lexicon distills a huge amount of thinking about writing.

The terms defined below are meant to be used when critiquing the manuscript of an author. By learning the definitions, the critiquer may become aware of flaws in his or her own writing.

Most terms refer to things to avoid, but some, like Eyeball Kick, are thought desirable.

INTRODUCTION

This manual is intended to focus on the special needs of the science fiction workshop. Having an accurate and descriptive critical term for a common SF problem makes it easier to recognize and discuss. This guide is intended to save workshop participants from having to "reinvent the wheel" at every session.

The terms here were generally developed over a period of many years in many workshops. Those identified with a particular writer are acknowledged in parenthesis at the end of the entry. Particular help for this project was provided by Bruce Sterling and the other regulars of the Turkey City Workshop in Austin, Texas.

"SAID" BOOKISM

Artificial, literary verb used to avoid the perfectly good word "said." "Said" is one of the few invisible words in the language; it is almost impossible to overuse. Infinitely less distracting than "he retorted," "she inquired," or the all-time favorite, "he ejaculated."

TOM SWIFTY

Similar compulsion to follow the word "said" (or "said" bookism) with an adverb. As in, "'We'd better hurry,' said

Tom swiftly "

Remember that the adverb is a leech sucking the strength from a verb. 99% of the time, it is clear from the context how something was said.

"BURLY DETECTIVE" SYNDROME

Fear of proper names. Found in most of the same pulp magazines that abound with "said" bookisms and Tom Swifties. This is where you can't call Mike Shayne "Shayne," but substitute "the burly detective" or "the red-headed sleuth." Like the "said" bookism, it comes from the entirely wrong-headed conviction that you can't use the same word twice in the same sentence, paragraph, or even page. This is only true of particularly strong and highly visible words, like, say, "vertiginous." It's always better to re-use an ordinary, simple noun or verb rather than contrive a cumbersome method of avoiding it.

EYEBALL KICK

That perfect, telling detail that creates an instant visual image. The ideal of certain postmodern schools SF is to achieve a "crammed prose" full of "eyeball kicks." (Rudy Rucker)

PUSHBUTTON WORDS

Words used to evoke an emotional response without engaging the intellect or critical faculties. Words like "song" or "poet" or "tears" or "dreams." These are supposed to make us misty-eyed without quite knowing why. Most often found in story titles.

BATHOS

Sudden changes in level of diction. "The massive hound barked in stentorian voice then made wee-wee on the carpet."

BRAND NAME FEVER

Use of brand name alone, without accompanying visual detail, to create false verisimilitude. You can stock a future with Hondas and Sonys and IBM's and still have no idea what it looks like.

COUNTERSINKING

Expositional redundancy. Making the actions implied in a conversation explicit, e.g., "'Let's get out of here,' he said, urging her to leave."

TELLING, NOT SHOWING

Violates the cardinal rule of good writing. The reader should be allowed to react, not be instructed in *how* to react. Carefully observed details render authorial value judgements unnecessary. For instance, instead of telling us "she had a bad childhood, an unhappy childhood," specific incidents—involving, say, a locked closet and two jars of

honey--should be shown.

LAUGHTRACK

Characters give cues to the reader as to how to react. They laugh at their own jokes, cry at their own pain, and (unintentionally) feel everything so the reader doesn't have to.

SQUID IN THE MOUTH

Inappropriate humor in front of strangers. Basically the failure of an author to realize that certain assumptions or jokes are not shared by the world at large. In fact, the world at large will look upon a writer as if they had a squid in their mouths. (Jim Blaylock)

HAND WAVING

Distracting the reader with dazzling prose or other fireworks to keep them from noticing a severe logic flaw. (Stewart Brand)

YOU CAN'T FIRE ME, I QUIT

Attempt to diffuse lack of credibility with hand-waving. "I would never have believed it if I hadn't seen it myself." As if by anticipating the reader's objections the author had somehow answered them. (John Kessel)

FUZZ

Element of motivation the author was too lazy to supply. The word "somehow" is an automatic tip-off to fuzzy areas of the story. "Somehow she forgot to bring her gun."

DISCHISM

Intrusion of the author's physical surroundings (or mental state) into the narrative. Like the character who always lights up a cigarette when the author does, or is thinking about how they wished they hadn't quit smoking. In more subtle forms, the characters complain that they're confused and don't know what to do--when this is actually the author's condition. (Tom Disch)

BOGUS ALTERNATIVES

List of actions a character could have taken, but didn't. Frequently includes all the reasons why. A type of Dischism in which the author works out complicated plot problems at the reader's expense. "If I'd gone along with the cops they would have found the gun in my purse. And anyway, I didn't want to spend the night in jail. I suppose I could have just run instead of stealing their car, but then . . ." etc. Best dispensed with entirely.

FALSE INTERIORIZATION

Another Dischism, in which the author, too lazy to describe the surroundings, inflicts the viewpoint character with space sickness, a blindfold, etc.

*** CONTINUUM ***

June, 1999

by KDW

We returned to the Cyber Cafe with thirteen this month. Brad put in a brief appearance, even though he was working across the plaza at the Light Opera Oklahoma production of the week. Melissa Koehn was there for the first time since the Christmas party (she's living in Michigan at present), and several new members attended for the first time. The chili lights were rad, we had lots of room to spread out, and the machines were chock full of junk food, not to mention the counter spread with goodies we brought ourselves. As usual these days, we had more stories than we had time to read, but, as you can see below, we gave it our best!

Melissa Koehn: In a triumphal return engagement, Melissa read "Timeline," the amusing tale of multiple violations of historical timelines. Caitlin, a law clerk, is overwhelmed by a sudden influx of intruders in her office, all of whom give her conflicting and confusing instructions apparently intended to avert an impending catastrophe of some sort. I liked the story's madcap mood and the irony of well-meaning do-gooders trying to prevent something that probably never even happened in this timeline.

Amanda Gannon: Amanda brought the first half of a long piece tentatively titled "River," the story of Avenie, an orphan who witnesses a murder one morning by a strange creature who lives out on an island in the river. I enjoyed the rich mythic texture of this story and especially the sections from the viewpoint of Falolan, an outcast among her own kind who can take the shape of either animal or man. I'm very curious to see how these two compelling characters interact in the rest of the story.

Harold Chester: Harold read "Raid on a Fine and Private Place," the story of Carlton Evans, an officer candidate in a future school during a time of alien invasion. Spurned by a fellow classmate, he seeks revenge by stealing her underwear to fly on the school flagpole and in the process inadvertently learns a secret that prevents disaster for the home world. I liked the cam suit which allows him access to the women's quarters and the final sense of triumph when he is commissioned a junior grade lieutenant.

Tim Fravser: Tim made his OSFW debut with the first chapter of his novel in progress, THE LAST FLIGHT OF THE WICHITA. In chapter one, main character Dan Boman arrives at Starbase Five to take command of his first ship, the Wichita. I liked the panoramic view of the starbase and the impending sense of trouble as Dan finds out he is assigned to patrol the fringe of the coming troubles.

Paul Batteiger: "Once there existed here another world"--

As always, I was captivated by Paul's vibrant use of language. He read from AGE OF WINTER, first a scene involving the birth of a girl child taken to raise by a former godling, then an ambushed warrior dying of his wounds. "There can be no victory," the latter thinks, "let there be honor," and then crawls out onto the ice to at least deny his foes his head. When he breaks through and falls into the freezing water, he finds a presence beneath the surface, something that asks him if he would live again. "I shall make you mighty so that even kings will fear your name." I'll be very interested to see how this tale progresses in future pages.

*** THE ICE PICK ***

by Diana Carolyn Ice

MAKE THAT SCENE, A WRITER'S GUIDE TO SETTING, MOOD, AND ATMOSPHERE, by William Noble. Middlebury, Vt., Eriksson, 1988. ISBN 0-8397-5708-5. \$17.95.

One of the first questions readers ask is "Where am I?"

This book shows how to create the physical setting to develop a sense of place, a background, against which your story will play, and how to develop the mood within that setting.

Noble explains how setting can be used to add vividness, develop a plot, establish or influence a character, build tension, or act as a major character itself. He shows how to use details, time, dialogue, and action to establish setting.

He specifically addresses stories where you cannot "write what you know," namely those set in the future and those in the past. Too often, he says, writers load their scenes with description to achieve authenticity, when two or three telling details might be all that is needed. "The important details, no matter what kind of story we write, involve specific colors, shapes, and textures."

He explains that to choose the most telling details, you can imagine yourself there and see what two or three things strike you the most. Or you can remember a similar experience in your life. If you are writing about a first date, for example, ask what things stick in your mind about your own first date.

"Atmosphere (or mood) is what the reader feels as the effect of the setting settles. It is the writer's way of injecting life into the stiff details of the locale."

It is generally not good to have the setting and the atmosphere match—an argument in the midst of a thunderstorm, for example—but Noble explains when you can do that and when it is better avoided.

He says that what you see, hear, smell, feel, and taste make the difference between the "one dimensional" and

the "imaginative scene." Describing scenes, clothes, and a different way of life is not enough. "To take us alive into another period of time, the senses must be invoked. . . . History, the future, other worlds, other mindsets, it doesn't matter. The senses make it all come alive."

Noble shows how you can influence mood and atmosphere not only by the five senses, but by physical description, point of view, change of pace, tone, the music of your words themselves, and even the nostalgia your characters express.

There is also a section on the special mood requirements of genres, like horror.

The index is excellent and there is a great bibliography for further exploration.

I highly recommend this book.

*** PHYSICS OF HELL ***

Alleged question given on a University of Washington chemistry midterm:

"Is Hell exothermic [gives off heat] or endothermic [absorbs heat]? Support your answer with a proof."

Most of the students wrote proofs of their beliefs using Boyle's Law [gas cools off when it expands and heats up when it is compressed] or some variant thereof.

One student, however, wrote the following:

"First, we need to know how the mass of Hell is changing in time. So, we need to know the rate that souls are moving into Hell and the rate they are leaving. I think that we can safely assume that once a soul gets to Hell, it will not leave. Therefore, no souls are leaving. As for how many souls are entering Hell, let's look at the different religions that exist in the world today. Some of these religions state that if you are not a member of their religion, you will go to Hell. Since there are more than one of these religions and since people do not belong to more than one religion, we can project that all people and all souls go to Hell. With birth and death rates as they are, we can expect the number of souls in Hell to increase exponentially.

Now, we look at the rate of change of the volume in Hell because Boyle's Law states that in order for the temperature and pressure in Hell to stay the same, the volume of Hell has to expand as souls are added.

This gives two possibilities:

#1. If Hell is expanding at a slower rate than the rate at which souls enter Hell, then the temperature and pressure in Hell will increase until all Hell breaks loose

#2. Of course, if Hell is expanding at a rate faster than the

increase of souls in Hell, then the temperature and pressure will drop until Hell freezes over.

So which is it? If we accept the postulate given to me by Ms. Therese Banyan during my Freshman year, "That it will be a cold night in Hell before I sleep with you," and take into account the fact that I still have not succeeded in having sexual relations with her, then #2 cannot be true, and so Hell is exothermic."

*** MARKET UPDATE ***

CHANGES

FANTASTIC WORLDS is dead.

Jennifer Brehl has been promoted to executive editor at AVON EOS and senior editor at AVON BOOKS.

THE PLASTIC SMILE has been renamed DR. KNIFE AND OTHER INHUMAN BEINGS. The editor says he will consider any manuscript currently in his slush pile, but is otherwise closed.

DARK REGIONS is not accepting reprints at the moment.

NEW LISTINGS

GENRE SAMPLER MAGAZINE, P.O. Box 6978, Denver, CO 80206. Editor: Su Wright. Needs adventure/f/h/mystery/sf/romance/western fiction. Payment: \$20-30/story.

ST. MARTIN'S PRESS, 175 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10010-7848. Editor: Gordon Van Gelder. Buying sf/f/h. Send complete manuscript, cover letter, and synopsis.

*** CONTEST NEWS ***

The National Fantasy Fan Federation Amateur Short Story Contest is open until Dec. 1, 1999. Both science fiction and fantasy can be entered. Prizes are \$50 (1st), \$30 (2nd), and \$20 (third), plus there are some honorable mentions awarded. For entry forms, contact Donald Franson, 6543 Babcock Ave., North Hollywood, CA 91606-2308. Several OSFW members have won in this contest in the past. It is well worth entering.

*** MANY THANKS TO ***

Warren
KDW & Guido
Diana Carolyn Ice
Chris Merle
Ojvind Bernander
Lewis Shiner

*** SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION ***

A subscription to *Son of GPIC*, the official newsletter of the Oklahoma Science Fiction Writers, may be obtained by mailing a check or money order in the amount of \$13.00 (\$18 per household), prorated by quarter, to:

K.D. Wentworth, Treasurer
6915 New Haven
Tulsa, OK
(Checks should be made out to K.D. Wentworth)

Please note: An "X" on your mailing label indicates OSFW has no record of either 1999 dues or GPIC subscription renewal. This GPIC will be your last.

*** OSFW INFORMATION ***

The OSFW meets at members' homes the second Friday of every month to read, critique, and promote in general SF, Fantasy, and Horror writing. All willing to contribute and (after a couple of trial meetings) pay their dues are welcome. **There is no age limit but parents should understand that material with adult themes and language is read and discussed.** Membership dues are \$13.00 per year, adjusted by nearest quarter, which includes a subscription to GPIC. Checks should be made out to K.D. Wentworth, and may be sent to K.D. at the address above.

*** GPIC NEWS AND ARTICLES ***

GPIC solicits news and articles from OSFW members. We prefer they be on disk or sent via e-mail. Pseudonyms are OK. We accept files on either a 3-inch Mac or PC disk. We like RTF files but we can convert most Word and Word Perfect files; always include a separate ASCII file just in case.

Otherwise, arrange to send them by e-mail to Simon at: simon.mccaffery@wcom.com.

You retain copyright on material. If this is of special concern you might let us know who you really are along with your pseudonym. We reserve the right to edit (although we try not to).

*** NEXT GPIC DEADLINE ***

Pesky deadline for August issue: July 29.