

Writing an Anarchist Novel

J.G. Eccarius

1990

FE Note: The anarchist novel that J.G. Eccarius wrote is *The Last Days of Christ the Vampire*, excerpts from which appear in the box below. It was first published in 1988 with a second edition featuring a new front and back cover which includes a quote from the *Fifth Estate* describing *Last Days*...as “one of the most wildly blasphemous books we have seen since the classics of sacrilege.”

The story has enough adventure, suspense and drama to be the stuff of a movie script, but needless to say its theme makes even its distribution in book form difficult.

It is available from FE Books for \$6.00; for bulk orders contact: III Publishing, P.O. Box 620362, San Diego CA 92162.

When I started writing *The Last Days of Christ the Vampire* I had no conscious intention of writing an anarchist novel. I merely wanted to spread the idea that if Jesus really rose from the dead, then that made him a vampire, not a god. As the novel developed from what was originally a short story, I began speculating on how anarchist principles would apply to fiction, and to some extent the finished novel reflects those principles.

Fortunately, the general intent of the novel made this process easier than it might have been. Experience has taught me that arguing with superstitious people has little effect; even demonstrating, before their eyes, that they are mistaken seldom produces more than momentary effect.

So I applied the ancient self-defense principle of letting the opponent do most of my work for me: I accepted the most ridiculous assertion of the Christians, that Jesus rose from the dead and that he is alive and still appears to people and orders them about.

The actual idea came to me from an old made-for-TV movie that had a Charlie Manson-type figure and his followers as vampires; and of course they made Charlie look like the spitting image of Jesus. I don't remember the name of the movie.

Resisting authority is a basic anarchist theme, so resisting a powerful vampire and its followers provided plenty of openings for demonstrating anarchist practices. That given, the most important question was who the book was for: was it to be for tried and true anarchists, for intellectuals, for Christians, or for anyone who can read?

Steinbeck and Traven

Sticking to principle, I attempted to write a book for anyone who can read. This led to many limitations in style that, paradoxically, gave me the freedom I needed to tell the story. I tried to keep the sentences and paragraphs short, and to avoid unusual words.

I tried to illustrate principles with the characters' actions, rather than lecture the reader, or have a character lecture the reader. I purposefully studied two authors who I believe are inspirational in this regards, John Steinbeck and B. Traven.

While I gave more depth to some characters than to others, I attempted to show contradictions and complexities in each. Jesus, back before he became a vampire, has good qualities, which combined with his bad qualities make him evil in a truly frightening way (modeled on Lenin, Stalin and Trotsky). The Professor, who is one of the good characters, has a number of faults commonly found in basically good human beings. The “heroes” are essentially nobodies: outcasts. Even the Professor is not really a professor, he is a college dropout.

I avoided making the vampire hunters into a sort of vanguard, though like all people in similar circumstances they were pushed in that direction. I left them out of the last chapter entirely; they may have sparked the revolution, but it was the Christians, awaking from their slumber, who burned the churches.

This disconcerted my reviewers quite a bit: people are used to a book where they can follow one character all the way through. To prevent the book from becoming too confusing to readers I kept it in a straight-line time sequence, with the exception of the loop to A.D. 33, and stuck to the theme, allowing it to develop as a social movement might.

Some people might say that anarchy “ would require one to jump around almost randomly, which might be an appropriate technique in some cases, but I had a story to tell that I wanted anyone who cared to be able to follow.

Anarchism is Realism

I believe anarchism is realism, so I was amused that some people have characterized the novel as surrealistic. Reality includes the human mind and imagination: real Christians are essentially mentally ill, and that illness makes them react to learning about *Christ the Vampire* in much the same way as is shown in the book. The characters in the book don't believe it at first, but as they test reality against their beliefs, they enter the realm of confusion, of letting go of preconceptions, that creates the freedom necessary to get back in synch with reality.

There are only a few anarchist novels that I know of, but doubtless there are many others. B. Traven wrote some wonderful anarchist novels, most notably *The Death Ship* and the series known as the jungle novels (my favorite is *Rebellion of the Hanged*). He illustrated reality vividly, but he always narrated using one character for each work, though that person has to work with others to gain freedom.

He almost never mentioned the word anarchy, and was therefore thought by many readers to be a socialist. Since his works are critiques of both social conditions and the ridiculousness of governments, I think it's fair to call them anarchistic.

Pervasiveness Of Christianity

As Traven did, I wanted to illustrate people gaining their freedom by cooperating with one another against authority.

It is clear just from looking at the pervasiveness of Christianity that no one hero could kill the vampire. Many, many people played roles in this cooperative effort, and the people in the book only serve as examples.

I also wanted the readers to have the opportunity to think for themselves. That is why I often had characters argue both sides of a question, and that is how I built suspense. I also used each chapter to paint a picture, leaving the developments between chapters to the readers' knowledge of reality and their imagination.

Finally, it was tempting to show off my erudition as Wilson and Shea did in the *Illuminatus Trilogy*. In their book it worked, in a way it was the whole point, but in most works this would simply distract the reader. It helps if the reader knows who Alexander Hamilton is, to understand my casting him as a vampire, but it isn't essential since through his words he makes his priorities clear. I do namecheck a few people: most readers won't know who H.P. Lovecraft was or that the Crucifucks were a real band, but after all, fun is fun.

an excerpt

The Last Days of Christ the Vampire

All over America they came to the recruiting centers. Few were inspired by patriotism, though all were patriots. All were Americans looking for the best deal they could get.

Perhaps they had failed in school or were lacking in spirit. More often they wanted to escape the place they had grown up in, whether it was a ghetto or a strict, domineering family. They took some tests, asked some questions, signed, reported for service when and where they were supposed to, were clipped and examined.

A few cc's of blood. Some went to the base lab and was tested for type and signs of disease. One cubic centimeter was frozen and forwarded with the others to the Blood Sample Section in Arlington, Va. But this was only a transshipment point to a place nearby: the Pentagon.

At intervals a white van would make the delivery. A sergeant would always be there to take it in a dolly. He would walk to an unmarked elevator that few people knew the purpose of and fewer still had a key to. The elevator sped downward almost putting the sergeant in free fall for a moment. It crushed him to the floor as it stopped.

The two armed guards in private uniforms eyed him without the hint of recognition in their faces that normal humans would have. Yet they recognized him and let him pass without a word. He walked down the hall, pushing the blood-laden dolly. He passed by doors until he came to one that looked like all the others. He removed a key from his pocket and unlocked the door. Two more of the guards were inside. Beyond them was a massive steel door which was not locked. The massive bolt slid easily at his touch. He stepped inside a steel-lined room, still pushing the dolly. There was yet another door to the room, but instead he pushed the dolly over to a small, wall-safe-like door.

He unpacked the blood, opened the door, and placed the blood in the chamber. Then he took the dolly and packing out of the room, past the guards and back to the corridor. The trash he placed in a container for that purpose, the dolly was placed in a utility room. Then he went back to his room, which contained a cot and a desk. He opened his bible and began to read where he had left off. The words were in Greek.

The blood's deposit was duly noted by its assignee. He activated a switch that would sterilize it with gamma rays. Then he opened the chamber from his side, removed the blood, and put it in a large freezer. He took part of an older batch out of the freezer before closing it.

He put several cc's of the blood in a special breast pocket to warm it to body temperature. Normally, he would have done nothing until it was warm, but now he lay down in his recliner. It was specially designed so that he could make himself vertical enough to encourage his body to stay awake, but still have his weight comfortably supported. He focused his mind on Reverend Jefferson of the Holy Zion Batbit Church in Anacostia.

When he had the Reverend's attention, he projected his thought: "Does anything trouble you, Isaic?"

"Lord! All is well but one thing. This servant does not wish to trouble you with it. It troubles me, this evil in my neighborhood."

"Tell me, Isaic. Let me salve your troubles."

"Lord, someone put up signs in the neighborhood. They said it is a vampire infested area, and that Christians are vampires. We took the signs down, but people are disturbed by this hideous blasphemy.

"Do you know who put up the signs?"

"No, Lord. They must have been put up at night, when our good flock would be sound asleep."

"Listen, Isaic, this is the work of Satan, but it is carried out by his followers on earth. You must double your vigilance, for the Second Coming is near, within your very lifetime. These people may be back, to spread their lies, or they may be putting up the posters in different neighborhoods. Organize your people to look for them. Capture them and turn them over to Reverend Bob. Do you understand?"

"Yes, master, it will be done as you command."

Withdrawing from the communication trance, Jesus reached for a syringe. He took the warm blood from his breast pocket and, one by one, stuck the ampules with the needle and filled the syringe. When that was done, he uncovered his leg with its special device for keeping a vein permanently open. His practiced hand slid the needle into the device and made the blood his own.

NEW! from the author of *The Last Days of Christ the Vampire*, a novel which spans history from peasant revolts in England to the American "air conditioned nightmare"—*We Should Have Killed the King* by J.G. Eccarius; available from FE Books, \$5.

fifth Estate

J.G. Eccarius
Writing an Anarchist Novel
1990

<https://www.fiftheestate.org/archive/334-summer-1990/writing-an-anarchist-novel>
Fifth Estate #334, Summer, 1990

[fiftheestate.anarchistlibraries.net](https://www.fiftheestate.org)