



AN ARCHETYPE in the television Western is the lawman who cleans up a rough town, fighting for the right without the help of the citizenry, obeying his personal moral code when he could easily turn in his tin star and walk away from the struggle. Since life imitates art, it is not surprising to find, behind the scenes, that the television business has its own "Westerns," with good guys, bad guys, and disinterested spectators.

The following true-life saga is set in Bakersfield, California, a metropolitan area of 298,400 television homes. The marshal is Yale Roe, president of Halstra Corporation, which manages TV-radio stations, including the Harriscopes station in Bakersfield: KBAK-TV, a CBS affiliate. A year ago Marshal Roe came into town and found a messy situation in the 147th-ranking television market. "One of the worst markets in the country . . . price-cutting not to be believed . . . quadruple, quintuple spotting." Translated, this trade lingo means that his own station and the two others in town, KERO-TV (an NBC affiliate

owned by Time-Life, Incorporated) and KLYD-TV (an ABC affiliate, independently owned) were clustering too many commercials and disregarding conventional rates and practices to get accounts from advertisers.

None of the stations was "on the code," that is, a subscriber to the National Association of Broadcasters Television Code, which sets self-regulatory time standards for commercials. (About 400 of approximately 600 stations, or 65 per cent are currently on the code.) The marshal immediately put KBAK on the code. From now on the number of commercials, particularly in a half-hour, would be restricted; and there would be only "double-spot" commercials during station-breaks.

Roe's personal code persuades him that one "ought to run a clean station." He also feels that it's good business: "It firms up the market." By excessive spotting the stations had been, in effect, offering "more merchandise to the advertisers for less money." As a result the agencies, because they could get all the impressions they felt they needed for

this less money, had begun to cut their budget allocations. This, in turn, had made the competition even fiercer. A "firmed up" market, reasoned Roe, would help all three stations.

"I'll charge you a little more for each spot," said Roe, "but I'll cut the clutter. Instead of being grouped with two or three other advertisers, you'll be adjacent to only one. You'll make a sharper impression and, actually, the cost efficiency will be the same."

The marshal's clean-up campaign, however, brought a mixed response from the time-buyers at advertising agencies. At certain San Francisco agencies the move was favorably received. Elsewhere, most of the time-buyers were unimpressed. They couldn't care less about the commercial clutter: they were interested only in lower cost per thousand. They refused to switch to KBAK unless it offered a dramatically lower price than its competitors.

ROE, who was formerly daytime sales manager for ABC Television, doesn't regard his actions as heroic, merely rational. "The advertisers are always complaining about clutter. Here they have a chance to get rid of the clutter at the same value, and they're concerned only with reaching as many homes as cheaply as possible."

The marshal's move affected his chief competitor, the Time-Life station, only to a degree. Prodded by advertisers who pointed to KBAK's new policy, the NBC affiliate also cut down to double-spotting in prime-time station breaks. An off-the-air monitor's report in March showed "twenty-four commercials for sixty minutes" for the Time-Life station, representing "40 per cent of commercial activity per hour of programing . . . The 11 p.m. half-hour news [was] 43 per cent commercial." At KBAK, the marshal's station, they don't triple-spot at all; and they never run more than six minutes of commercials in a half-hour, twelve minutes in an hour. But the 995,500 television viewers (three to a home) in the Bakersfield area don't seem to care. The Time-Life station continues to be No. 1 in the area; the CBS station is No. 2.

It could be that people watch KERO more because it has better shows, or that it's just inertia—the Time-Life station was there first and viewers follow the conventional path. Roe has considered advertising the fact that he has less commercials, but he hesitates lest people think there's something wrong with his station, or for that matter, with commercials generally. So in the end it's a wash—the good guy is making about the same amount of money as before, for all his pains. Yet he persists. A good marshal lives by his code—come hell or high noon.

—ROBERT LEWIS SHAYON.

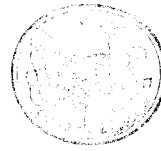
Your Literary I. Q.

Conducted by John T. Winterich and David M. Glixon

NAME, PLEASE

Within the name of each Shakespearean character represented in Column One is embedded a common word, set off by parentheses. In Column Two—courtesy of Carolyn C. Hansen of Denver—the parentheses enclose a definition of the word, followed by a hint about the character. What are the names? For the dramatic personae, turn to page 70.

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|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. _ _ _ _ (_ _ _) | (proscribe); witch's son |
| 2. _ _ _ _ (_ _ _ _ _) | (five lines); jovial knight |
| 3. (_ _ _ _) _ _ _ | (wine); judicial heroine |
| 4. _ _ _ _ _ (_ _ _ _ _) | (penniless); Henry IV |
| 5. (_ _ _ _) _ _ _ _ | (diffident); usurer |
| 6. _ _ _ (_ _ _) _ | (be situated); suicidal heroine |
| 7. _ _ _ (_ _ _) _ _ | (engine food); betrayed lover |
| 8. (_ _ _ _) _ _ _ _ | (horse-ball); sententious courtier |
| 9. _ _ _ _ (_ _ _ _ _) _ | (devil); murdered heroine |
| 10. _ _ (_ _ _) _ _ _ _ _ | (vessel); sensual triumvir |
| 11. _ _ _ (_ _ _ _) _ | (sinners' home); suspicious general |
| 12. _ _ _ _ (_ _ _) _ _ | ("most unkindest"); witty swordsman |
| 13. _ _ _ (_ _ _ _) _ _ _ | (fast time); Veronese gentleman |
| 14. _ _ _ _ (_ _ _) _ | (wager); thane of Cawdor |
| 15. (_ _ _ _) _ _ _ _ _ | (wood measure); faithful daughter |



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LITERARY HORIZONS

From Out of This World

LAST spring Damon Knight, president of the Science Fiction Writers of America, wrote me a letter arguing that I and other reviewers should pay more attention to the work produced by members of his organization. I replied that I didn't know whether he was wrong or right, since I had read no science fiction more recent than the work of Jules Verne and H. G. Wells and had no idea what was going on in that field. He was kind enough to send me three anthologies he has edited: *A Century of Science Fiction*, *Cities of Wonder*, and *Thirteen French Science-Fiction Stories*. I have been reading in these books and also in two histories of science fiction by Sam Moskowitz—*Explorers of the Infinite* and *Seekers of Tomorrow*—and I feel less ignorant than I did. What follows is a preliminary report.

Moskowitz, in the earlier of his histories, offers this definition: "Science fiction is a branch of fantasy identifiable by the fact that it eases the 'willing suspension of disbelief' on the part of its readers by utilizing an atmosphere of scientific credibility for its imaginative speculation in physical science, space, time, social science, and philosophy." This definition permits him to include Cyrano de Bergerac, Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, Edgar Allan Poe, Fitz-James O'Brien, and other early writers, but he grants that modern science fiction begins with Verne and Wells. The term itself, he says, was first used in 1929 by Hugo Gernsback, then editor of *Science Wonder Stories* and formerly of *Amazing Stories*.

After reading a couple of dozen short stories selected by either Knight or Moskowitz, I think I can discern two major tendencies in science fiction, one going back to Verne and the other to Wells. Verne prided himself on keeping close to science and technology as they existed in his time, making only what he could defend as legitimate extrapolations and claiming not only to entertain his readers but also to provide them with scientific information. Wells, on the other

hand, was more interested in man and society than he was in physical science. In *The Time Machine*, the first chapter of which is included in Knight's *Century of Science Fiction*, Wells induces the willing suspension of disbelief by sheer legerdemain, by an adroit manipulation of irrelevant but hypnotically convincing details, in order to say something about man's present and future. Among contemporary science-fiction writers, so far as I can make out from my limited reading, Robert Heinlein is more like Verne, Ray Bradbury more like Wells.

What surprises me more than anything else is the extent to which science-fiction writers distrust science—or, at any rate, technology. Everyone is familiar with the emptiness of life in Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* and the horror of life in George Orwell's *1984*, but these writers are not alone in their pessimism. In several of the stories in Damon Knight's anthology *Cities of Wonder* the city of tomorrow, developing out of the city of today, is a monstrous menace. In Robert Abernethy's "Single Combat" a man tries to defy the city and is destroyed. In Walter Miller's "Dumb Waiter" and Henry Kuttner's "Jesting Pilot," although there is some hope for change, the city is evil. In J. C. Ballard's "Bilenium," an ingenious and bitterly amusing story, the growth of the population approaches its cataclysmic crisis. Knight has also included E. M. Forster's vision of the end of a mechanized civilization, "The Machine Stops," and Stephen Vincent Benét's "By the Waters of Babylon," presenting a neo-barbarian who looks in awe at the ruins of what was once New York.

Science fiction today is more varied than I had supposed. Satire and protest, as I have just pointed out, are common. Humor isn't; but in Mack Reynolds's "The Business, as Usual" time travel is made the basis of comedy, as is space travel in Robert Heinlein's "It's Great to Be Back." Several of the French stories live up to the French reputation for sexiness, and one, Alain Dorémieux's "The

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Vana," is charming as well as ingenious. Several stories—for instance, Edgar Pangborn's "Angel Egg"—are at least as close to fantasy as to science fiction. A few writers pay attention to make-believe gadgetry—atomic knives, coelostat eyepieces, esprojectors, and the like—but most of the stories get along without this kind of hocus pocus. There are many surprises: Edmond Hamilton's "What's It Like Out There?" proves to be a neat bit of pacifist propaganda.

The problem of the science-fiction writer is that science fiction is generally regarded as a subliterate commodity, like mysteries and westerns. Western writers often make the same complaint: not all novels about the West are "westerns," but most of them are treated as if they were. There are readers who demand science fiction, just as there are readers who demand mysteries or westerns, and it is from this dependable market that most science-fiction writers derive their incomes. It is therefore no wonder if 90 per cent of science fiction—the figure is Damon Knight's—is trash. It is also no wonder, the book business being what it is, if the one science-fiction novel that isn't trash gets lumped in with the nine that are.

On the basis of this introductory exploration, I feel that science fiction as