

CLEAR ETHER!

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FUTURE SOCIETIES: LIBERTARIAN ALTERNATIVE

Suppose you are writing a Science Fiction story set in the future. You want one or more model societies to use as background and possibly contrast. One you consider is libertarian. What should it look like; more importantly, what should it *not* resemble.

Libertarian-like societies have been presented by Heinlein, LeGuin, Russell, Kornbluth, Anderson and others. None were written in light of the recent "explosion" of libertarian theory (since 1969); they were the author's idea of a free society independent of the new scholarly literature and movement debates. Circa 1969 even my own Rann Gold Series is obsolete. One has the extreme of Larry Niven's "Cloak of Anarchy," which resembles libertarian thought just close enough to evoke howls of "smear" from the positions attributed to the anarchists not in fact held by radical libertarians.

WHAT DO LIBERTARIANS THINK?

If you're going to write dialogue for libertarians, you should have some ideas of their precepts, jargons and obsessions. I'm not going to explain the philosophy here, just the *character* traits. Naturally, as individualists, libertarians have a great deal of variety and a great deal of differences between them, but there are some salients in common.

Libertarians are morality-conscious. Although a free speech, laissez-faire society is a result of libertarianism, libertarians are strongly concerned with morality. Usually their libertarian position derives from some higher precept: Natural Law, Objectivism, Christianity, or, in the case of the Stirnirites, *denial* of universal morality. Thus you could easily show a group of libertarians in a saloon or around a campfire or in a drawing room vociferously challenging each other in heated debate—but turning as one in scorn on any intruder who dared suggest resolving a disagreement by force, then happily returning to their strenuous arguments. Of course, some libertarians will disagree about *this*, and sit outside the talk sessions attempting

to achieve a mellow state.

Libertarians are voluntarists. While a libertarian army is conceivable, and would probably be organized as a highly efficient business company with highly autonomous units using a high degree of independent judgment down the "ranks," it would exist as anything more than a rudimentary appendix only if a clear and present danger (large State nearby) also existed. Some fans suggested in their fanfic a "libertarian police" pouncing on non-libertarians, exiling them, jailing them, or at least cutting off business with them (including feeding and sheltering). This is as absurd as a portrayal of a Christian medieval society with a "Christians for Satan" club. One might portray an "ex" libertarian society which has been taken over by statists and corrupting the name, but they will be recognized by many of the character is your society (probably from the underground).

Libertarians are marketeers. Even in the very "Left" anarchy of Anarres, Ursula LeGuin was forced to introduce a private press for her rebels to dissent from the collectivist anarchist line. The vast majority of libertarians today, even of socialistic leanings, expect a free trade society. Most see a highly commercial and technological organization in a libertarian society and view the very existence of government as grit in the gears and highly inefficient (as well as immoral).

Any attempt at business interference would strike your characters as counter-productive, competition would be exalted, and crime against life and property would arouse the populace immediately.

Libertarians are varied. While libertarians have many rigid ideologies as well as free-form positions, there is no monolithic party line . . . which brings us to the next section.

WHAT KINDS OF LIBERTARIAN SOCIETIES ARE THERE?

In *principle* all libertarian societies are alike. Culturally, however, one may not only conceive of many different libertarian societies but every libertarian society by its nature will have numerous subsocieties. From an SF author's point of view the use of a libertarian society for a setting offers the widest latitude to the imagination. Invent any non-coercive philosophy or religion and there's no reason why you

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SKYLOCS OF SPACE

December 23, 1978

Dear Sam:

I enjoyed muchly your con report, even though it's difficult to find comment hooks. I did, however, find your comments on Doc Smith vs the feminists interesting. It has always amused me to watch perfectly rational, intelligent people attempting to judge a work of art produced in a particular age by the standards of another, usually radically different age. Tis one of the reasons I defend films like War of the Worlds, Forbidden Planet, Them and The Incredible Shrinking Man so strongly. For their time, they were all incredibly good films, but not all that great when compared to "modern" stuff. Or the work of C.L. Moore . . . whose writing I only marginally enjoy, but when you think of the time in which she wrote, her stories are heads above anything else (if in nothing but style). You are aware, I believe, of my opinion of Smith. I've read very little of his stuff, and find it teetering on the border of unreadable mostly because I consider his style, ideas and development terribly naive—so much so, that I just can't accept them. I can't seem to be able to suspend my belief that far. But I don't think him a rotten writer or anything along that line. I have the same problem with most of the material that was being produced during that time. It's my "fault," not Smith's. What's interesting to note is that his treatment of women is not one of my objections. To tell the truth, I never really ever noticed it. It's not that I'm insensitive either. I recently listened to an episode of Flash Gordon and went absolutely berserk at the portrayal of Dale Arden. I guess it just takes a major "slap" at my womanhood or my intelligence to set me off. Liberal thinking can be a pain in the ass sometimes.

*And your review of One Immortal Man has me wanting to read it. Now the only problem is to get my hands on a copy. *sigh of complete & utter exasperation**

*Bobbi Armbruster
Munchen, Deutschland*

Well presented and difficult to pick apart from that position. Alas though, that thou shalt never get that rush of joy I experienced several times in reading the Lensman, especially at the end of *Children of the Lens* when the Eddorian lookout called "All Highest! Help!" While I dislike the movies you mention, your reasoning sounds too much like my own for defending *Star Wars* against the Pseudoliterati for me to do much. You seem to have an excellent grasp of the areas where you are subjective and where objectivity is required; one of the rare ones you are. As for Dale Arden, how did you like Dale Ardor in *Flesh Gordon*? And far be it for me to take a major slap at your womanhood. **have a straight line** Geis's novel is being published in book by REG himself, if I got my ads straight. I shall investigate getting a copy through the international mail . . .

MY FANNISH WAYS

C.S. LEWIS SOCIETY

Since I don't have a Con report, I thought I'd write a meeting report. Alas, I've been missing so many meetings at LASFS that it would require a refresher for me to do it justice; besides, *everyone* goes to LASFS. SFALB (Speculative Fiction Association of Long Beach) has been done in these pages already, and has recently been sporadic in meetings anyways. I may do one on Westmarch, the Tolkien group, but how about one that would very likely never be mentioned in any other fanzine? A CLEAR ETHER! exclusive!

I have been associated with C.S. Lewis Societies since the first year of the first one. Clive Staples Lewis was first brought to my attention in a classroom in Alberta as *The Lion, The Witch, and the Wardrobe* was read to us. Finding out there were more Narnia Chronicles in the library, I read them as soon as they were published and arrived at the library. Later, as I got into SF, I discovered the Ransom trilogy, though not immediately recognizing the authors as the same.

Joining the University of Wisconsin Tolkien Society in 1969, I discovered that a fellow member and friend (Jared Lobdell) was also into Lewis—even more than Tolkien—and that they were both Inklings. Later that year, the New York C.S. Lewis Society was formed, and in August, 1970, I attended a meeting in New Jersey.

After moving to New York that fall, I attended most monthly meetings until the summer of 1975. Originally there were a fair number of SF/Fantasy fans, but soon it was a mainly religious/literary orientation. As an atheist, not particularly literary, I suppose I have been somewhat anomalous in the society, though by sheer longevity of acquaintance I achieved a good deal of acceptance and camaraderie from the more conservative members. Several members whom I brought in or who were fans as well as "Lewis Christians" filled a spectrum between me and the mundane converts and the New York group remained fairly heterogenous and spiced with amiable differences and discourse.

In 1974 the Southern California C.S. Lewis Society was formed around seminar attendees at Valyermo by Brother Peter Ford (now Mr. Paul Ford). Although aware of the New York (and Portland and others by then) group, they were independent. Since I planned to move to L.A., I wrote Ford telling of my coming and offering what I could. I later discovered my arrival was awaited with some foreboding as I had been quite candid about my orientation and the Southern California group was almost entirely mundane and theistic.

I begin attendance in October 1975 and with few lapses, have been a staunch member and supporter since. All it took was an understanding of our sincere mutual love for the thinking of Lewis to engender respect and acceptance among us, through about a year.

The Tolkien connection occurred here too, as Bernie and Teny Zuber were fairly regular attendees. (They are founders of Westmarch and former Mythopeic Society fen). Glen and Bonnie GoodKnight and some of their associates attended for awhile, but currently my friends are the only fannish contingent. Interestingly enough, some of the harder-nosed skeptics of my membership and commitment to Lewis have also drifted away, leaving a friendly, affable group again.

What I see in C.S. Lewis, not accepting his Christian metaphysics, would fill an issue by itself, and if I get the demand for it, I may explain it. It has had its hazards, with one atheist friend of mine attending and converting to Christianity, another is currently teetering on the brink. Above all, though, I love Lewis' mind: rigorously rational, entertainingly imaginative, uncompromisingly consistent and winningly tolerant. It's a combination akin (though not exactly) to the character I have sought to achieve myself.

The most recent meeting (January 17) is fairly typical. The third Wednesday of the month is standard, though I have had a running battle with the others not to skip December and the summer months. Last year they gave in as far as June and July meetings—and guess who was chosen to lead the July meeting! Fortunately, Father James Sadowsky, S.J., probably the world's only libertarian jesuit, was in town and I managed to bring him for a well-received coup.

This meeting began (probably, as I was late) at 7:30 P.M. with the usual introductions around the table of the twenty or so in attendance. Paul Ford was there, though no longer on the executive, asking opinions on the illustrations he had for his upcoming book on Narnia. Professor Bill Geiger presided; he, Ken Futch and George Musacchio (*The Lamppost* editor) are a threesome from Riverside Baptist College who have been pretty heavily into the organization and administration of the society. Marilyn Peppin has taken care of membership for as long as I can remember.

The meeting had been moved from its regular second-floor room in Fuller Seminary (Pasadena) to the first floor in the cafeteria room, so as not to conflict with a class. Professor Mary Mahl was guest speaker on Lewis' literary theory, but most of her address consisted of quotes from unpublished letters by Lewis which were avidly received. The usual break for refreshments of cheeses, cakes, cookies, coffee and tea

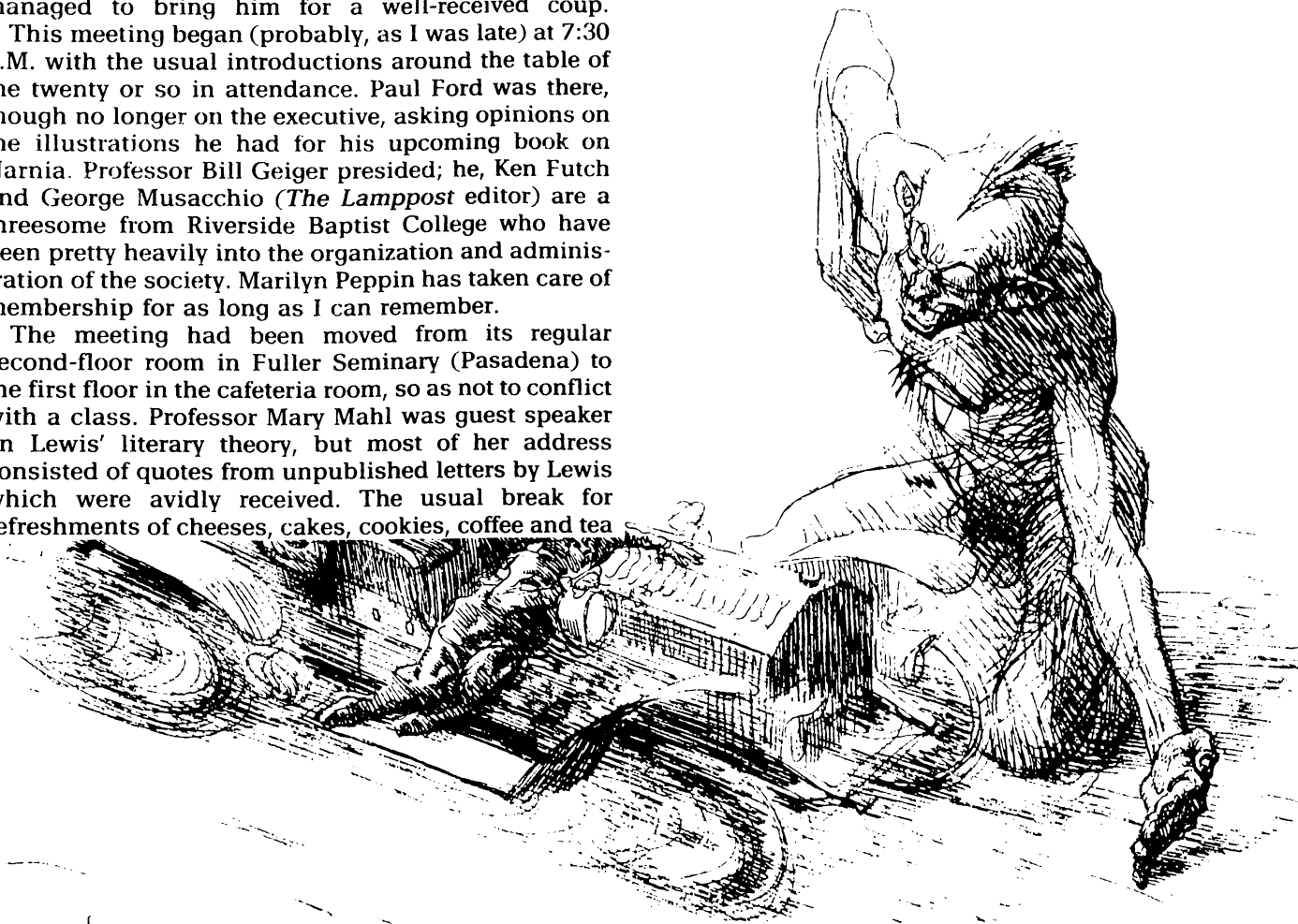
came between the talk and the questions rather than after introductions, announcements and business (more usual).

Mentions of Lewis in the media are always brought up at the meetings; this time a film on his life narrated by Peter Ustinov which was touring the country was the highlight. Plans were made to attempt to get the film for a club showing (probably open to the public).

This time I brought a fairly regular fellow attendee, J. Neil Schulman, who brought a newcomer himself. The meeting broke up early at 9:30 but we usually go out with the more fannish type to a nearby restaurant (often the Salt Shaker on Arroyo Parkway) afterwards.

I'd like to get more fans to come to the meetings and of course attend our aftermeetings. Those reading this outside the L.A. area might consider checking your locale for clubs you can attend. And all might work on getting Lewis the richly-deserved Gandalf Award for Grand Master of Fantasy for which he has been perennial runner-up. (I know the rules of the World Science Fiction Society/Convention have been altered to exclude non-living authors—though Tolkien received the first immediately after he died—but a special exception could be voted.)

Next meeting at Fuller will be an open discussion of *The Screwtape Letters* on Wednesday, February 21, 7:30 P.M., Room 110B. No Watchful Dragons await . . .



FUTURE SOCIETIES: LIBERTARIAN

[Continued from page one, column two]

cannot have several practitioners of it in your society.

A perfectly reasonable example would be to have an elite, Dorsai-like group of mercenaries coexisting on a planet (a "free port" perhaps with the other planets state-controlled) with pacifist businessmen, clannish communal farmers, and guildish scientists and engineers. Throw in a libertine entertainment district, some wandering freaks both religious and secular, and a few refugee revolutionaries from the other systems and presto! You've got more interactions, character growth, contrasts and "conflict" than you could possibly use, not to mention ample ideas for humour by juxtaposition.

In one sense, every individual in a libertarian society is an autonomous unit. To know one is to know almost nothing about the rest. In another sense, there cannot be more than one libertarian Society in the sense of distinctly separate units with defined borders or boundaries. Anyone can go anywhere he, she, or it can afford or get invited. Then again, one group may decide to withdraw from the rest and isolate themselves anyway.

NO POLITICS, NO WARS, NO TAXES, . . .

For a writer, conflict is especially important. Alas, a libertarian society is particularly lacking in it. No unemployment since one needs a minimum wage law to keep people unemployed. No wars because you need governments to wage them. No elections or coups because there are no government leaders. No oppression because there are no police. No serious crime because property is protected efficiently as with any other business. No taxes because there is no government to collect or demand them.

Of course there are still challenges to living, overcoming natural obstacles, making money, innovating, personal tragedies and fights, eternal triangles and romances, errors and corrections, inventions and crackpottery. But if you want large scale social ills, you'll have to add a State or two.

There are problems you will have to deal with having a libertarian society bordering a statist one, such as why the State's subjects put up with it when they see the example of a working anarchy next door. But one can be imaginative about such things.

WHAT LIBERTARIAN SOCIETIES ARE NOT

A libertarian society must have come from somewhere. Conceivably, it might have arisen on some alien planet never having known the State and discovering the non-aggression principle early. One can have some obvious drama when this innocent society runs into their first statists—such as Terrans!

But if it arose from our present society, then the people must have developed libertarian behavior modes. Note I did not say libertarian theories. In order for a libertarian society to have developed, the libertarians in thought must have become libertarians

in deed. This has nothing to do with signing up, voting, or declarations.

A society becomes libertarian when the populace refuses, en masse, to obey the State, to submit under threat, to pay taxes, to use State currency, or to accept handouts and subsidies. This self-sufficiency will be maintained as long as the society is, and this will be reflected in all customs, transactions, traditions and even the romances of the libertarians.

Thus behavior patterns at variance with an individual self-governance—of children, of parents, even of the "handicapped"—will be tolerated and could be found—but they would be clearly noted as aberrations.

ALIEN LIBERTARIAN SOCIETIES

The construction of libertarian alien societies has been about as common (or uncommon) as those of Terran human ones. Asimov had an anarchist society in *The Gods Themselves* (though I surprised him in an elevator by pointing it out to him); Anderson in *Winter of the World* (although the aliens were ex-human mutants). Many others mention alien societies in passing but "forget" to give them a government or politics.

Libertarianism is based on individual intelligence (free will) and its interaction with matter (property). Hence any beings with the smarts and material possessions can have a libertarian society. Whether or not they will be more or less likely to than humans are is the subject for a nice long letter or mailing comment debate. For starters, Anderson thought that mutants were more capable than humans to "handle anarchy" (*op. cit.*).

Since Ursula LeGuin has both functioning human anarchies and alien societies in her Ekumen, it will be interesting to see what she does with the interactions. Other well-known authors currently of libertarian leanings whose future works should be observed for anarchies are Heinlein, Van Vogt, Bester, Wilson (both), Moorcock and maybe even Richard E. Geis.

Pros you would *not* expect an anarchy from (except inadvertently) are Niven and Pournelle, Asimov, Herbert, and Reynolds. I don't know what to expect of R.A. Lafferty.

CONCLUDING DETAILS

There are a lot of technical questions one might want to follow up if building a libertarian society in close detail. There is simply no room to delve into all the possibilities. For example, how would a libertarian society fight a state that appeared suddenly? What kind of heavy philosophical debates would members of the libertarian society get hung up on? How could garbage be collected and murder mysteries solved? The answers to all these is that it depends on the context you have developed.

For those of you wanting expert consulting on libertarian technicalities, contact me at NLE. This article was written simply to prevent the most obvious errors and inadvertent smears (all smears of libertarianism will henceforth be assumed advertent!). You may now start writing; class dismissed.