

## Gene Wolfe: Moral Fabulist



consider the moral aspect while dealing with those questions, just as you deal with certain questions by arithmetic. I don't try to say that the good guys always win, because one of the things I'm very conscious of is there are no good guys. There are only various gradations of bad guys. It's not a pleasant truth, but I'm not the one that's in charge of making the rules. What I see is that evil has a place in every human being. I don't mean it holds that place by rights, but it's in occupation. The hero at some point is at least capable of acting badly, and the villain at least capable of acting well. Scarface Al Capone, who beat two of his subordinates to death with a baseball bat, also bought free milk which he distributed to little children in the slums of Chicago. You may say that he was merely salving his conscience, and that's probably exactly right, but a whole lot of us are merely salving our consciences.

"I'm also very interested in memory. [In the "New Sun" series], Severian had eidetic memory and was haunted and hag-ridden by it. I tried to show a reasonable interpretation of that condition, based on what I knew about it. In some ways, it's a gift; in other ways, a terrible curse, not least because you are so cut off from ordinary people who forget things – which is unimaginable to you. Then I felt it would be interesting to go the other way and deal with someone who forgot, and I came across this article about a certain type of brain injury that produces the kind of memory loss that Latro has in the "Soldier" books, in which events are not passed from short-term memory to long-term memory. It turned out to be immensely difficult. With Severian, I could have him sitting at the table while he's waiting to leave the planet, and writing away about all this stuff he remembers. Latro either has to write it down soon after it happens, or he does not remember it. The only other thing he can do is write down what somebody else told him about, and that means he is writing down the words of an unreliable narrator. Of course, he himself is an unreliable narrator, in addition. The reliable narrator is a literary convention in which we say we are going to pretend that everything that the author tells us about the story is the story.

For years before he became a full time writer, Gene Wolfe led a double life as editor of a trade periodical on engineering, and a writer of sf and fantasy where his interests seem anything but technological. "God knows I've written hundreds of thousands of words, conservatively, of technical material, but this ain't it. I am probably a fabulist. That is my natural gait. I think the most effective way that you can make a point or a series of points is to tell little stories. This, above anything else, is what people remember, and it's certainly an effective teaching method. The only method I know of that rivals it is asking questions, and that requires quite a small group size to work with.

"I don't think of it as just making a moral point. I think of it as dealing with serious questions in human life. It seems to me you have to

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## Andre Norton: Living Legacy

Like the craftsmen of old, Andre Norton has assembled a group of junior collaborators and apprentices, in a kind of super writers' workshop. She has many projects in hand – sf, fantasy adventure, and even some solo ghost stories. Norton comments, "I'm enjoying collaboration very much.

"Coming out in the fall is the book I did with Mercedes Lackey, *Elvenbane*. We got together at Boston and worked out a complete outline. When she got sections done, she'd send them to me. I would say what we'd better do next, and we talked it out over the phone. That will have a sequel."

Then there's the indirect followup to *Imperial Lady*, with Susan Shwartz. "We came across this footnote in Han Dynasty history. The Han Dynasty was the only militaristic dynasty China ever had, the only expansive one, and they sent an army down the Silk Road to take all the little countries. They reached Cappodochia, and there they captured a town that was held by Crassus' men, and they captured a Roman cohort. They were so impressed by their military ability that they sent them back to China. That's all the little note said. She came down last October and we worked out the complete outline. Then I gave her my notes, and she selected from my library about 20 books in Chinese history. Now we're both reading up the Roman army history. Then we'll exchange back and forth."

Another novel, *Mark of the Cat*, is a different kind of collaboration: "That is based on the drawings of Karen Kuykendal. She sent me a huge notebook of what the country was like. She had all the information about the background, but she had no plot. She thinks of it as an artist, something static, and I said you've got to have continued action in order to carry it off. So I plotted and wrote that, but it's done from her notes. There's going to be a sequel, because the material she sent was so lengthy we had to cut it. The sequel will probably be called *The Day of*



*the Rat*, because the rats in the story stand for evil. That sold to Bantam."

Her most ambitious project is an ongoing series of "Witchworld" books, in collaboration with several other writers. "We have brought out the first of the 'Chronicles', *Witch World: The Turning: Storms of Victory*. There's going to be three books in all. Each will contain two

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<p>prize of \$4000. For further information on contest rules, send a stamped, addressed envelope to L. Ron Hubbard's Illustrators of the Future Contest, P.O. Box 3190, Los Angeles CA 90078.</p> <p>The CompuServe Science Fiction and Fantasy</p>	<p>Forum announced the winners of its first annual HOMER Awards for best sf and fantasy of 1990. SF Novel: <b>Redshift Rendezvous</b>, John E. Stith; Fantasy Novel: <b>Servant of the Empire</b>, Raymond E. Feist &amp; Janny Wurts; Horror/Dark Fantasy Novel: <b>Moon</b></p>	<p><b>Dance</b>, S.P. Somtow; First Novel: <b>Golden Fleece</b>, Robert J. Sawyer; Novella: "Naught for Hire", John Stith; Novelette: "The Manamouki", Mike Resnick; Short Story: "Designated Hitter", Harry Turtledove. The awards are voted by Forum members.</p>
<p><b>BOMC to Launch SF Book Club</b> <i>Continued from page 6</i></p> <p>most successful of the specialty clubs associated with The Literary Guild. Membership is somewhere between 150,000 and 200,000, with a high percentage buying most main selections.</p> <p>The BOMC started buying sf more than a year ago,</p>	<p>in competition with the Science Fiction Book Club (see story, <i>Locus</i> 352). The competition has caused some spirited bidding for various sf books, such as <b>Earth</b> by David Brin and <b>Queen of Angels</b> by Greg Bear, but not on as many books as the publishers hoped. Tracy Brown of BOMC leans more to the literary/sf, while Ellen Asher of SFBC buys more adventure/fantasy. BOMC has recently bought <b>Heads</b></p>	<p>by Greg Bear, <b>Buddy Holly is Alive and Well on Ganymede</b> by Bradley Denton, <b>Martian Rainbow</b> by Robert L. Forward, <b>A Maze of Stars</b> by John Brunner, and <b>Bridge of Years</b> by Robert Charles Wilson. SFBC did not bid on most of them.</p> <p>Of course, if BOMC goes through with a complete launch, they will need at least 60 books per year, and then the competition will <i>really</i> start.</p>
<p><b>SF Magazines Rejuvenated</b> <i>Continued from page 6</i></p> <p>stand distribution. <i>Pulphouse</i> printed 10,000 copies of #1 and gave away a large number at conventions. It is available through subscriptions, specialty dealers, and bookstores, plus local distributors.</p> <p>The second issue of <i>Amazing</i>, with a cover by Jack Pennington, should be out by now. It will feature</p>	<p>fiction by Paul Di Filippo, Timothy Zahn, Sharon Farber, Bob Frazier, and Phillip Jennings.</p> <p>The June 1991 <i>Fantasy &amp; Science Fiction</i> contains Edward Ferman's farewell editorial (in true <i>F&amp;SF</i> understatement it isn't listed on the contents page), ending his 25-year reign. He predicts there will be changes under new editor Kristine Kathryn Rusch. Just having a separate publisher and editor should help both the editing and publishing sections of the magazine.</p>	<p>New <i>Omni</i> editor Keith Ferrell is a longtime sf reader. Although he plans to leave the fiction editing to Ellen Datlow, he's making other changes — notably, using well known science fiction authors to write speculative articles on the various parts of science, giving more of the magazine a science fiction bias.</p> <p>Meanwhile Joel Davis, head of Davis Publications, is talking about changing the title of <i>Analog</i>. He's thinking seriously of <i>Astounding</i>...</p>
<p><b>Serial Killer Novel Axed</b> <i>Continued from page 6</i></p> <p>lowed a \$300,000 advance and then watched as Vintage published the book with great commercial success. For the new book, no advance was actually paid, and no contract had been signed. <b>Just Killing Time</b> had sold in auction for \$920,000, with Simon &amp; Schuster outbidding Bantam, while six other editors were still considering mid-six-figure offers.</p> <p>After Le Carré and Wambaugh angrily denied writing the endorsements, author Clive Cussler — who contributed a genuine favorable comment on the work, said he was considering withdrawing his support. Cussler is a Simon &amp; Schuster author, and is represented by the same agency as Goodwin.</p> <p>Apparently, not only the endorsements were misleading — an author bio for "Van Arman" indicated</p>	<p>he had CIA connections, and this was his first book, whereas Goodwin (a Phoenix-based freelance writer) actually had no link with the CIA and had published previously. Since the manuscript was offered by Peter Lampack, a reputable agent, publishers took the package at face value. "It could have happened to anybody," commented Doubleday president and publisher Stephen Rubin. "Everybody was hoodwinked." Goodwin himself claims to be the victim of a hoax, saying he spoke on the phone to someone claiming to be Wambaugh. Agent Lampack was quoted by the <i>Times</i> as saying, "If it's a hoax, [Goodwin] is probably as much a victim as we all are."</p> <p>Industry insiders had speculated that Simon &amp; Schuster might still publish the book, for a substantially reduced advance, while the story of the hoax was still in the news. The rumored smaller advance was \$100,000 — which would have put the value of en-</p>	<p>dorsements by Le Carré and Wambaugh at about \$410,000 apiece. While the prediction proved to be wrong, it is certainly common practice in the industry to buy books as much (or more) on the basis of celebrity endorsements as on the quality of the manuscripts themselves. Some wags in the editorial offices have suggested that certain big-name blurbs be acquired for their market value, without subjecting the celebrity authors to the onerous task of actually reading manuscripts. Just joking ... right?</p> <p>The fate of <b>Just Killing Time</b> remains unknown, for now. It remains to be seen whether Goodwin/Van Arman can become a Clifford Irving for the '90s.</p> <p>And the industry will be watching closely to see how many more serial-killer novels Simon &amp; Schuster will get axed by.</p>
<p><b>Bigger Bookstores for the '90s</b> <i>Continued from page 7</i></p> <p>chairs and tables for a "library atmosphere," and a children's play area. The company plans to convert some of its existing stores to Superstores, plus adding new ones, to bring the total to 15 by the end of 1991.</p> <p>Waldenbooks seems to have less ambitious plans,</p>	<p>but has expanded into four 10,000-square-foot Waldenbooks &amp; More operations, carrying 45,000 titles. Similarly, Crown now has five Super Crowns in the Washington DC area, with another just opening in Los Angeles; the stores range from 5,500 to 9,000 square feet, and carry 30,000 titles, including extensive backlist.</p> <p>Overall, Barnes &amp; Noble/B. Dalton has nearly</p>	<p>1,300 stores nationwide, Waldenbooks 1,268, and Crown 225. In the first separate disclosure of Waldenbooks sales figures by parent company K mart, reported sales were \$992 million for 1989, and \$1.064 billion for 1990. Operating income rose from \$28 million for 1989 to \$29 million for 1990, or about 3% of sales. Waldenbooks is considered the most profitable of the chains.</p>
<p><b>Andre Norton</b> <i>Continued from page 4</i></p> <p>complete novels and a section of a continuous story. I did the first novel and the continuous story. Pauline Griffin is doing two of the other novels. Pat Matthews is doing one, Sasha Miller is doing one, and Mary Schaub is doing one. I have the continuing story that carries it through.</p> <p>"Pauline Griffin will probably take over the 'Time Trader' series. I can't go back to that type of writing. We've had a lot of call for those adventure stories, and it seems to be a sort of custom now, getting [other] people to follow along."</p> <p>There will eventually be another collaboration with A.C. Crispin for Tor — the fourth in the 'Gryphon' series, also part of the 'Witchworld' series — called <b>Songsmith</b>. It was delayed five years since the first plans.</p> <p>As for her collaboration with Julian May and Marion Zimmer Bradley, <b>Black Trillium</b>, the collaborators are going their separate ways with the story. Julian May will do a sequel set 25 years in the future. Meanwhile, "I'm continuing my story from the very place it leaves off in the first book."</p> <p>Other solo projects are shorter works. "Ghost Story" was done for <i>Pulphouse</i>. They'll bring it out both in their magazine and as a chapbook. Penguin is doing an old-fashioned Victorian annual for Christmas, and it's going to have stories and poems. I did 'A Christmas Ghost Story' for them. I would dearly like</p>	<p>to write [more] ghost stories. I have a vast collection of books on real haunted houses. My first one that I did for <i>Pulphouse</i>, I got very interested in the character, and would like to have carried it on. It would be one of those books where each chapter is a separate adventure, but I have this other stuff which has to be done first."</p> <p>Not all her future projects are literary. Also in the works is the Norton Trust, which she is planning along with her companion and neighbor Ingrid Zierhut. "It really won't start until my death. What we want to do is fix a place where writers can come and work. We could give them room but not board. When it's finished, we can put up three writers at a time. The place is extremely quiet and peaceful. We have two houses side by side, and they're only separated by a driveway. Neither of us have any descendants, so we're putting both our houses into the Trust. My house is already largely library. When the house was built, we had bookcases in every room. I've been adding bookcases ever since. We're hoping to get the house back of us — there are two houses on one lot. One is a small cottage that could be made into the caretaker's. The other house we could gut. Ingrid's house has a beautifully big conference room. We have two computers. We're trying to buy all the reference and science fiction books. Two people have promised us their libraries and art collections. We have a corridor that's an art gallery where we'll hang all the pictures that we get. Forrest Ackerman sent us a great many magazines, which we're storing. We have a board set up — a</p>	<p>lawyer, an editor, and an accountant."</p> <p>For many years, Norton worked as a children's librarian, a natural outgrowth of a love for books and reading that started very early. She is a long-time fan of adventure fiction. "When I was in high school, I was collecting H. Rider Haggard books. I have Talbot Mundy and A. Merritt — one of the great joys of my life was when I came across Merritt. I got <b>The Face in the Abyss</b>, and it was the most wonderful book I'd ever read. I always liked 'lost race' stories." Other favorites include Leslie Barringer, and Ganpat. The latter wrote "dandy lost civilization stories — he did for India what Haggard did for Africa."</p> <p>As for fantasy, "I had the Tolkien books before they became popular. You had to wait a year between them. They left you hanging. The quest remains the basic fantasy plot. My favorite now is David Eddings. His sense of humor is marvelous. When I got his first book, I wanted to get everything [else] I could. The same was true of Mercedes Lackey. It opened a whole new world of writing to me. Some of Raymond Feist is good. Fred Saberhagen is doing some books I like. There are two Chinese novels by Barry Hughart I find very exciting. I love Judge Dee. I have every one of the Judge Dee books. I even have a limited edition signed by Van Gulik. I often reread those, not for the mystery but for the background.</p> <p>"So many things nowadays are downbeat. I cannot read modern novels. They're on subject matter that's depressing, unpleasant. They don't solve anything. When you get a really good book, it's such a pleasure."</p>