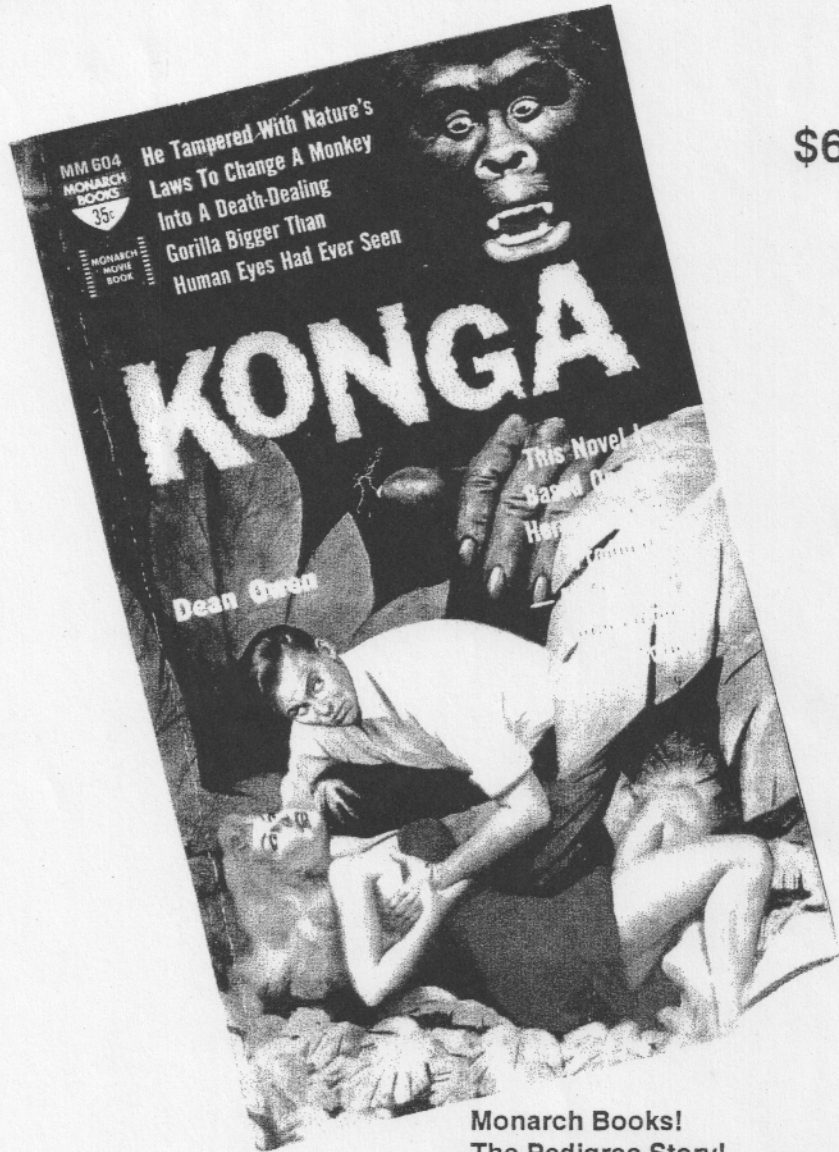


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Here is a serious study of this author, his work, his imitators, and the realities that made H. Beam Piper the fine writer he was. Joseph is a fine scholar whose far-ranging mind makes the significant connections that bring new and true ideas to important and interesting subjects. I'm proud to present this fine study of:

LORD KALVAN OF OTHERWRITERS

by

Joseph T. Major

Around 1968 Dr. Richard Hornberger, M.D., a physician from Maine, set out to write stories based loosely on his service in a military hospital during the Korean War. Being a rock-ribbed State-of-Maine Republican, he staunchly affirmed traditional American values in this work, such as patriotism, Republicanism (though the famous means of dealing with Democrats, "failure of attempted homicide," was to come later), and particularly the one about grumbling civilians in uniform.

The latter attitude seemed to be the most attractive, to the exclusion of the others, and so that novel was to produce some strange fruit indeed. It was adapted into a popular movie, a film reflecting Vietnam-Era New Left disenchantment. In turn, the movie generated a television series, a popular one, highlighting the gentle sensitive aware understanding post-macho male. In turn, the success of the TV series spurred a demand for book adaptations.

Well, for all that Dr. Hornberger was pleased (the TV series alone, he once said, was the equivalent of 26 gall bladder operations a year - in royalties, that is) he was also busy. No problem, the publishers replied, we'll get you assistance.

The assistance grew and flourished on its own. The rock-ribbed State-of-Maine doctors (well, from Boston and

Georgia too, but) were gradually pushed into the background. Instead, a wild host of boozing Cajun oil millionaires, lusty Russian exile tenors, harassed politicians of all sorts, jolly gay chorus lads (this was pre-AIDS, you will note), and other exotic and eccentric folk took center stage in the tales under that banner, in a worldwide gallery of exotic locales.

While it is established in Lord Kalvan of Otherwhen that its hero Calvin Morrison also served in Korea along with Hawkeye, Trapper John, Duke, Spear-chucker, et al. and was even wounded there, H. Beam Piper was of course never in a position to have anything to do with this other work, and so never had any opportunity to do a tie-in to it with a story of Corporal Morrison at the 4077th M*A*S*H. In those days, shared worlds, sharecropping, completions, fan fiction, crossovers, and the other literary excrescences that generate revenue for publishers were as yet unborn. (Well, maybe not crossovers. L. Ron Hubbard had once had one of his characters brag about having fatally defeated Harold Shea in a duel of sorcery - a revelation the creators chose to ignore until fairly recently.)

"They told me that if I voted for Goldwater in '64 we would be at war in Vietnam within a year. Well, I voted for Goldwater, and sure enough, we were at war in Vietnam within a year." H. Beam Piper was even more despairing than that; combined with his parlous financial status at the time and general depression, it was enough to drive him over the edge. Starving and depressed, on November 5, 1964 he killed himself. As his legacy to science fiction, he left a just completed novel, Lord Kalvan of Otherwhen.

Fans were gratified to see Piper returning to his established "Paratime" series, his tales of the Paratime Police who protect their time-line from discovery of the means by which they exploit other time-lines for the resources necessary to sustain their exhausted resource-sparse home. This story of a policeman from Rambo country (Author David Morell calls the setting of his first Rambo novel First Blood "Kentucky", and the movie is set in the Pacific Northwest, but it is based on the area of Centre and Lycoming Counties in Pennsylvania where the Kalvan series centers) quickly became famous; then as contracts expired and the book fell out of print, a lost classic.

Control of the Piper estate fell into the hands of Jerry Pournelle, who, back when he was actually writing his own books, wrote very much in the style of Piper. It's not surprising, therefore, that Pournelle should want to continue the stories. Pournelle himself has the rights to continue Piper's work and has been going to bring out *Son of Space Viking*, the sequel to Piper's *Space Viking*, any moment now for the past ten or eleven years.

The continuation of the Lord Kalvan story, however, was passed to Pournelle's associates John F. Carr and Roland Green. Carr has written many of the introductions and done all the editing for the recent Piper collections issued by Ace. It would seem, perhaps, these admirers of Piper may have loved him too much and not well enough.

What of the original? Back in 1960, Piper had written a story titled "When In the Course", set in his "TerroHuman" future history, the background of the "Fuzzy" novels and of *Space Viking*, telling the story of the first contact of TerroHumans with the inhabitants of the planet Freya, a world occasionally mentioned in the other works of the series as being the home of beautiful women. Campbell rejected it, and the story evidently didn't sell elsewhere either.

The basic idea of "When In the Course", the story of a struggle against a temple hierarchy that kept power through a monopoly on the manufacture of gunpowder, apparently still had some merit in spite of the non-sale. The original story, by the way, was eventually to be published in *Federation*, the Piper collection from Ace Books, edited by the aforementioned John F. Carr, complete with an introduction by the editor revealing all this.

Piper had had a good bit of knowledge about guns; he had already written a mystery novel (*Murder in the Gunroom*) that featured that knowledge (and General Semantics as well, it dating back to the G.S. fad that also brought us van Vogt's "Null-A" series and even Dianetics), etc. If having completely alien aliens on another planet who "just happened" to be infertile with TerroHumans was too much (this was pre-STAR TREK) to seriously consider, how about completely human humans from another time line? It had been a few years

since the last "Paratime" story ("Time Crime" in 1955), but . . .

The result of this reconsideration is the story of the misfit (well, doesn't fit) Corporal Calvin Morrison, Pennsylvania State Police, sometime soldier in Korea under "Great King" Harry S Truman, and student of Renaissance Warfare, who through the accidental intervention of the Paratime Police is thrust into the War for Extermination of the Princedom of Hostigos, partially serialized in *ANALOG* (as "Gunpowder God" [ANALOG, November, 1964] and "Down Styphon!" [ANALOG, November, 1965]) and then published in full as *Lord Kalvan of Otherwhen*.

Besides being a student of guns, Piper was a student of military history. This book reflects that knowledge, happily without the need to stop every other page for a lecture. This is a temptation hard to resist; John Masters once said he wouldn't research one of his novels on Indian history too much. If he had found out, for example, that Tipoo Sahib had been in the habit of giving his pet pug dog a quart of champagne for breakfast every day, Masters said he was afraid that he would put that factoid into his novel no matter how inappropriate it was. Like Masters, like Piper, the good writer will gain an understanding of how his society works, and the understanding will reflect itself in the work. Most writers don't even bother to try understanding. Though the editor's editing might have helped; The John W. Campbell Letters contains one to Piper where Campbell discusses the revision of "a lecture on military tactical problems by H. Beam Piper" that Campbell thought impeded the plot flow of "Down Styphon!" [pp. 429-431; letter of June 15, 1964].

In this case, though, understanding led to a classic portrayal of how a society in turmoil and in extremis could consider the last resort, the ultimate in the unthinkable, and undertake social change. The Princedom of Hostigos is under the ultimate pressure from the rich, powerful, and hated priesthood of Styphon. These priests, whose wealth, power, and hatefulness stems from their total control of a major means of warmaking are for some incomprehensible reason demanding that Prince Prospes of Hostigos give them the sulfur springs

of his Princedom. As with the priests of Styphon's House comes the exploitation of the priests of Styphon's House, Ptosphes said no, and is now as a result facing destruction. The interdicts of Styphon's House are enforced with a vengeance: they won't sell their interdicts any fireseed (gunpowder, that is).

Then, by a miracle, Ptosphes becomes able to make fireseed, and threatens thereby to bring the proud Styphon's House tottering to its destruction. In addition, he has miraculously acquired a supreme captain of his armies, a commander of unprecedented skill and bottomless ingenuity. As you might have guessed, this is the aforementioned Calvin Morrison, or Lord Kalvan.

In two smashing battles, Lord Kalvan's new model army (somehow the Cromwellian reference seemed appropriate) using the fireseed he brought from his history, dealt a reshaped in the modes he derived from his history, dealt a major blow to the hegemony of Styphon's House and reshaped the political order of the world. This is where Piper's intimate knowledge of military history showed its worth; the two battles described in the plot are based on historical models. The first, the Battle of Fitra, is based on Nathan Bedford Forrest's little Civil War masterpiece, the Battle of Brice's Cross Roads. The second, the battle of Fyk (cursed in a divine name by the participants as "the Dralm-damned Battle"), is based on the confused and treachery-haunted Battle of Barnef, the climax of the Redeption of Henry VI in the Wars of the Roses. And having triumphed (for the moment), Kalvan being the only man who can run the situation, finds the Princedom of Hostigos and its new dependencies transformed into the Great Kingdom of Hos-Hostigos ("Hos" being the prefix of imperium in Kalvan's new world) with Great King Kalvan at its head. Rather an impressive example of advancement there.

Piper used an interesting trick to counterpoint and explain the situation. It's been mentioned that the story was transferred from one Piper series to another, and that the other series had been in abeyance for a while. Well, besides providing the means for initiating the story, this other series also provides the means for explicating it through counter-plot

to the main plot.

The counter-plot deals with the doings of Verkan Vall, former Chief of Duplicate Paratime Police (read "Time Crime" by Piper, reprinted in the Ace collection Paratime (even if the cover shows Vall holding an Austrian Steyer AUG assault rifle and the text has him holding an American Sharps bolt-action rifle) for an explication of this learning experience) and presumptive Chief of Paratime Police, in his investigation of the Calvin Morrison Incident. In the course of this investigation, we meet Colonel Verkan of the Hostigi Army, someone who bears as great a resemblance to Verkan Vall as Admiral Miles Naismith of the Dendaril Free Mercenaries bears to Lord Miles N. Vorkosigan of Barrayar (of Lois McMaster Bujold's "Miles Vorkosigan" novels), and for the same reason. (That is, they're the same person under two different but similar pseudonyms.)

This playing-off of plots gives Piper a means of commentary on the main action, placed in the mouths of the Paraimers. It seems less than fair to let the author praise himself; this interplay of plot and counterplot, however, gives depth and balance to the story. The uninitiated can come to understand how important all the events of the book were to the participants, while explanations can come plausibly.

While the first two-thirds of this was running in ANALOG as the stories "Gunpowder God" and "Down Styphon", Piper gave up. I have heard it attributed to Piper's agent Kenneth White that he boasted that he didn't need to write anything down, as he had it all right there in his head. It became a little hard to get at that information, though, when White died in October of 1964. The Paratime Police might have been able to do so (the Paratime story "Last Enemy" deals with some of the effects of an effective proof of reincarnation and mindreading), but their services in that area were not available to Piper. Like I said before, now broke and depressed, he gave up and shot himself. Meanwhile, his new agent Max Wilkinson (Piper really moved fast this time, perhaps too fast) had sold the Kalvan stories to Ace Books, without bothering to inform Piper of that little matter. The mills of publishing grind inexorably, leaving little room for

such trivialities as life and death, and so in 1965 Lord Kalvan of Otherwhen came out, too late to bring his author any satisfaction - or money.

We now fast-forward some twenty years, to the year of 1985. Heartening and joyful news came from Ace Books: they released Great Kings' War by John F. Carr and Roland Green, the long hoped-for sequel and continuation to Lord Kalvan of Otherwhen.

There had been hints that the things to come to Kalvan after the events of the earlier book might not all be good, above and beyond the requirements of having enough conflict to make a worthwhile novel. Not only does Kalvan's introspection at the end (Chapter 19, Section 2) give some hints of problems to come, but in a letter he wrote to Campbell Piper himself said as much: "Kalvan is Great King, and Hostigos is really beginning to pick up Hos-power; but Styphon's House isn't down yet, let alone out, and the Great King of Hos-Harphax isn't going to take this secession from his realm placidly. To carry on the story further, I'm going to have to do a lot of figuring..." [quoted in the article "The Last Cavalier: H. Beam Piper" by John F. Carr, ANALOG, January 1988, page 171]

Great Kings' War begins with a nasty description of a nasty winter, but the nasties tossed Kalvan's way by Ly'tris the Weather Goddess are nothing as to the nasties tossed by Styphon the Gunpowder God. Or, anyway, his mundane followers.

The heat is on (after a long cold winter) when Styphon's House discovers believing leaders, the Styphoni Inquisition ("Nobody expects the Styphoni Inquisition!"), and the Holy Order of Zarthani Knights. This latter, a formidable force of cavalry along with its comrades the Sacred Squares, a formidable force of infantry, is now ready to be turned to the defense of Styphon's House against the threat to its monopoly.

Great King Kalvan rallies his forces and turns on his one-time nominal overlord, Great King Kaiphranos of Hos-Harphax. At first, the aged Great King Kaiphranos placidly allows the rebel to practice mutual non-interference, but Kalvan forces the issue and hands Kaiphranos and his anile

family a staggering shock at the Battle of the Heights of Choithros - only in turn to be handed one himself.

For meanwhile, Styphon's House has assembled a formidable force around the Zarthani Knights and Sacred Squares and has handed Prince Prospes, back defending Kalvan's rear, a horrid defeat. This forces Kalvan to throw away most of his hard-won victory and march back north to defend Tarr-Hostigos. There, at the bloody Battle of Phyrax, aided by chance and incomprehensible ineptitude on the other side, Great King Kalvan staves off total ruin at a massive price.

At the same time, now Chief of Paratime Police Verkan Vall continues his overtime attachment to Kalvan, while Colonel Verkan of the Hostigos Mounted Rifles continues to serve intermittently in the Great King's army. This dual existence is easier to keep than might be thought on the Hostigi end, but one would think that a major administrator of a significant national agency would be wanted more often.

The Chief and Colonel has to worry about his fellow-timeliners, though, as the promise of aid Colonel Verkan offered Great King Kalvan has to be fulfilled by Chief Verkan, organized and dispatched from the Paratimers Home Time Line to the Kalvan Subsector Time-Line. Much time and many pages are spent by Carr & Green describing the intricate interrelations of the university study team descending upon their hapless all-unknowing victims of Hostigos. This has something in common with the second subplot.

While the Demon Kalvan has been planning, Styphon's House has been counter-planning. So on, Master of the Zarthani Knights, a hardened veteran of the wars against the savage Mexicoatl aborigines in the South, is now turned by the Inner Circle of Styphon's House against their new deadly foe. There is some early intrigue among that Inner Circle that looks like it might be important, but it is set aside in favor of a different set of intrigues. (Of course, nowadays it seems to be the habit to spend huge blocks of text setting the stage for events that will come in the next book, retarding the plot in the current one in the process; for example, certain incidents found in Janissaries: Storms of Victory, about which there will be more later. It's a problem of seriesitis.) Which, as well as

tying Master Soton in with some dangerous and unusual priests among the hierarchy of Slyphon's House, seem as well to be tied in with the third subplot.

Phidestros, captain of the Iron Company of mercenaries, later Grand-Captain of the Iron Band of mercenary companies, is a scheming resourceful scoundrel. He is also restrained from switching sides like a good mercenary, as he has incurred the implacable wrath of Prince Sarrask of Sask, one of Kalvan's subordinate princes, through having plundered Sarrask's baggage train. (Sarrask, a character already familiar to readers of Lord Kalvan of Otherwhen, never mentions it, though.) Phidestros is marked out for bigger and better things, as shown by his intriguing that helped him survive the Battle of the Heights of Chocthos unscathed, gained him command of a band of mercenary companies, and helped him survive the bloody Battle of Phyrax unscathed - a rare accomplishment for any on his side.

Indeed, Carr & Green seem determined to set up Soton, or Phidestros, as an anti-Kalvan (or maybe both of them, in differing contexts) to oppose Kalvan and all his works. Likewise, in the Paratimers section as much is made of university researcher Danar Sirna and chief's assistant Ranthar Jard as of their nominal superior Verkan Vall. You will recall the situation previously described with regard to the M*A*A*S*H books; the new supporting characters introduced in the books gradually pushed Hawkeye and his original friends well into the background. This seems to be a consequence of continuations.

As one huge example of such in Great Kings' War, may I introduce you to Xykos the Bull, the strongest man in Lord Kalvan's army? He's a big fellow, muscular, wielding his great two-handed sword Boarsbane to devastating effect. He looks remarkably like Bertan Wandor's sworn man Berek Strong-Ax from the Wandor series of Wandor's Ride et seq. They both look remarkably like P.F.C. Arkos "the Great Ark" Passovopolous of Janissaries: Storms of Victory. It's just a coincidence that Roland Green co-authored the first and third books and wrote the second series all by himself. Sarcasm aside, this is merely a substantial and visible highlight of the

infiltration of one author's style into another's work.

On a somewhat more substantial note, in an interesting lab experiment, or perhaps an example of alternative timelines, we have the case of the Fuzzy sub-series of the TerroHuman series. The first of these, *Little Fuzzy*, was published in 1962 to some acclaim; a second and a third volume, it was indicated to Piper, were eminently desirable. Piper then produced the second volume, *Fuzzy Sapiens*, and while it was going through the works he wrote the third.

The publisher, Avon, changed the title of the second volume to *The Other Human Race* and put on it the most hideous cover I have ever seen, one without any indication that this book has any relation to any other book in existence. Then, with sales nigh nonexistent, Avon told Piper that as there seemed to be no demand for the third volume (already completed by Piper) not to bother with it any further. All this maneuvering, by the way, was in 1964 and is considered to have been a likely contributor to Piper's fatal depression.

We fast-forward to 1981. The Piper revival is in full fling, and capitalizing on it Ace has commissioned a continuation, for the manuscript of the third Fuzzy book has vanished. The reading public falls voraciously upon *Fuzzy Bones*, by William Tuning, the sequel to the beloved *Little Fuzzy* and *Fuzzy Sapiens* (Ace restored the original title). If you can't get Piper, imitation Piper is almost as good, or so publishers would have it. (There are some odd features of the background; for example, Tuning seemed to think that "Gunnery Sergeant" was a specialty and not a rank, which it might be in the TerroHuman space marines, but as Piper tended to model the future on the present, likely such would not have been the case. There will be more on this.)

Then, *Fuzzy Bones* instantly became a collectors' item (of sorts) as the news came out that the long-lost *Fuzzies* and *Other People* had indeed been found. In due time (1984, that is), this third book in the *Fuzzy* series by Piper was published and people noticed (or didn't notice) the differences.

Fuzzy Bones is clearly meant to be an intermediate novel; there are unresolved elements in its plot clearly meant to be the bases for future novels. *Fuzzies* and *Other People* is

a concluding and conclusive volume in the Fuzzy sub-series; the plot elements are resolved. Thus, for example, while Tuning had Hugo Ingermann, the scoundrelly corrupt politician Piper introduced in Fuzzy Sapiens, being rescued by a generous stranger so that he could still harass the protagonists with ill deeds, Piper had him take the cash and bug out, resolving a plot element instead of leaving it open for later volumes.

This is the dynamic of seriesitis; there must always be unresolved plot elements at the end to provide the bases of further volumes. That this dynamic dooms the series to be no more than Fuzzy Bones II, Fuzzy Bones III, Fuzzy Bones IV, et seq., ad infinitum, ad nauseum (or in our case Great Kings' War II, Great Kings' War III, Great Kings' War IV, et seq., ad infinitum, ad nauseum) is apparently no concern of the writer, though it should be.

There are elements in the original concept that might be enough to provide the basis of a different kind of novel. "For example, none of [the subordinate Princes] liked having to renounce their right, fully enjoyed under Great King Kaiphranos, of making war on one another, though they did like the tightening of control over their subject lords and barons, most of whom were an unruly and troublesome lot. The latter didn't like the abolition of serfdom and, in Beshla and Kyblos, like the abolition of serfdom and, in Beshla and Kyblos, outright slavery." [Lord Kalvan of Otherwhen, p. 236] "And rioting in Kyblos; the emancipated slaves were beginning to see what Samuel Johnson had meant when he described freedom as the choice of working or starving." [ibid., p. 238] "He still hadn't gotten anything done on paper-making. Maybe he'd better not invent paper; if he did, some Dralm-damned bureaucrat would invent paper-work, and then he'd have to spend all his time endlessly reading and annotating reports." [ibid., pp. 241-2]

To some extent, Carr & Green have proceeded along that line. The presentations of life in the royal house of Harphax helps the reader "to understand why Kalvan had been so successful so quickly." [Great Kings' War, p. 123] The decay and stress among the Harphaxi royals seems to have been in retrospect (of the events Piper put in Lord Kalvan, that is)

pretty obvious, and yet the presentation here is something new and interesting. When they picked up on something introduced by Piper and followed it along the lines of his work, they turned out to be interesting. This is rare enough.

The possibilities of social strain deriving from the introduction of new methods and technologies present a far more interesting prospect to the thoughtful reader than does the endless repetition of wars. To their credit, Carr & Green do touch on this subject; note particularly the discussion of papermaking in Chapter Three and Chapter Twenty-one of Great Kings' War. The character of Ermut the papermaker is an interesting example of the problems and concerns associated with this: [As Mytron and Kalvan entered Ermut was saying] "'- and the next time you let the goat fat burn, I'll try to find a coating that calls for boy's fat. Your fat, you lazy Dralm-forsaken whore's son - oh, I beg your pardon, Brother My-Your Majesty!'" [Great Kings' War, p. 27] I like that.

Having had presented to them Ermut's experiments with sizing for paper (I really hope he didn't try human fat) Kalvan is able to discuss with Mytron at least the concept of experimentation, and the related concepts of science and universities. A comparison with the Janissaries series, where science and universities (places to teach knowledge, not Political Correctness, that is) feature significantly, is not inappropriate in this context: but then, I know Grant McCormick once referred in a review to Rick Galloway, the protagonist of that series, as "Lord Rick of Tarr-Kartos", parodying the style of "Lord Kalvan of Tarr-Hostigos". It does after all come from the same source. This is an example of innovation, innovation that could lead to a certain type of strain on society (note the preceding reference to "inventing paperwork") from new methods. Somewhere, and I regret that I don't recall where, I came across a comment concerning the problems of innovation and social change. The commentator gave as his examples these two series, and commented that the technological innovation involved was in an era of social turmoil. These matters, these scenes, though, in this book are only incidental elements, isolated scenes set within a great panorama of strife and bloodshed. It's not enough.

That panorama has problems, too. The great battles of Lord Kalvan of Otherwhen were based on historical models; no such basis seems to exist for the battles of Great Kings' War. Indeed, the climatic conflict, the Battle of Phyrax, seems to have no intent but to maximize casualties on both sides. (Consider, for example, the cliched scene on page 269 where Berek, uh the Great Ark, that is Xykos the Bull finds himself surrounded by corpses stacked three and four deep.) This extends even into combat operations (the region between tactics and strategy), where an entire assault is staged seemingly for no other reason than to get thousands of Styphoni killed in a trap. There seems to be a peculiar emphasis on a certain kind of nastiness of war involved.

Going from war to the means of making war, we find another problem. Lord Kalvan distrusted mercenaries. Lord Kalvan of Otherwhen contains a quote from De Principatibus regarding the unreliability of such troops [pp. 160-1]. Machiavelli's prime example of such is the life and fate of Francesco Bussone, Count Carmagnola, the man who whipped the Swiss. Carmagnola, having left the service of Duke Filippo Maria Visconti of Milan for good and sufficient reason (they had a falling out) entered that of Venice. The Doges then perceived a certain lassitude in Carmagnola's ensuing campaigns on their behalf against Milan. While Carmagnola always had an explanation and an excuse, the Council became ever more suspicious and eventually had Carmagnola arrested for treason and beheaded. Later events, such as the career of Albrecht Wenzel von Wallenstein (inspired by the Third Amendment, or so Edward Teller would have it) in and out of the service of the Holy Roman Empire during the Thirty Years' War, would seem to bear this appraisal out.

Then in 1967 an event took place which would seem to have fully validated Lord Kalvan's distrust of mercenaries. Ever since the "Simba" rebellion of 1964-5, the government of the Congo had relied on mercenaries as its main military striking force. This reliance had its merits, as the Arnee National Congolaise, the nominal natural armed forces of the nation, was of little value militarily. However, when mercenaries think they are going to be massacred, or when

mercenaries think an opportunity arises to change sides for better pay, or when mercenaries think they can take power themselves, they are likely to revolt.

In 1967 all three of those conditions held true in the Congo, and mercenary leaders Jean Schramme and Robert Denard thought a wonderful opportunity was opening up before them. On June 5, 1967, they rebelled against the Congolese government of the then Joseph Desire Mobutu [now Mobutu Sese Seko]. As it turned out, all the odds were against them. They lacked any senior Congolese leader to serve as a rallying point against Mobutu - Moise Tshombe, the most likely such leader, had just been taken prisoner in Algeria on July 30 of that year. In addition, Denard was seriously wounded in the early stages of the revolt. This left Schramme with no choice but to go to ground in the Congolese town of Bukavu, on the border with Rwanda, and hope for the best. The best was not forthcoming; finally, the white mercenaries were expelled from Africa while their black associates were granted a permanent home there, much to the dismay of the Red Cross, which had been promised by the Congolese government that their lives would be spared.

Thus you can see that Kalvan's Machiavellian distrust of mercenaries was not unjustified. However, the fashions in science fictional portrayals of mercenaries have changed. Piper had seemingly envisioned the ordinary state of affairs in Italy, and in fact in Africa for that matter, where mercenary commanders hired men for a ruler. However, the current fashion stems from a highly colored interpretation of the era of the Free Companies, where for a brief interval large numbers of already-associated mercenaries held together long enough to be hired en bloc, leaving the just-truced-over Hundred Years War for the then-available little wars of the Italian peninsula.

This state of affairs has not come to pass again. When in 1961 the French government disbanded the 1er Regiment Etranger Parachutiste in the aftermath of the Algerian rising against de Gaulle, the 1er REP did not then hire on en masse to Tshombe's troop-hungry Katangese as "1a Legion Mercenaire de Faulconberge". When on Mike Hoare's recom-

mentation President General Mobutu disbanded Five Commando, Hoare's former command, in spite of the prolific rumors spreading at the time it did not then reappear in Yemen under the title of (say) the "Denardi Free Mercenaries". When the British government found it no longer needed the services of their 2nd/7th Gurkha Rifles, for all that Sultan Hassan al-Bolkiah of Brunei might have desired the services of let us call them "Bahadur's Slammers" to defend his tiny oil-rich East Indian land, he was just out of luck.

There is just no such market for such assemblages of mercenaries, as John Banks, main supplier of victims to Costas "Colonel Callan" Georgiou the Angolan mercenary mercenary-killer, found out when he speedily assembled "the Banks Band" (well, he didn't call it that) in 1975 to be hired as a mercenary band in true Dorsai-Hammer-Falkenberg style, only to have it as speedily come apart in a welter of booze and brawling. Besides, the sort of people who sign on for that sort of thing are the ones who were too unstable to hack it in ordinary life. The Legion Etrangere, the Tercio Extrangero, the Gurkha Rifles: these mercenaries depend on the financial structure and the disciplinary measures of their employers the French, Spanish, and British national armies. The "pure" mercenaries of SFnal fame, lacking by their structure such a sanction, would (as did the mercenaries of the Congo) dissolve into undisciplined mobs. Hoare could not stop the mercenaries of Five Commando from looting, for example.

(Of course, the way that Pournelle's latest completist S. M. Stirling has "got around" this problem, by having the mercenaries actually be hired-out regular troops of other countries, in his continuation to Pournelle's *The Mercenary* is typical. That is to say, it is completely unrealistic and pretty much contradicted in the original. The latter comment derives from the description in *Prince of Mercenaries* in particular of free companies hired by countries in the fashion that John Banks wanted to be hired. (The special disposition of the principal unit, Falkenberg's Mercenary Legion, as a unit of the Co-Dominium secret service, accords poorly with what had been established in the original as well. And of course Stirling ends up writing about his own types of characters in his own

background, thinly overpainted to purport to be in Pournelle's background.) Then too, regulars hired out as mercenaries tend to lose morale; this was a concern in the recent Gulf War. And from the other side of the equation, Machiavelli also had something to say about the inadvisability of hiring another country's army to defend yours, in chapter thirteen, the one after his discussion of the inadvisability of hiring mercenaries, of *De Principatibus*.)

Thus we should see that the presentation of mercenaries in SF is generally unrealistic. This unrealism has not stopped this presentation from becoming standard: In contrast to Lord Kalvan of Otherwhen, which adheres to the historical structure of individual mercenaries hiring on under rulers, *Great Kings' War* adheres strictly to the SF standard, as seen with Captain Phidestros and his Iron Company become Great-Captain Phidestros and his Iron Band.

Small details seem to suffer, as well. Sometimes they are trivial in the extreme: "[Blonde] hair cut in what he knew as a page-boy bob." [Lord Kalvan of Otherwhen, p. 32] "Rylla, who'd been putting her long blonde hair up in a nightcap, looked at him in silence." [Great Kings' War, pp. 33-4] There's been a little over a year between those two observations; can hair grow that fast?

Sometimes they are more serious: "Half a dozen news service personalities, including Yandar Yadd . . ." [Great Kings' War, p. 84]. It is a tribute to Piper's foresight that he predicted the rise of "60 Minutes" style journalism; in the Paratime story "Time Crime" (published in *Astounding* in 1955, as has been said, the last Paratime story until "Gunpowder God" in 1964) the roving investigatory journalist Yandar Yadd is as obnoxious as Mike Wallace, Bob Woodward, and the rest of that lot on our time-line.

However, Yadd has a job on the side; he is an agent for the Wizard Traders Organization, a vast paratemporal slave-trade outfit. The discovery and the beginning of the investigation of the WTO is the story of "Time Crime". Had Yandar Yadd shown his face in public at (say) the speech by the university bore giving the general background of Kalvan's situation described in *Great Kings' War*, he would have soon

thereafter been aiding the Paratime Police in their inquiries into the WTO. Could it be that while Carr & Green remembered the name, and a little of what he did, they didn't remember everything connected with the character? Shouldn't they have checked? In, say, Paratime, the Ace collection of Piper's "Paratime" stories including "Time Crime", with an introduction by John F. Carr?

This leads us to a serious inconsistency. In Lord Kalvan of Otherwhen, no bones are made about the unpopularity of Styphon: "Styphon is an evil god, and evil men serve him, but to them he gives wealth and great power." [p. 41] "Styphon wasn't a popular god, like Dralm or Galzar or Yirta All-mother. The priests of Styphon never tried for a following among the people, or even the minor nobility and landed gentry that were the backbone of here-and-now society. They ruled by pressure on the Great Kings and the Princes, and as soon as the pressure was relieved, as soon as the fireseed monopoly was broken, those rulers and their people with them would turn on Styphon's House." [pp. 88-91]

Likewise, the nature of Styphon's power is also made clear: "The Chief knew that, 'Styphon's House,' he said. 'That's that gunpowder theocracy, isn't it?' It was... through their monopoly on this essential tool for maintaining or altering the political status quo, Styphon's House ruled the whole Atlantic seaboard, while the secular sovereigns merely reigned." [p. 58] "[Gunpowder] had been the secret of the power of Styphon's House. No ruler, Great King or petty lord, could withstand his enemies if they had fireseed and he had none; no ruler sat secure upon his throne except by the favor of Styphon's House. Given here, armies marched to victory; withheld there, terms of peace were accepted. In every council of state, Styphon's House spoke the deciding word. Wealth poured in to be loaned out again at usury and return more wealth." [pp. 97-8]

In Great Kings' War, Styphon has become popular enough with the minor nobility and landed gentry to attract their youngsters into his service in his Holy Order of Zarthani Knights, and popular enough with the people to attract their footloose young men into his Sacred Squares, performing a

useful and valuable service in keeping the merciless Mexicoatl and savage Sastragathi away from civilization, having thereby acquired a power in the world independent of and combined with the other factors superior to the secular princes. The parallel made is with the crusading religious orders in the history of our timeline.

If you look at the history of those religious orders, though, it's worth noting that the one that tried ruling behind the scenes (the Knights Templar) was dismembered, while the one that had a great territory (the Teutonic Knights) eventually became a great secular power (Prussia) and the one that had a small territory (the Knights Hospitallers) eventually became a small semi-secular power (as might have been deduced from their other name, the Knights of Malta). Power needs a power base; but the power base ends up having its own justification independent of the original baseless organization. That is, it would make as much sense for Grand Master Solon to take advantage of the religious crisis in Styphon's House and set up his own Great Kingdom as it is for him to soldier on.

It might possibly be justified that this mighty army, this power center, just had not previously been called upon, in this the ultimate test of the power of Styphon's House. This justification could be done but it would take much work; extraordinary claims require extraordinary proof. Instead, the existence of this mighty army, this Styphoni state, is presented as a given state of affairs that somehow for some reason hadn't been mentioned before in among the listings of power. "Soon everybody would be making fireseed, and then Styphon's House would be only a name, and a name of mockery at that." [Lord Kalvan of Otherwhen, p. 99] With that army to call on? It seems improbable.

Also, it seems to be contradicting the established foreign policy of Styphon's House. Look back to the quote from Lord Kalvan of Otherwhen, pp 97-8, about Styphon's House and indirect control. Then consider: "It had been planned to use Prince Sartrask as a counterpoise to Gormoth, when the latter had grown too great by the conquest of Hostigos. Well, the time for that was now. Gormoth was needed to destroy Hostigos; as soon as that was accomplished,

he, too, must be destroyed." [ibid., p. 100] In other words, a foreign policy of balance of power, a policy appropriate to an indirect power wielding influence over other powers, not one able to intervene directly in affairs with a powerful army.

The introduction of a means of direct force wielded by Styphon's house makes a major difference in the story. Its effects are substantial, not only on the plot but also on the shell-shocked reader who can't imagine what trick might be pulled out of the hat next, what surprising unprecedented new development might ensue.

What is the cause of this? I recall a letter by L. Sprague de Camp to Niekas wherein he admitted that none of the writers who wrote continuations to Robert E. Howard's Conan series could produce a character quite like Howard's Conan. Howard's style, or so de Camp said (not only there but also in his books *Literary Swordsmen and Sorcerers* and *Dark Valley Destiny*), stemmed partially from his neuroses; becoming "normal" might well have changed Howard to the point where his writing would have lost all its strength. And while de Camp was willing to try to imitate Howard, becoming deliberately neurotic was somewhat farther than he was willing to go.

Other writers de Camp didn't mention did worse by Conan. One in particular whom I won't distinguish by naming turned Conan into a rapist, something Howard said, would specific that Conan never was; Conan, so Howard said, would go to great lengths to avoid even the appearance of a situation in which he might be anything approaching a rapist. As opposed to the author I won't name, who evaded the charge with a sham justification ("I won't name, but when said by and I'll stop." - All looking very fine in print, but when said by a large powerful man to a naked exhausted distraught woman, a sham indeed). A character rape, in more than one sense of the term.

The point of this description is the differences introduced by different authors. As de Camp points out, sometimes it stems from the very nature of the author. But as de Camp was too polite to point out, sometimes it stems from the author's need to be different for differences' sake. But differences and continuations are at cross purposes by their very

nature.

At Hostigos Con, held in Lord Kalvan country at Penn State on June 10-12, 1988, to the excitement of the assembled multitude, Roland Green held forth from the forthcoming (*Real Soon Now*, along with *Son of Space Viking*) sequel to *Great Kings' War*, *Great Kings' War II - Gunpowder God*, rather. (Note that the title of the book is also the title of the first Lord Kalvan novelette. Does this imply that *Down Styphon!* will be the title of the third continuation?) The reading was interrupted by a loud vehement drunken bellow from the back of the room of: "Great! But it won't work!!!!" Yes, Pournelle was there, and he had a comment on the description of events therein. Being able to visit the site of a novel is not without its advantages to the continuator(s) of that novel, and Pournelle had noticed certain geographic features of the site in the Bellefonte area where Piper had located Tarr-Hostigos that rendered the description being given of certain events taking place at that castle less than acceptable. Well, Green & Carr went there, revised their description, and then made it acceptable. To Pournelle, anyway.

To my knowledge, two sections of the ever-forthcoming *Gunpowder God* (not this year, anyway) have been published. Robert Adams's anthology *Altermities* (copyright May 1989) contains one, titled "Kalvan Kingmaker". "Kalvan King-maker" deals with a heretofore only slightly mentioned section of the Kalvan Subsector *Time-Line*: the *Trygath* (our Middle West). Soton and Phidestros, the former still Grand Master of the Zarthani Knights (as explained at the end of *Great Kings' War*) and the latter now Captain-General of *Hos-Haphax* (both the anti-Kalvans doing well, I note), are rolling with the punches. Phidestros is rebuilding the crummy Harphaxi army, which mention is all he'll get in this story. Now Soton has deeper plans in mind . . .

As a savage invasion of a nomad horde of the grass people of the *Sastragath* has crossed the Great [Mississippi] River and is moving up the *Lydistros* [Ohio] Valley towards *Hos-Hostigos*. The ubiquitous Zarthani Knights are herding these invaders Kalvanwards, and devastating the *Sastragath* behind them to provide extra motivation. Not trusting to the Ohio

Valley Lung Rot to take care of this horde, Kalvan moves with his army to reinforce King Nestros of Rathon (Akron, Ohio - P. J. O'Rourke country!) or High King Nestros of the Trygath, however you want to look at it (or whichever side you're on).

In a small battle (not unlike the battle with the nomads in Janissaries: Clan and Crown, which really shouldn't surprise anyone) Kalvan and his new ally Great King Nestros of Hos-Rathon (he felt emboldened) win the allegiance of the nomad chieftain Sargos, Warlord of the Great Horde. They then turn on the herding army of Zarthani Knights and chew it up, handing Soton yet another defeat that aids Soton's cause and harms Kalvan's. You see, it seems that Phidestros is somehow building a mighty army out of that nest of corruption in Hos-Harphax, and this campaign has given him time to do it, while Kalvan's new allies Nestros and Sargos are somehow of no use to him save as a bolt-hole (as we shall see).

The results of this are implied in the material Green read to the congoers at Hostigos Con. After revisions, it became acceptable to the Lord of the Piper Estate, and was published in the Pournelle-created anthology (from that reference, he likely has about as much to do with it as he does with his other books) Armageddon!: There Will Be War VIII (also copyright May 1989) under the title of "Siege at Tarr-Hostigos".

Before our story begins: Somehow having escaped the fate of Carmagnola and Wallenstein (thus far, anyway) mercenary Captain-General Phidestros of Hos-Harphax has joined with his fellow anti-Kalvan Grand Master Soton at the head of Styphon's Holy Host to destroy Great King Kalvan's army at the Battle of Ardtros. Kalvan is fleeing to the protection of his new allies Nestros and Sargos, while the Holy Host is bringing the Styphoni Inquisition ("Nobody expects the Styphoni Inquisition!" - including perhaps H. Beam Piper), that is, the Holy Investigation of Styphon, to now-unprotected Hostigos.

Then begins our story. The aging Prince Ptosphes is left with the halt and maimed to hold Tarr-Hostigos, while Kalvan flees with the able. Meanwhile, there is beginning a

falling out among the victors, as Captain-General Phidestros is less than pleased with the tactics of Styphon's House Archpriest Roxthar (an archpriest of Styphon who believes in his god, something Piper had flatly ruled out) and the Holy Investigation as they torture to death everyone they find in Hostigos, and less than pleased with the tactics of his fellow anti-Kalvan Grand Master Soton, who refuses to screen Tarr-Hostigos and pursue Kalvan, instead wanting to besiege the castle and let the army go.

Meanwhile, among the Paracops, Chief Verkan Vall is disgusted that Colonel Baron Verkan couldn't aid his lord Great King Kalvan. (The Paracops call that feeling Outtime Identification Syndrome, and it can win the affected person a trip to the Inquisition - sorry, the Bureau of Psychological Hygiene, an outfit on the Paratime Home Time Line about as feared as the Inquisition, and for the same reasons.) The Chief is also disturbed that the University Team he was saddled with has been massacred by the Styphoni, for while they were fiercely independent of his control, he and the Paratime Police were still responsible for them. Well, they weren't all massacred. One, Sirna, or Danar Sirra back at the Paratime Home Time Line, is hiding out in a brothel. Thus far she isn't on staff, but treating wounds is about as bad for her state of mind. Thanks to Soton's obstinacy, there are plenty of wounds to treat. And thanks to Roxthar's obstinacy, there are plenty of inquisitors around ready to torture to death anyone who looks at them cross-eyed. Like, say, an outtime university scholar who thinks religion is a form of ancient barbarism.

This combination of determination on Ptosphes's side and fanaticism on Soton's side (of course, Soton would say it was a case of determination on his side and fanaticism on Ptosphes's. Isn't point of view just wonderful?) leads to an explosive climax. Literally, as when the Holy Host finally storms Tarr-Hostigos, as his dying act Ptosphes sets off the magazines in the castle, taking them with him.

Captain-General Phidestros thinks he can salvage something from the wreckage, for now he has an edge over Grand Master Soton his fellow anti-Kalvan - he didn't support that massacre! Also, on the morale front, he has a new

mistress, one Sirna. Things end well for the Paratimers, too, as Danar Sirna is now sort of protected by Phidestros, and over in the Paratime Home Time Line Chief Vall is busy rallying support for himself against the opposition (the Paratime Home Time Line has a parliamentary government - this was something established by Piper in the story "Time Crime" that Carr&Green actually remembered!) and for Kalvan against his opposition.

What's the problem? To answer that question, one has to contemplate the realization that Nevil Shute (N. S. Norway) is best known for his most atypical novel. In most of his works, the hero succeeds, and by his success improves the situation. This doesn't mean that he is around to see it; in *Most Secret*, a novel where Nevil Shute the writer used his alter ego Nevil Shute Norway's experience in British Combined Operations of WWII to set the background, one of the heroes is shot by the Germans. But the Bretons of the area where the action was now have a symbol to harass their German occupiers with.

In Shute's best-known novel, though, no one can succeed, and nothing will be better off no matter what anyone does. In *On the Beach*, the entire world is going to die. For all that everyone does, the mood is one of despair, no matter how well it is hidden.

In Piper's novels the hero succeeds, and by his success improves the situation. In *Space Viking*, Trask has created a new trading power, overthrown a dictator, and laid the foundations for a new interstellar government. In the *Fuzzy* novels, the humans have established a firmer definition of sentience, and saved sentients from extinction in the process. In *Lord Kalvan of Otherwhen*, the hero takes a course that will lead a people to an era of innovation.

Great Kings' War and *Gunpowder God*, by way of contrast, follow the dynamic of seriesitis. The protagonist of the series can never resolve the situation, never defeat his foes, for that would mean cutting off the series. The situation can never really change, for that would mean introducing something different and losing the reliable buying public. This means an endless round of struggles against a never-defeatable foe. How unexciting.

The new elements introduced also introduce problems. The university bores with Danar Sirna are a disharmonious factor. Their squabbles with each other and the Paratime Police are distracting and really less than interesting. Now suppose that Carr&Green had decided to write a new Paratime story about Danar Sirna and the university study team in a primitive time line other than the Kalvan Subsector Time Line - it would have been more original, but as it didn't have that all-important tie-in it couldn't have been sold in the first place. And their being there introduces other problems.

In his report on *Hosligos Con*, Taras Wolansky raised an interesting point: these competing Paratimer factions have been willing to carry their competition into other time lines. Suppose, Taras asked Roland Green at that con, one of these factions decided to assassinate Kalvan? Green's less-than-convincing answer was that as writers, Carr&Green wouldn't kill off their hero. While showing a proper appreciation for the dynamics of structure in novels, this evades the issue.

Mark Twain once penned a story in which he deliberately wrote himself into a corner, and then said he had got his hero into such a predicament that he didn't know what to do next. Heinlein introduced a similar predicament in the adventure serial *Roger and Hazel Stone* write in *The Rolling Stones*; Hazel explains that she is deliberately going to evade the answer as to how the hero got out of the inescapable trap the Galactic Overlord trapped him in. Most writers in such a situation tend more towards Hazel Stone's "solution".

Carr&Green have introduced a factor that unbalances the situation, and have produced an answer to their problem of their own introduction that is more like Hazel Stone's. With a little forethought, they might have avoided the entire mess to begin with.

The militancy and military of Styphon's House also present problems. This is clearly a contrivance of Carr&Green, one definitely at odds with the original. It seems to be a counterbalance to the power of Kalvan's reforms, one that makes the confrontation between Kalvan and Styphon's House more balanced. This makes the conflict more "even"; that it also makes possible endless sequels is a side-effect (the way

that birth defects were a side-effect of certain drugs).

There is also the matter of tone to consider. The Pournelle group seems to be fascinated by military violence. Note that the climatic Battle of Phyrax in *Great Kings' War* seemed mostly intended to cause casualties. This seems rather to be at odds with the original: "Piosphes was shocked by the casualties [of the "Dram-damned" Battle of FykJ. Well, they were rather shocking - only forty-two hundred effectives left out of fifty-eight hundred infantry, and eighteen hundred of a trifle over three thousand cavalry. The body count didn't meet the latter figure... [most] of the mercenaries on the left wing had simply bugged out." [Lord Kalvan of Otherwhen p. 210] In other words, 2,800 killed, wounded, and missing (a high proportion of those fled and later that day rallied by Rylla) out of a total Hostigi army of some nine thousand (we must add gunners).

On the other hand: "Eleven or twelve thousand Hostigi casualties was the estimate Verkan had heard, and it matched his own." [Great Kings' War, p. 305] Thus the battle of Phyrax. Of Piosphes's defeat beforehand, he says: "I have with me, fit for battle, not more than ten thousand men... [ibid. p. 218] out of 24,500 [ibid. p. 148]. Add to that the survivors of Kalvan's army, which a check of the original reference will reveal originally had a strength of 26,000 [op. cit.] and you get around thirty thousand Hostigi at Phyrax, of which as was said previously eleven or twelve thousand were casualties. That is a casualty rate more appropriate to an army that has decisively lost a battle. (And apparently the real losers, the Styphoni, had even more killed.)"

Piper had Lord Kalvan, evidently basing his opinion on historical models, find the casualty rate at the "Dram-damned Battle" of Fyk shockingly high - but it's low when compared to what Carr & Green are doing. The percentage of casualties has gone up, as you can see by comparing between Piper's figures in the preceding paragraph and Carr & Green's in this one, but there is no reason for this increase that I can see other than that enthusiasm for violence. This is an example of the replacement of historical values and standards by seriesistic values and standards. The series has to go on giving the readers

more of the same predictable material. And what do they want? There seems to be a certain enthusiasm for military violence among the new writers, at a cost to plausibility, among other things.

And note a certain trend: Lord Kalvan of Otherwhen had just two battles. *Great Kings' War* shows two, a third takes place off-stage (Piosphes's defeat) and there's a long bloody pursuit afterwards. Of the published excerpts of *Gunpowder God*, "Kalvan Kingmaker" has two full-scale battles and "Siege at Tarr-Hostigos" has besides the siege, references to another grand battle and a chevauchee by Rylla. This increase in battles is not promising. It would seem that all there is for Lord Kalvan to look forward to is war and more war, at a higher, faster, and more exhausting pace. That's what you get when you have nothing to write but *Great Kings' War*, *Great Kings' War II*, *Great Kings' War III*, *Great Kings' War IV*, et seq., ad infinitum, ad nauseam.

I should point out that the enthusiasm for military violence is hardly unique to the Pournelle group; it's not at all a new or an original fervor. For example, in *The Worm Ouroboros* E. R. Eddison, C.B., C.M.G. had his heroes Lords Juss, Spifire, Goldry Bluzco, and Brandoch Daha gaily throw away entire armies, only to raise more from the ever-loyal peasantry of Demonland and their allies all in order to exterminate entire armies of Witchland and its allies. Finally, having defeated and exterminated all their foes, they throw a collective tantrum at the thought of now having nothing to do, whereupon Princess Sophonisba, a kindly sorceress in love with Lord Juss, undoes the catastrophic events of the last few years and lets them refight all their recent wars all over again. You'd think they'd get bored after a while. Or worse.

Compare how Eddison's favorite class felt about that sort of thing in real life. At their final encounter, former Prime Minister and minister for the Mediterranean Theatre Harold Macmillan, later Earl of Stockton, made a like proposition to former C-in-C Mediterranean Theatre Field Marshal Sir Harold Alexander, Earl Alexander of Tunis (though unlike Sophonisba, Mac didn't have the power to actually bring it off); namely whether it might be interesting to do the Second World War all

over again. Alex replied: "Oh no. We might not do nearly so well." (Of course both Mac and Alex had served in and indeed had been wounded in the big one - WW I, that is.)

For all his manifest erudition and style Eddison had a certain lack of historical understanding, not to mention plausibility. In Literary Swordsmen and Sorcerers, de Camp connects this to Eddison's "only the strong survive" philosophy, something he found disagreeable and even somewhat unlitary. J. R. R. Tolkien, who after all actually met the man (and was even in World War One with Mac and Alex, though the Lancashire Fusiliers are not quite as fashionable as the Grenadier Guards (Macmillan) or the Irish Guards (Alexander), said something a bit more explicit:

"Eddison thought what I admire 'soft' (his word: one of complete condemnation, I gathered); I thought that, corrupted by an evil and indeed silly 'philosophy', he was coming to admire, more and more, arrogance and cruelty." [The Letters of J. R. R. Tolkien, p. 258] Ideas have consequences. (By the way, Eddison spent World War I at the Board of Trade, according to de Camp in Literary Swordsmen and Sorcerers.)

This enthusiasm for military violence also seems to be connected to the lack of historical understanding among the Pournelle group. (Something manifest in the master himself, whose latest completist is even more notorious for lack of historical understanding as well as seriesitis and a love of military violence; he can't help himself.) There were enough problems with the horrors of war that had nothing to do with fighting: World War Two was the first war ever fought by the U.S. in which battle was the predominant cause of death. Before that, disease was the primary decimator of the ranks. If Carr & Green had wanted to emphasize the horrors of war, as some might think the catalog of catastrophes in their works is an attempt to do, they could have gone into the military problems of disease and epidemic. But describing how half the army is dispensing with trousers all the better to handle their raging dysentery doesn't have the sheer "fun" that describing soldiers getting their heads shot off does.

This is a problem peculiar to the Pournelle group. By way of contrast, consider a common one, a problem that isn't

just theirs. The seriesitis problems described above are not the only case, nor even the most extreme case, of the prevailing trends in this area. Shared worlds, sharecropping, completions, fan fiction, crossovers, and the other literary excesses that generate revenue for publishers are all too common in all areas. Indeed, many of those writers who vibrantly and vociferously damn dat of 'debbil Pournelle for being racist, fascist, sexist, heterosexist, and all of the other Seventy-six Evil Isms are just as energetic themselves, if not even more so, in generating shared worlds, sharecropping, completions, fan fiction, crossovers, and the other literary excrescences of today from their works.

Which final realization of universality leads us to a general conclusion, of sorts. The problems of Pournelle and Co. in this case are not too different to the general problems of such works as they are producing; they are trying to write H. Beam Piper novels while not being H. Beam Piper. One can at least try to get in the original writer's head. Consider, for example, First Cycle (1984). This book is not without problems; it is perhaps a bit cliched, there is some question as to how much it is Piper and how much Kurland (the original manuscript is just not available), and it could be clearer whether or not it is in the TerroHuman future history. But it is in accord with Piper's philosophy (perhaps a little too much, with its stereotyped Good Guys anarchist capitalists and its Bad Boys the-socialist totalitarians) and with his intent. Kurland couldn't be Piper, but he did try to follow Piper's intents - and so avoided the contradiction stemming from not having tried to understand how the original worked.

This contradiction leads to a fundamental conflict of means, resolved by introducing disharmonious elements, at a cost to both the original work, which becomes lessened by its non-sequential sequel, and the new material, which is neither totally original, nor completely complementary to its source. This fact of life makes such conflicts inevitable; the cost is to the reader, who is cheated by this lessening, who is sold patry imitations in lieu of authentic originals.

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