FOREWORD REVIEWS THE INDIE WE LOVE.

Science Fiction

Codename Prague: An Unfinished Pulp Science Fiction Novel
D. Harlan Wilson
Raw Dog Screaming Press
978-1-935738-05-3
(December 31, 2010)

When not berating his employees, Truth and Beauty, for purchasing carbonated olive oil or renaming them Untruth and Ugliness, Doktor Hermann Teufelsdröckh pursues the perfect union of evil genius and artistry. His creation, The Sans Merci, is a hybrid of Adolf Hitler and John Keats that ultimately faces off against Vincent Prague, a reluctant super-spy whose chosen sobriquet is *Codename Prague*. After being persuaded (i.e., tortured, eviscerated, and reanimated) by his employer, the Ministry of Applied Pressure, Prague is sent to the city of Prague, there to stay at the Hotel Prague on Prague Street and meet Henri Prague and his sister, Mädchen "The Prague" Prague.

Long before this, however, the author, a literature professor by day, makes clear his fascination with the symbolic function of language as the words on the page and the meanings they convey (or not) devolve into a revelry that often seems more send-up than narrative. Consider, for example, the first paragraph of chapter two: "All stories begin with a first sentence. This story is just like all the others…" From cloned agents known as SAMSAs to the Slaughterhouse-Five spy agency's headquarters, where gigantic livestock is butchered alive by detectives required to slaughter their own meat, every aspect of this book celebrates stylized simulations of violence: the agents "took turns pistol-whipping the suspect to make sure he was still unconscious and de-wooled the sheep's torso with stylish rust-textured retrofutique vibronic shears." This stuff would be sickening if its excessive verbiage did not slap the reader silly at every turn.

In the shopping mall, Araby, The Sans Merci grapples with multitudinous James Joyce androids and fights the "urge to goosestep" while Doktor Teufelsdröckh remonstrates, "One can think and look like a Nazi, but one must not act like a Nazi…This is a Brave New World, remember. Better to traipse from here to there like a lovelorn poet." By the time *Codename Prague* dukes it out with the monster at the Bruce Lee Funpark, staffed with Bruce Lee androids

ranging from Teletubby BLs to those “with Doc Oc tentacles,” complete with a “West Side Story finger-snapping sequence in silhouette,” readers will conclude that their bewilderment means (if anything, in fact, means anything) that they need to read this book again.

Wilson, a winner of the Wonderland Book Award, has written several novels and short fiction collections, including *Psuedo-City* and *They Had Goat Heads*.

Elizabeth Breau