

Getting it in the Neck

Written by Mark Wegierski on January 1, 2002

Conservatives in America often treat contemporary culture the same way in which, as Mark Twain noted, people deal with the weather: everybody always talks about it, but nobody ever does anything about it.

Well, almost nobody. Thomas M. Sipos is a young, Los Angeles-based, libertarian-oriented conservative and horror-fiction aficionado whose Hungarian and Catholic roots (with some aristocratic pretensions) might explain some of his baroque tastes. His parents were Hungarian refugees who fled the country to escape its communist government. Sipos earned a bachelor of fine arts in film and television at New York University's Tisch School of the Arts and has had several short stories and non-fiction pieces published in paying media. His sitcom and horror scripts have won awards.

Sipos's first book, *Vampire Nation* (1998), was published by Xlibris, a leading on-demand electronic publisher. (This means that a copy of the actual physical book is assembled, via rapid printing, only when requested at a website or bookstore, and is then sent to the buyer or store as requested.) The premise of *Vampire Nation* is that the members of Romania's Communist elite under dictator Nicolae Ceausescu were actually vampires. Sipos's book was partially inspired by his visits to relatives in Romania in the 1970s. The work gruesomely hammers home the real evil of Communism, which was in some ways not that far removed from Sipos's gory fictional renderings. The image of the communist ruling class sucking the lifeblood of the very proletariat whom it claims to champion is a brilliantly evocative image and a powerful, original metaphor for Communism--something one would have hardly thought possible to achieve after all that has been written on the subject in the past eight decades.

Sipos's second book, *Manhattan Sharks* (XLibris, 2000), is not a horror work but rather a satire of corporate life and personal greed in 1980s New York City, specifically during the sweltering summer of 1983. It is an amusing work with some clever period details and phrasing. The villain of the book is a former hippie who has turned into a consumerist yuppie but still holds all the appropriate "progressive" opinions on topics such as gun control. The observation that most yuppies were fiscally conservative but socially very liberal is still not exactly commonplace today, and Sipos's book brings this point home forcefully. Many liberals have latterly envisioned the 1980s in the United States as a uniformly archconservative Decade of Greed, but Sipos adeptly implicates them in the mess by repeatedly rejecting conventional ideas of class and politics. The bumbling protagonist of his rather episodic book is a low-level, white-collar employee, and probably the most heroic figure is a blue-collar worker, embodying Reagan's powerful appeal to the real working class of America. The novel ends with a yuppie "power-couple"--led by the younger, more conservative man--renouncing the turbulent lifestyle of Manhattan in order to "search for themselves" in the heartland. This is a clever counterpoint to the supposed "dropping out" of many 1960s activists, who all too quickly

"sold out" (in the 1970s and afterwards) to the pleasures and large, urban, bourgeois-bohemian settings of the consumerist lifestyle. Serving as a coda to the novel are two acerbic short stories, "Career Witch" and "Spirit of '68"--the latter won a well-deserved Honorable Mention in the 1996 *Writer's Digest* fiction contest. Sipos's books are available at www.amazon.com.

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