

The Archives

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AN INTRAVIEW WITH ARTHUR D. HLAVATY

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Q: Why have you consented to be interviewed at this time?
 A: Because someone has finally asked me.
 Q: OK, Why do you want to be interviewed?
 A: Because, to me, the hardest thing about writing is picking a topic and organizing my thoughts. I'd much rather react than act.
 Q: But considering your choice of interviewers, don't you still have that problem?
 A: Well, yes, but not the problem of organization. And there are several other reasons I'm doing this.
 Q: Such as?
 A: I thought you'd never ask. I tend to feel that I should talk about Important Topics in DR. But now I feel like talking about ME, and not trying to impress anyone. Besides, I think I've managed to get around the problem of questions. I have here a book called TELLING YOUR STORY, by Sam Keen and Arne Valley Fox (Signet pb). It contains essay questions. Try some of those.

Q: OK, here's one: "Make a list of the ten words or phrases that describe you best."
 A: In ascending order:
 (10) Swarthmore graduate
 (9) Pagan (polytheist)
 (8) Philosopher/semanticist
 (7) Libertarian
 (6) Counterculturist
 (5) Science fiction fan
 (4) Erisian
 (3) Writer
 (2) Member of the persecuted Hyperlexic minority
 (1) Bodhisattva-in-training
 Q: OK, let's look at them: Swarthmore grad?
 A: I loved Swarthmore. It was a community of the mind, a place where I learned much both in and out of the classroom. The only thing wrong with it is that they throw you out when they give you your diploma. It took me 13 years after that trauma to find a similar community, and that one lacks the Ivory Tower aspects.
 Q: Pagan?
 A: I've written about that. The belief that there is One God, knowable by us finite mortals, leads to fanaticism, killing for creeds, etc. Polytheists take a more modest, tentative, relativistic view.

X



Chinese food. When the writing is going well, I enjoy it more than Chinese food.

Q: Hyperlexic?
 A: The idea of treating the overly intelligent as a handicapped or persecuted minority may be the most serious gag I've ever pulled. I worship Mind. Those who have intelligence and/or creativity and/or empathy are MY PEOPLE, and seeing that people with those traits are encouraged, rewarded, and protected is my highest priority.

Q: Bodhisattva-in-Training?
 A: Everyone should have one ambition that is far beyond any hope of total satisfaction, and that is mine. I want to liberate every soul in the Universe from Reality.

Q: That does seem a bit ambitious.
 A: Of course, but since I know it's impossible, I won't feel like a No-Good Shit if I fail to achieve it. I hope to make some steps towards it. For instance, I am a third-generation Shaman.

Q: Tell me about it.
 A: My father's mother was a witch. I spell that with a small "w" because she was not a Witch by religion. She was, however, a Wise Woman. She touched things and made them grow. My parents both were Teachers, and I spell that with a capital T. You see, the same word is used for both a Holy Vocation and its opposite, a Civil Service job. Thirty years ago, it was possible to be both at the same time, and my parents were both. My father was also a Holy Exemplar who demonstrated the surprising fact that those who live without hate in their hearts are the happiest. My father, alas, discontinued 2½ years ago. My mother is still exercising her Teaching vocation by giving speeches.

Q: How do you exercise your Teacher vocation?
 A: By writing, particularly by writing DR. I should emphasize that I do not speak or write as one who Knows the Truth. I believe that I am farther along on certain paths than most of those who will be reading my words or I wouldn't bother writing them down. But, like Socrates, I try to maintain a healthy awareness of just how vast and pervasive my ignorance is.

Q: Let's talk a bit more about DR. Why did you start it?
 A: Because I was loresome, because I had things to say & felt that I communicate better on paper than in social situations.
 Q: Why is that?

A: Partly me, and partly our tribal customs. There is the idea that in "polite society" one does not speak about sex, politics, or religion. Gods! what do they talk about--the weather? Charlie's Angels? To them I say: Fuck a politician for Jesus.
 Q: Returning to DR, did you get a good response?

A: Hell, yes. Pros took the time to encourage me. I will always be grateful to Robert Anton Wilson, Frederik Pohl, Dick Geis, Robert Shea, William Rotsler, and Robert Bloch.

Q: Philosopher/Semanticist?
 A: My degree is in Philosophy. I put that down as a sign that I am interested in Ultimate Realities and like that. Also "Semanticist" because I identify strongly with another traditional role of philosophy: monitoring & improving our language & other communications systems.

Q: Libertarian?
 A: Primarily in the sense of "Civil Liberties." The idea of persecuting people for what they read or write, what chemicals or rituals they choose to alter their consciousness, or what noncoercive sex acts they choose is as vile to me as racial or religious persecution. I'm a bit less sure about economic libertarianism, but I loathe politics (i.e., forced involvement in the lives of others) and have difficulty distinguishing between the concepts "majority vote" and "ganging up."

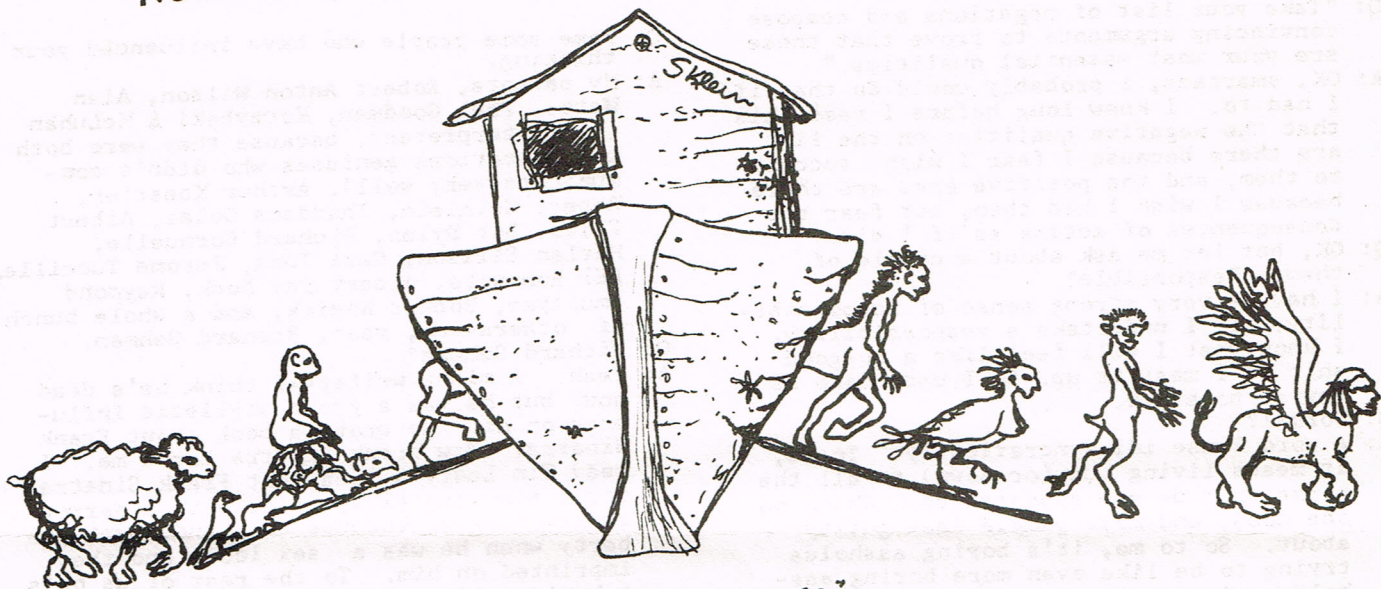
Q: Counterculturist?
 A: In two senses. I spent the years 1966-1968 in San Francisco, where I observed what was called "the Counterculture." There was much I liked about it--the emphasis on love, tolerance, and consciousness expansion. The rejection of violence, status, and intratribal competition. It didn't work, and I have some ideas why it didn't, but that's another story. Then too, I like the idea of countercultures. There should be ways for many different cultures to coexist. Let the "Moral" "Majority" live without deviant sex and Godless Evolution if that is their trip, but give them no power to keep others from living otherwise.

Q: Science fiction fan?
 A: My favorite counterculture. The scattered community I spoke of earlier.

Q: Erisian?
 A: Worshipper of Eris (Discordia), Goddess of Chaos. There are 2 kinds: Discordians are on the side of Chaos, and want it to defeat Order. We Erisians respect Order, too, because there would be no Chaos without it. We merely wish to see a proper balance between the two.

Q: Writer?
 A: Robert Anton Wilson says that writing is his third favorite thing, after sex and

Noah's ark. "the in's and outs of Biblical bestiality"



or "mythology my ass,"
that's my cousin."

- Q: Was it personally rewarding?
- A: Even more so. I met Adrienne Fein, who has been--and remains--friend, lover, companion, teacher, student, and fellow adventurer to me. After a while, I ventured out into the world of cons & clubs, and have made far too many other friends to list.
- Q: What do you think of your writing?
- A: I enjoy it. I reread it with pleasure, another trait I share with Robert Anton Wilson. Of course, I'm biased, and I know what I was trying to say, which my readers may not.
- Q: What do you think of your editing?
- A: You had to ask that, didn't you? I think that's the worst thing about DR. I have to edit the lettercol, and I have doubts about my performance. I suspect that I print too little & choose wrongly. The one thing that would improve DR most would be a separate editor to run the lettercol & print a lot more, but that would also require a ~~shack~~ philanthropist to pay for the additional printing, and someone to do the work.
- Q: Anything else you want to say about your writing?
- A: Yes, I'm ambivalent as all hell about being a self-appointed Bodhisattva. I feel that I really should stick to important stuff in DR. Then I get tired of that & want to do mere natter, so I do something like this, but then I find myself going back into Teacher mode. But you forget something, dummy.
- Q: Oh, yes, isn't this going to add to the lettercol problem?

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*Read THE REVOLUTION FROM ROSINANTE (Del Rey)
This has been a free unsolicited plug. 3

A: Well, I'll warn people that this is a one-shot, and I have no plans to print letters about it, but I'll try to write personal replies to anyone who locs. Now that that's out of the way, why don't we go back to personal trivia and another question from TELLING YOUR STORY?

- Q: OK "Imagine that you are uncontrollably angry. Describe the persons you would punish, torture, or kill; the things you would destroy."
- A: I would punish Richard Nixon, Jerry Falwell, all narcs & vice cops. I would destroy the state. I would vent milder economic punishments on all those who have taken unfair advantage of the State, from Chrysler to a bunch of useless generals to \$20,000 a year garbagepersons and "teachers" who can barely read & write. I really have no personal enemies. There are some people I think are full of shit, but I don't wish to punish or torture the

- Q: "Create a fantasy in which you become your Ideal Self....What would you do with your power?"
- A: Help people who've been nice to me.
- Q: Did you put that in to try to trick people into helping you?
- A: Anybody who's gullible enough to think that I'm going to become rich & powerful is welcome to try.

- Q: "Now make a list of ten characteristics you do not have--qualities, functions, feelings, or roles you find it important to deny."
- A: Not in order: powermad; stupid; capable of coping with the real world; dishonest; disloyal; physically strong; responsible; sadistic; aggressive; normal.

Q: "Take your list of negations and compose convincing arguments to prove that these are your most essential qualities."

A: OK, smartass, I probably could do that if I had to. I knew long before I read this that the negative qualities on the list are there because I fear I might succumb to them, and the positive ones are there because I wish I had them, but fear the consequences of acting as if I did.

Q: OK, but let me ask about a couple of them: Responsible?

A: I have a very strong sense of responsibility. If I undertake a responsibility, I know that I will feel like a no-good shit if I mess it up. So I undertake as few as possible.

Q: Normal?

A: A word I use idiosyncratically. To me, it means living up (or down) to all the norms that we are supposed to. Which no one does, and most people feel guilty about. So to me, it's boring assholes trying to be like even more boring asshole. A nation which wants to grow up to be Jerry Ford.

Q: "How much has your self-image been shaped by stereotyped ((sex)) roles?"

A: Fairly little, fortunately. My parents had remarkably little of that sort of shit in their marriage, and they passed along such feelings to me. I picked up a few dumb things from the culture. For instance, there were a few years when I didn't want to wear bright colors because that was "effeminate" or something dumb like that. The Hippie movement cured me of that. I certainly wouldn't say I'm perfectly nonsexist, just that I'm relatively immune to such things.

Q: "How do you experience the masculine characteristics and the feminine characteristics within yourself?"

A: For reasons I just got through trying to explain, I find it very difficult to think in such terms.



Q: Name some people who have influenced your thinking.

A: My parents, Robert Anton Wilson, Alan Watts, Paul Goodman, Korzybski & McLuhan (via interpreters, because they were both communications geniuses who didn't communicate very well), Arthur Koestler, Robert Heinlein, Thaddeus Golas, Albert Ellis, Bob Dylan, Richard Cornuelle, Harlan Ellison, Carl Jung, Jerome Tuccille, PEI Bonewits, Albert Jay Nock, Raymond Smullyan, Robert Nozick, and a whole bunch of others--oh, yeah, Richard Gehman.

Q: Richard Gehman?

A: Yeah. A minor writer--I think he's dead now, but he was a great stylistic influence on me. He wrote a book about Frank Sinatra. Now Frank Sinatra bores me. I read Tim Leary's idea that Frank Sinatra bores everyone except people in a narrow range of ages, because they underwent puberty when he was a sex idol, and they imprinted on him. To the rest of us he's a boring old creep who lost his voice 30 years ago & now hangs out with unsavory characters, like that washed-up actor Ronnie--but I digress. I loved Gehman's book about him. I reread it at least a dozen times because of his style. The best analogy I can give you for his style is a football image. Imagine a player covering a kickoff. He runs down the field, and his main target is the man with the ball. But some players, if they see anyone from the other team, they'll hit him upside the head. That was Gehman. The fun in reading him was not Sinatra, but all the cheap shots he took at everyone he didn't like, and there were many of those. He also wrote a novel called THE HAD, which was an extended piss-and-moan about how awful it is to be a Normal American White Male Husband And Father--like SOMETHING HAPPENED or MY LIFE AS A MAN, only even nastier. I loved it.

Q: "What pledges have you taken, what creeds affirmed?"

A: I took the Pledge of Allegiance a lot in school, but it didn't take. (I'm still not quite sure where "under God" is supposed to go.) I swore to uphold the Constitution when I was in VISTA. Since it was keeping me out of the Army, I felt that I was upholding the 13th Amendment. Under the influence of dangerous, habit-forming books read without Official Permission (specifically, a Certain Trilogy), on the cusp of the New Year 1976, I placed my hand over my crotch in the manner of the ancient Hebrews and swore fealty to Eris and to Operation Mindfuck. My subsequent notoriety may be seen as a consequence of that action.

Q: "What does it mean to you to have...blood?"

A: I'm an ethnic mongrel; my mother is Jewish, and my father was mixed Hungarian & Slovak. That may be why I'm weak on thinking of myself as part of an ethnic group. I've been through the dialectic of "I'm Jewish"/"I'm not Jewish" Now I feel that I'm also Jewish.

Q: "What places in your home town were taboo?"
 A: There was a whorehouse within walking distance of me when I was a teenager. It was across the street from a record store that I patronized, and it was the Green Door. I wondered what went on in there, but I never dared try to enter it. (I'm afraid that the fact that it was a Black whorehouse may have added a tiny bit of prurient fascination in my mind.) A few years after I became aware of it, we had a Reform Mayor. He shut down the whorehouse, but other than that didn't do much. (It opened 2 weeks later down the block of course.) I guess there's been another reform mayor when I wasn't looking, because the whorehouse is now 2 blocks away. I still haven't been in there, but I don't care anymore.



CAN I BORROW FIVE BUCKS?
 I'LL PAY YOU BACK REAL SOON NOW

Q: "What ten commandments would best summarize the rules, ideals, and taboos your family advocated?"

- A: I. Thou shalt not murder.
- II. Thou shalt not steal.
- III. Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.
- IV. Thou shalt not figure out other ways to hurt people.
- V. Thou shalt not judge people by race, sex, or other externals.
- VI. Thou shalt think for thyself.
- VII. Thou shalt respect the world of mind.
- VIII. Thou shalt contribute something to the world.
- IX. Thou shalt not call attention to thyself or us.
- X. Thou shalt care about all human suffering.

Q: How do you feel about these commandments today?

A: I still believe wholeheartedly in the first seven. The eighth I try to do. The ninth makes sense more often than not. The tenth is a source of misery to me.

Q: How & where did you learn about sex?

A: My parents told me the truth--never anything like "don't play with it or it'll fall off." There were books on the subject in the house, and I read them. By the time we had 2 weeks in Human Reproduction in HS Bio, there were few surprises. It took me quite a while to put together the books, the gutter references, and those top-40 songs that purported to deal with related matters.

Q: How's your sex life?

A: Complex. Or perhaps multiplex; I forget precisely how Delany drew that distinction. I'm tempted to call it "A Langdon Diagram Named Möbius." It's a growing & changing web.

Q: In which you are ensnared?

A: I wouldn't want it any other way.

Q: What is your favorite realistic fantasy?

A: Finding a tribe, corporation, or whatever that will find my mind, and those of my friends, valuable enough so that it will gladly protect & care for our bodies.

Q: What is your favorite unrealistic fantasy?

A: Transcendental Illumination--i.e., being reconstituted as an immortal invulnerable, needfree being that can still perceive, think, and comment.

Q: Tell us about your dreams.

A: Sometimes I remember them, but not as often as I'd like. There have been times when I've practiced writing them down immediately upon awakening, but as I recall, most of them were not terribly interesting. I think I may be getting back into remembering & recording dreams. I have noticed some things: Swarthmore & San Francisco recur, as my personal Eden images, though I recall quite vividly a dream of a few years ago, when I was locked out of both. Places recur, systematically deformed. There are places from my dreams which are/are not Grand Central Station, my high school gym, etc., which are consistent from dream to dream, and which I can visualize as well as I can ever visualize anything (which isn't saying much). People recur; some real, some not. There is a woman I've fornicated with in dreams perhaps 3 or 4 times over the years; alas, she appears to have no objective correlative. It is known that people who go into analysis tend to dream in their analyst's system. Jungian patients see archetypes, Freudians see towers and tunnels, etc. I've never been taught psychoanalyzed, but I was influenced by Christopher Evans' theory that dreams are a way of rearranging data, and now my dreams seem to reflect that. My father told me that his dreams tended to take the form of three continued stories. Shortly before he died, he mentioned that the three stories were starting to converge.

Q: Are your dreams starting to converge?
 A: No.

Yes, I do want to trade
ADH

ADH #5
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6.

- Q: "In what ways do you repeat patterns that are frustrating to you?"
- A: Hating the material world. (I may be getting over that one.) Pointless anger and resentment. Taking frustrations too seriously.
- Q: "Imagine yourself at your worst. How do you use this weak, suffering, helpless self to get your way with other persons?"
- A: You ought to be ashamed of yourself-- attacking a sick person with a question like that.
- Q: "What lucky objects protect you against the irrationality of the world?"
- A: None. Hey, maybe that's why all that bad shit gets at me.
- Q: We're getting into smart-ass answers all of a sudden.
- A: Well, yes, the book mentions how we are influenced by the fact that the child who says, "I won't" is punished, while the child who says, "I can't" is helped. But that's the material for a serious, Teacher-mode essay which I promised myself I wouldn't do in this zine.
- Q: OK, what's your favorite dirty joke?
- A: There were two bulls standing on top of a hill. One was a young bull, in his prime, full of the juices of young bullhood. The young bull looked down in the valley and saw a herd of cows. He pawed the ground and snorted and said, "let's run down the hill and fuck a couple of those cows." The older, wiser bull (older in bovine terms than I am in human ones) said, "I've got a better idea, son: Let's walk down the hill and fuck them all."
- Q: Back to the book. "Choose ten scenes from your past which were important pivotal events in your life and describe them."
- A
1. The kids in kindergarten picking on me. (I don't remember the moment when I discovered that if I made them laugh, they would stop picking on me.)
 2. A general vision: My teachers in elementary school hating me for my behavior and fearing me for my intellect.
 3. Choosing to go to the boys' private high school, rather than the coed one. (Public school was out of the question.) Some of the reasons for that would be obvious to anyone familiar with Freud's concept of the "latency period," but it was more complex than that.
 4. Choosing to apply to Swarthmore (coed rather than one of the Ivy schools, and knowing damned well why.
 5. Sitting on the beach the summer between high school & college, and being struck by the realization that I was not getting anywhere in my attempts to befriend (or something) the women around, and that my chances were not too good, and thus facing the seductive thought that maybe fantasizing was better than facing failure & rejection.
6. The possibility of joining VISTA occurring to me as I began to realize that I was not succeeding in grad school.
7. Realizing that my earlier belief that Cannabis sativa was a shabby hoax that worked solely by autosuggestion was not precisely correct.
8. A conference with the principal in my one year as a public school teacher, in which both of us realized, more or less simultaneously, that, as Dan Fouts would later say of one of his coaches, I couldn't motivate Dale Carnegie.
9. Discovering that the woman I was in bed with was looking for a Normal American White Male Husband and Father, and wondering how she could ever have mistaken me for one of those, and then wondering if I shouldn't feel awfully guilty for not being one.
10. Getting the courage to print up & send out DR to a bunch of strangers, for the only reason that I ever do anything that appears courageous--that I mean no longer stand not doing so.
- Q: You left out reading ILLUMINATUS!
- A: That was more a long-term process, including rereading, thinking about it, etc.
- Q: Are you trying to create the perfect fanzine?
- A: I am trying to overthrow Consensus Reality, to Immanentize the Eschaton, and to Liberate every soul in the Universe, and you ask me whether I am trying to do the perfect fanzine?
- Q: Are you always this grandiose?
- A: I'm trying to get a perspective. I love fandom. It gave me a home; it gave me love & friendship & meaning & all kinds of good stuff like that. I will always love fandom; it represents a last bastion of the written word. It is rich in fascinating people and keeps getting new ones. But the idea that all those who aren't in our tribe are THEM, whether you call THEM wogs, or goyem, or straights, or (as we do) mundanes, is dumb. There are other tribes out there who are worth talking to.
- Q: Such as?
- A: There are some crazy fuckers (he said admiringly) in the pagan movement. There are some very interesting feminists and libertarians. That's 3 that come to mind right away. Of course there are also Pagans who think Mother Nature is going to spank us for using nasty technology like flush toilets. There are feminists who are into enforced equality & shit like that. There are libertarians (especially in the Party) who are the real-life version of NATIONAL LAMPOON's "pants-down Republicans." A good rule is: THEY are no better than WE are.
- Q: What next--Will you write a book?
- A: Maybe.
- Q: A novel?
- A: Not if I can help it.
- Q: Is that a literal statement?
- A: Yes.
- Q: Then I think we've come to the climax.
- A: Speak for yourself.