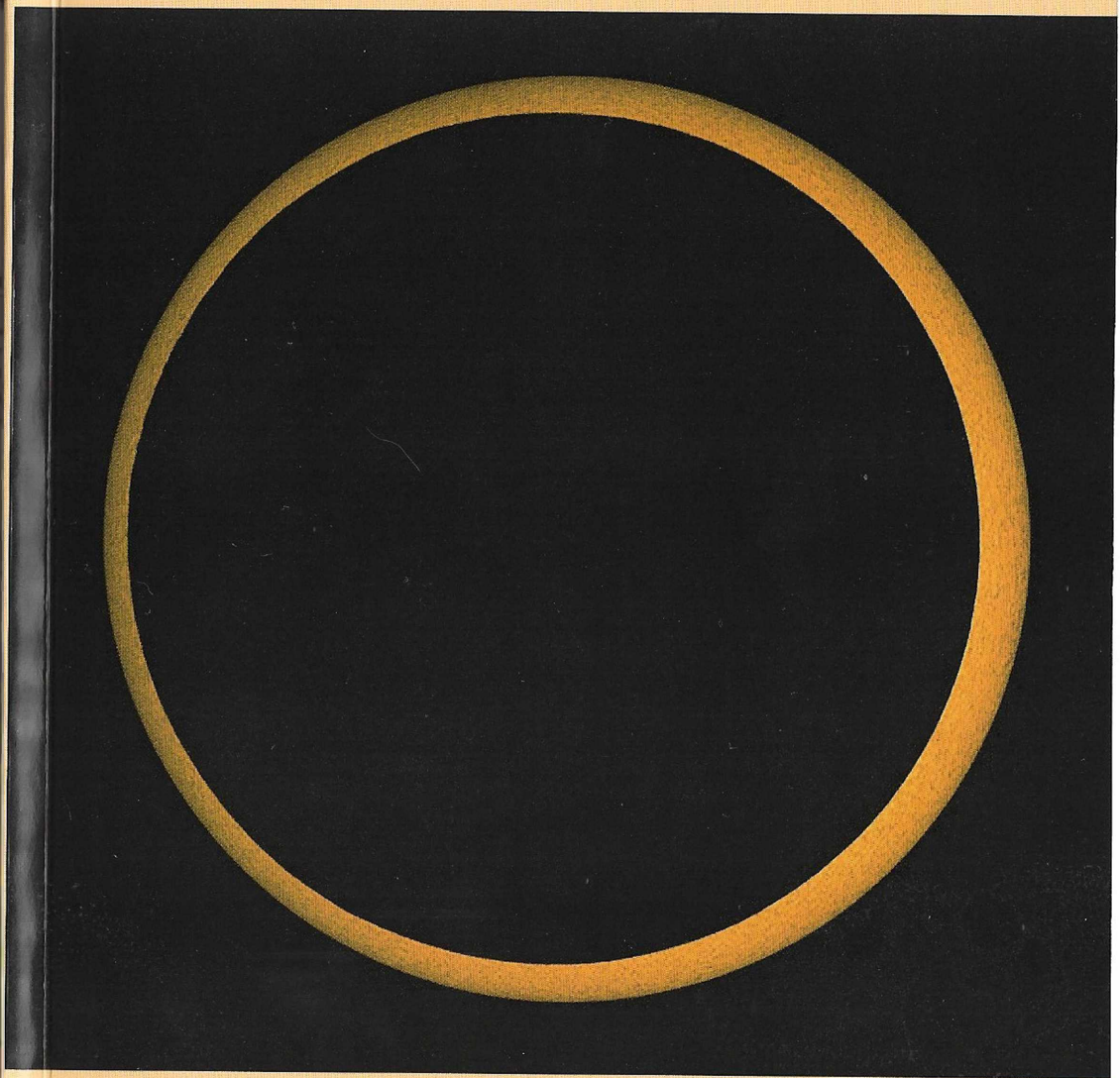
Foundation

The International Review of Science Fiction



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Editorial

Graham Sleight

It's a commonplace of sf, and sf criticism, that science and technology provoke some ambivalence and often bring unintended consequences. I found this out in a first-person way when I became a cyborg last autumn. The immediate cause was my not looking where I put my feet while stepping off a train; a few hours later, I found myself in hospital, diagnosed with a fractured tibia, and scheduled for surgery the next day. The surgery – a procedure known as intramedullary nailing – involved implanting inside the bone a titanium rod some 345mm long, anchored with several screws passing through the bone on either side of the fracture. It's intended to stabilise the fragments in the correct position to allow the fracture to heal. In my case, it seemed to work extremely well: I was mobile and back at work 2½ months after the break, rather than the estimated 4 months.

But I am now left, reasonably permanently, with 345mm of titanium in my shin, and I have to confess that it's an odd feeling. (Pedants may argue that, since the titanium rod contains no electronics, I'm not a real cyborg; I'm certainly not at the level of the late sf writer John M Ford, who reported that when he had a kidney transplant in 2000, he also ended up with a USB port.) Friends ask me questions such as, Does one leg feel heavier than the other? (No.), or Do magnets now stick to your leg? (No.) Setting aside the convenience question of whether I'll set off airport metal detectors, there is a sense of – to use a John Clute word – Wrongness about carrying around so much inorganic material inside one's body. At my last follow-up appointment, I asked my surgeon, a man equipped with a dry delivery, whether they would remove the nail. "Only if it gives you trouble," he replied, "And we don't like to do that. We have to dig it out." So, for the rest of my life, I will continue to have 345 mm of titanium inside me, progressively bonding with the bone and tissue that surrounds it. Yet, to return to the original point, I can't deny that this advance of technology and skill has brought me very palpable benefits.

Of course, for US readers, I could also add that throughout this I received treatment of a very high standard without having to pay a penny for it – having funded it already through my taxes. But that would clearly position this story in the realm of socialist utopia or dystopia.

* * *

Some pieces of housekeeping to be taken care of:

Firstly, I was very glad to receive so many applications of a high standard for the Assistant Editor role advertised a few issues ago. I'm delighted that we've appointed three people to the role, Dean Conrad, Andrew Ferguson, and Maureen Kincaid Speller. Each of them has a strong background in sf scholarship, and I hope that their work on different aspects of the journal will become apparent over coming issues. We've also asked Catherine Coker and Heather Osborne, who weren't able, for various practical reasons, to take on full Assistant Editor roles, to become Associate Editors, helping with various pieces of work behind the scenes. I hope you'll join me in welcoming all of them.

Secondly, you may have noticed that the journal has a new email address, journaleditor@sf-foundation.org. Using the Science Fiction Foundation's own domain name should provide improved security and reliability for us. The old gmail address will, however, remain in operation for at least a year.

Lastly, I'm delighted in this issue to offer a selection of papers on the Gothic, curated by Martyn Colebrook. Although all of them have been through our usual external peer-review process, I think that they have very much benefited from Martyn's expertise in shepherding them to publication. I would be keen to receive other proposals for similar themed issues or sections.

Graham Sleight

On fiction and history

Cecelia Holland

Viewpoint:

"History is not what you think it is. It's what you can remember."
– Sellers and Yeatman, *1066 and All That*

All history is fiction. The past, pace Faulkner, isn't only gone, it's unrecoverable. The present is gone in a breath. Within a few minutes the vital connections – people's thoughts, feelings, meanings – are already vanishing into ambivalent subjective memory. Think of the Kennedy Assassination: how can we ever feel again the innocence of the moment before that happened? 45 years later, there's a lot more noise, but we know less certainly about that event than we did in the immediate days after the President was shot; it's all been sifted through the knowledge of what came after, and altered to explain that. History isn't the past, it's what we think of the past.

Go back one hundred years and all that's left is physical evidence, and what people have written down for their own purposes. (Even a shopping list, as we know, is open to interpretation.) Go back a thousand years, and most of the physical evidence itself is gone. Time has eroded away the context, the emotional value, the meaningful and immediate, the motives and the expectations, and what survives is a random scattering of rocks and bones, connected to nothing, certainly not to the 21st century mind. Even the rare texts are only objects now. Read Dhouda's *Liber Manualis* (c. 841) and tell me exactly how you identify with that.

Yet every generation strives to recover a sense of the past, because without an awareness at least that something happened before which led to what is happening now, we're treading water in an infinite present. There is no future if we can't conceive of a past. (Gene Wolfe's *Latro* novels are representations of this, worlds without memory.) But how does this work out in the great genres of historical fiction – especially in a time when genre is blurring almost to meaninglessness?

I believe the single most potent tool we have for recovering some useful sense of the past is historical fiction. Non-fiction history sticks to recording the rocks and bones, and arranging them in artful ways; good research is priceless; certainly few people get off on it as I do. But the writer of historical fiction has

access to that research and considerably more resources to make sense of it. The writer brings in his own personal experience and understanding of human nature, his imagination and vocabulary, his memory, his human drive to make order, the space in his mind where stories happen, that little testing ground, will this work or not? Trial by narrative.

This is of course only half the process. The reader brings similar gifts, and assembles his end of the story. Novels are shared worlds. Historical novels are shared worlds with time machines.

Consider *Wolf Hall*, Hilary Mantel's Booker Prize novel. One long Tudor joke, a masterful assemblage of every datum, observation, table gossip, street rumor and outright lie about the most public lives of the 16th century, *Wolf Hall* uses the classic technique: The more bits and pieces of the evidence Mantel can account for in her pattern, the more convincing her account of how people experienced the 1530s.

Yet who knows if it was really like this? Has Mantel actually escaped her 21st century perspective to capture the mindset of 1538? Does she even intend that? Her savage characterizations of Anne Boleyn and Thomas More clash with more widely held deductions from just as good research; opinions on the English Reformation is as various as the people holding them. We will never know what happened to Kennedy. How can we ever know anything about Henry VIII? Isn't this just as much a brilliantly realized historical fantasy as, say, John Ford's *The Dragon Waiting*?

The vital difference between historical fiction and historical fantasy is that in fantasy the random evidence of the past is infinitely plastic. In fact one school holds that what's told about the past is more interesting than its existence, and the hard evidence itself is often inconvenient and ancillary. In fact a whole past can be made up if it suits. So Tolkien and Wagner made myth out of myth, cutting and pasting the received knowledge to their purposes.

The danger here is you can start to believe there never was anything real, that it's all accountable in metaphor, and the metaphor changes at whim. (Remember those Bushite neo-cons, who thought they made their own reality?) And now you're treading water again, and all you can see is yourself.

Other great fantastickers value the evidence, but change names and remake events to say what they want more crisply than thorny incompressible fact will allow. There are splendid books based on this imaginative dominance over reality, mesmerizing, challenging, metaphorically compelling, heroic, even, nonetheless lacking the heft of something like *Wolf Hall*.

We identify with Mantel's world. The novel restores something only fiction can describe: the context blown away by time. *Wolf Hall* is a world where everything is coming unhinged, language, religion, government, the cosmos itself, and sliding toward some unforeseeable precipice, maybe doom, maybe a future. And Mantel's imagined context is pegged up by empirical data. This is what makes it riveting, as riveting surely as Angelina and Brad. This happened to

real people, people we have some parallax on, having encountered them before, (in the case of the Tudors, ad infinitum) in books and movies and portraits and songs; much of the forward drive of the novel comes from knowing bad things are going to happen to all these people.

If Mantel had set her book as fantasy – Enrico King of Floribundo, and his henchman Machiavelli Saint George – it would have lost that terrible weight of the real. (To say nothing of its appeal to Tudorofanatics.) Even if its codes were obvious, and the story could easily be read back to its historical ground, the account would lose half its value. It would be a metaphor, a distillation of reality into some tidy framework, dilute with the writer's prejudice. (You think of James Frey's book *A Million Little Pieces*, which could not sell as fiction but went big time as a memoir. What's compelling about a story is not that you can think of it, but that it actually happened, believe it or not.)

This direct link to reality, however insecure, is the power base of historical fiction. As we all know, reading novels isn't just entertainment, but a way of knowing. Reading historical fiction is a way to know about the past.

But what? If the past is unrecoverable, truly, as it seems to be, what can we know from reading about it? Is there enough evidence in the research to come to any valid conclusion at all? Don't all writers actually take with them a preconception into which they fit the data – a personal fantasy of the event?

In the end, isn't Hilary Mantel's pattern in *Wolf Hall* still a metaphor? Isn't it conveniently like our own time? And isn't that why she chose to write the book?

So it's a circular argument. You end a long journey to find you never left home. Maybe it is just a matter of inflection, and treading water is the only sensible thing to do.

You can dismiss the whole exercise this way, except for one thing: the research, what remains when everything subjective is sifted out, the little rock of fact, the proof that something actually did happen, believe it or not.

When they excavated the site of Birka, the old Viking trading city in Sweden, they found a small stone buddha. What they could not excavate was the context. How did it get there? Did somebody from India or Central Asia bring it on an extraordinary journey west? Did it go as a gambling trinket, a bit of loot, a curiosity from hand to hand along the rivers and wooden causeways of the tenth century? Did somebody from the West go east and bring it back? Or something wilder, stranger yet, unimaginable?

But the object exists, scrubbed of its meaning, except this meaning: The past was. So we have to go there. The best way is now, always has been, to imagine stories about it. But it seems to me the power in it rests on pinning those stories on what actually happened, however few and shaky the glimpses, not some fantasy; what I discover, not what I make up.

Radio Free PKD

Umberto Rossi

> Amo la radio perché arriva dalla gente
> entra nelle case e ci parla direttamente
> se una radio è libera ma libera veramente
> piace anche di più perché libera la mente
>
> Eugenio Finardi, *La radio*[1]

In one of the first important academic essays on a novel by Philip K. Dick, Fredric Jameson said that "the basic event envisaged by *Dr. Bloodmoney* is the [...] replacement of the [...] world of empirical activity, capitalist everyday work and scientific knowledge, by that newer one of communication and messages of all kinds with which we are only too familiar in this consumer and service era".[2] Since this essay was published in 1975, well before the Age of the Internet (and email or SMS), it is an impressive statement; it is also seminal, inasmuch as it may well have inspired Darko Suvin's 2002 article "Goodbye and Hello", where he extended Jameson's remark about the importance of messages and communication in *Dr. Bloodmoney* to the rest of Dick's output: "Dick's oeuvre is full of messengers: from Juliana in *Man in the High Castle* and Walt in *Dr. Bloodmoney*, the theme grows omnipresent and mysterious in *Ubik*. In *A Scanner*, messages inside Arctor's brain get so confused that they break down. By the VALIS Cycle, almost everybody is a messenger and everything is a message".[3]

When one talks about messages and messengers in this era of Information and Communication Technology and digitalisation, the presence, use and meaning of mass media in Dick's oeuvre obviously come to mind; the solidity of Jameson's and Suvin's remarks is confirmed by the simple fact that media theorists and/or literary critics interested in media theory have repeatedly tackled this issue in the USA and abroad.[4] So far, however, critics only seem to have been interested in those media Dick put in his novels and stories to create the media landscape which is a key concept of most analyses of the postmodern age/condition.[5] Such analyses are mostly concerned with ontology; that is, broadly speaking, with the nature of existence, non-existence or apparent existence of social phenomena, individuals and society. Such an interest in ontology often derives from an

uncertainty about the substantiality of the social processes or groups that a desired political stance or agenda is based on.[6]

But these concerns, however legitimate, may lead interpreters to only read Dick's fiction and nonfiction in search or this or that truth about the postmodern condition, characterised as it may be by virtual reality, posthuman identities, death of the subject, simulacra, etc. – they might be more interested in the shifting of realities which Dick so effectively conjured up in his tales of (postmodern?) exhilaration and terror than in the actual messages that circulate through the omnipresent media. Many have wholeheartedly accepted McLuhan's motto that "the medium is the message",[7] i.e. that the content of media communication is ultimately irrelevant when it comes to its impact on society. Such an identification of medium with message has probably become popular because it dispenses with the wearing task of deciphering messages; yet this approach may prove self-defeating when dealing with Dick's fictions, where deciphering messages is often a matter of life and death.[8]

In Dick's fiction messages always have something important to communicate, even if their meaning is enigmatic; and interpreters should pay attention to *how* those messages are sent to the characters in his novels and short stories and ultimately to us readers, because in Dick's science-fictional and realistic worlds the medium which delivers the message is never indifferent. I have already argued that the widespread uncertainty that assails us in Dick's oeuvre about the authenticity of this or that virtual world is not intended to make us indifferent to authenticity or truth; if by postmodern we mean some up-to-date variety of nihilism, then Dick is definitely not postmodern.[9] The interplay of his alternative realities questions relevant political, ethical, social issues, not because we should chose which "reality" is true or real, but because the contradictions or aporias at the core of those issues can only be fully grasped thanks to the struggle between two opposed worlds or layers of reality. From this awareness follows that ascertaining what message is delivered by which medium is not a secondary concern, but a very important issue if we really want to understand what was the overall message of this most elusive writer.

I will start by articulating a working hypothesis: though all the media available in Dick's lifetime (i.e. television, newspapers and magazines, vinyl records and audio tapes, films, visual arts, and obviously books), play a very important role in the architecture of his sf and realistic works, radio has a particular importance which can be detected by taking into account its part in the plots, and the kinds of messages it transmits.

The special role of the radio could be partly explained by the very simple fact that while Dick knew the other media only as a consumer (with the relevant exception of books),[10] when it came to the radio he had an insider's knowledge of the medium. Lawrence's Sutin's biography says that the record shop where Dick worked in the 1940s (owned by Herbert Hollis) sponsored and supplied a local AM station, KSMO in San Mateo:

> Phil wrote DJ patter and Hollis shop commercials for the programs. He claimed, in later years, to have hosted a classical music program on KSMO, but no one who knew Phil at the time can recall his having been on the radio. But he must have paid frequent visits to KSMO: The ambience of an FM station is captured in fine detail in his 1956 mainstream novel, *The Broken Bubble of Thisbe Holt*, and the genial manner of a small-time DJ is touchingly embodied in Walt Dangerfield [...].[11]

Moreover, one of Dick's closest friends, Anthony Boucher, his literary mentor, hosted a classical music program on FM KPFA, *Golden Voices*;[12] KPFA, or Pacifica, being a pacifist radio station with leftist leanings, a political stance which has much in common with the ideas expressed by Walt Dangerfield, one of the main characters in *Dr. Bloodmoney, or How I Got Along After the Bomb* (1965). This sf classic features nuclear war and the utopian rural communities striving to survive after it. Walt is an astronaut who should be travelling to Mars with his wife, to start an American colony there, but who has been stopped by nuclear warfare and forced to orbit Earth, unable to reach his destination or to return home. Instead, he broadcasts from his starship, which he has turned into an orbital radio station.

Weird as the situation may seem, it can be read as hinting at something that really happened in the history of American radio, as some stations broadcast from beyond the borderline with Mexico, a place often depicted by American pop culture as if it were outer space. These radio stations have a long and turbulent history which began with John Romulus Brinkley and his radio station XER in Del Rio in 1931,[13] and it is not at all unlikely that Dick, who was born in 1928, listened to the programs of border radio stations, which were very popular in the USA from the mid-Thirties to the mid-Eighties.

However, we have an example of radio broadcasting from beyond the US borders in another novel by Dick, *The Man in the High Castle* (1962), where an alternative history has brought about the defeat of the USA in World War II and its invasion by German and Japanese armies. The States have been split in three quisling countries, where radio broadcasts are a tool in the hands of Nazi or Japanese propagandists;[14] but even in this dystopian universe radio may play a countercultural role, as Bob Hope mocks Nazi leaders and "gets away with what he says" because he "broadcast[s] from Canada" (78). Hope's radio program is evidently an anamorphic image of the historical border AM radio stations.

Walt Dangerfield however is a more sophisticated and ironic DJ than Bob Hope, or the Brinkley and his colleagues broadcasting from Mexico: "Walt Dangerfield was no Adam; he had more the quality of the last, not the first man, with his wry, mordant wit, his halting, almost cynical manner of speech as he faced the reporters".[15] Unconventional, witty, intellectual, the orbital DJ is described as a mix of Voltaire and western comedian Will Rogers (26), a quite remarkable mix, though Rogers was also a radio celebrity from 1930 to 1935. Dick only had the opportunity to visit a radio station in the 1940s, but he was surely a radio listener

– like most Americans – in the years of the Great Depression, a crucial period for the development of US radio. Then he was exposed to such radio celebrities as Rogers, and to the sf radio programs (such as *Buck Rogers* or *Flash Gordon*) broadcast by commercial stations.

Though Dangerfield plays opera, reads Somerset Maugham and Blaise Pascal, and airs highly nonconformist political opinions – things which would not have been done by a commercial DJ of the 1940s and the 1950s – he is considered a professional DJ by the characters in the novel: "That Dangerfield is really a great disk jockey [...] the best I've heard even before the Emergency" (102). Dangerfield's unconventional style can be explained by the simple fact that the novel, published in 1965 though completed at the beginning of 1963, is suffused with a distinctly countercultural atmosphere: pacifist, nonconformist, anti-establishment and above all anti-militarist. Such an atmosphere could arguably be found in West Coast college radio of the early Sixties, or such non-commercial, politically committed radio stations as Pacifica,[16] the Californian station that had been active since 1949 and was unsurprisingly investigated for "subversion" by the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) and the Senate Internal Security Subcommittee (SISS) between 1960-63.[17] Dick did not mention KPFA only in his letters; the radio station appears at least once in his fiction, in the first page of his last novel, *The Transmigration of Timothy Archer*, when the narrator introduces the figure of the new-age guru Edgar Barefoot, who has "a weekly radio program on KPFA in Berkeley".[18]

In Dangerfield's one-man programming, repeatedly described or quoted in *Dr. Bloodmoney*, there are "no slogans, no Fourth-of-July expostulations, none of the stuff that had gotten them all where they were now" (103). And where the characters of this polyphonic novel are "now" is a post-nuclear war world that has regressed into a rural arcadia of small, isolated communities, whose only connector is Dangerfield, who says "They knew better than to give me a gun – I would have shot an officer" (103). He is, like Pacifica's speakers and reporters, anti-war; or better, he is staunchly anti-cold war, since it is that virtual conflict which brought the US to the actual nuclear war and to the dissolution described in the novel. The pacifist attitude of KPFA was not – as we have seen – peacefully accepted by the authorities; in the novel, however, Dangerfield is not menaced by the FBI or the CIA (because they do not exist any more, while whatever authorities did survive cannot reach him in his orbital radio station [108]), but by psi-empowered, phocomelic radio repairman Hoppy Harrington, one of the two villains in the novel (the other being the deranged scientist Bruno Bluthgeld, responsible for catastrophic nuclear experiments).

Hoppy does not seem motivated by political issues: he wants to eliminate Dangerfield not because of what he says, but because he is much like Stuart McConchie, another character in the novel, who "felt envious of Walt Dangerfield; he wished it was he, Stuart McConchie, up there before the TV cameras, in the eyes of the entire world" (27). Envy of the famous (and Dangerfield is a celebrity

even before he starts his activity as space DJ), a wish for fame, identification: whatever the causes for Stuart's feeling, he does not harm Dangerfield, unlike Hoppy, who almost kills Dangerfield and then replaces him.

We should note that such a substitution can only happen in an invisible medium like radio. Being invisible, Dangerfield may be easily replaced, once sick, by Hoppy, thanks to a powerful, sophisticated radio transmitter. Dangerfield's highly original and humane programming is then replaced by a recorded imitation. On the one hand we have the creativity, the sincerity and, above anything else, the intellectual and aesthetic freedom of Walt Dangerfield; on the other hand there is a simulacrum personality, hiding a carefully organised plan (178). After Hoppy's takeover, what people listen to is a playback rather than a live DJ; and that playback DJ will be advertising for Hoppy Harrington, as the sample of the ersatz program in Chapter 15 makes quite clear (264-5).

What motivates Hoppy is evidently a form of unrestrained will to power. This has already been noticed by Fredric Jameson, who says that "Hoppy Harrington [...] grows in power as the book continues [...]. Along with this new confidence, however, his resentment has intensified as well. By the time of the confrontation with Bluthgeld, Hoppy is himself a dangerously paranoid figure, potentially as harmful to the community as the man he is now able to destroy".[19] No Dickian little man at the mercy of political or supernatural forces, Hoppy is as threatening and destructive a figure as Palmer Eldritch in *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* or Jory in *Ubik*. But his personality is clearly outlined well before the fight with Bluthgeld, even before the nuclear war that turns the United States into a constellation of neo-agrarian communities: in Chapter 3 we are shown Hoppy falling in a trance after drinking a bottle of beer in a bar and describing what lies "beyond" (36-9). His listeners receive his visions as something which might be expected from a medium, that is, a description of the afterlife – but readers will soon discover that it is a vision of a not-very-far future which lies beyond the nuclear holocaust. However, Stuart McConchie interprets Hoppy's sybilline vaticinations as the expression of a troubled and unpleasant personality: "It sounds like a megalomaniacal daydream, where he rules the world. Compensation because he's defective..." (36). But it is easy to see that there is not only that in Hoppy's words:

> [...] I'm better than anybody else. I can do anything they can do and a lot more. I can go wherever I want, and they can't. They can't move. [...] They can't go into the air or on roads or ships; they just stay. [...] I can see just each of them, like they're dead, like they're pinned down and dead. Like corpses. [...] [T]hey can converse with each other. But [...] [t]hey can only talk through me. (36)

Hoppy's "vision" may tell us what his real plans are, and what his purpose is in replacing Dangerfield. By seizing the satellite Hoppy will gain the greatest

power over the survivors of the nuclear war: they will only talk through him, and that means that there will be no real freedom of speech. Hoppy's use of the satellite once he has removed Dangerfield makes quite clear that the orbital radio station will effectively be a propaganda tool, cynically used to extol the new ruler. And there is no doubt that Hoppy wants to take advantage of his psi powers and his technological expertise, plus his ability to imitate the voice of Dangerfield, through the means of the communication satellite. The visit paid by a delegation of the local community (253-5) trying to reward Hoppy for the defeat of Bluthgeld can be easily read as an acknowledgement of the phocomelus' power. It does not really matter that Hoppy spurns the humble gifts of the delegation; he is evidently pleased by his new role as somebody who must be paid honour to – and feared. His final mimicking of the words of Orion Stroud, "There will certainly be more" (255), after having telekinetically broken a transmitter tube, sounds ominous enough.

The fact that Dick inserted in his novel elements that help us understand where Hoppy's will to power comes from – not just from his handicap but from an unhappy childhood in a backward area (38-9) – should not make us forget that Hoppy is not just a victim. Early in the novel he compares his condition to Stuart's, trying to persuade him that they are both marginalised individuals (Stuart is black, and we should bear in mind that the novel was written and published when the civil rights movement was struggling to achieve black equality), but once Hoppy eliminates Bluthgeld and takes control of the satellite, he seems to be only interested in showing the local community (and all those who can be reached by the radio) who is boss. More than sheer megalomania, what is at work is the selfishness of a child, and this is something that Bonny Keller, being a mother, immediately understands: "I had no idea he was so childish. Just a little child... we should have brought much more and it should have been wrapped gaily, with ribbons and cards, with as much color as possible. *He must not be disappointed* [...] Our lives depend on it, on his being – placated" (254). Though endowed with enormous powers, Hoppy remains at heart an unhappy child who looks for easy gratification because of his humiliating childhood experiences. There is a striking contrast between Hoppy's technical skills, his psi powers and his immature personality, and we might wonder whether Dick was inspired by a famous sf short story, Jerome Bixby's "It's a *Good* Life" (1953), whose protagonist, a psi-empowered child, Anthony Fremont, dominates and frightens a small town: Anthony is not depicted as malevolent or evil, but he is deadly dangerous because of the gap between his three-year-old mind, with its limited grasp of the world, and his apparently immense, god-like powers.[20] The psychological immaturity of both Anthony and Hoppy does not mean that they are not two threatening, potentially deadly figures.

This analysis of Hoppy's motivations should now enable us to understand the role of radio in the novel when there is a DJ like Dangerfield behind the microphone. While Hoppy uses the medium in the same way as one of his plastic

and metal extensors, that is, as just another prosthetic limb that allows him to manipulate his neighbour, Dangerfield uses the medium to keep the scattered communities of survivors in touch with one another. He delivers his pacifist messages, plays music, broadcasts news and forwards bits of information that may help the members of the scattered communities to survive: "Things you can do with the timer out of an old R.C.A. washer-dryer combination. This item arrives from a handy in the Geneva area: thanks to you, Georg Schilper" (109). While Hoppy wants to use the satellite for propaganda purposes, that is, to build his own public image, Dangerfield sees himself as a node in a communication network: he forwards messages from the survivors to other survivors. His programming is based on a democratic, "horizontal", anti-authoritarian conception of the role of the media: a countercultural approach.

All in all, Dangerfield's orbital radio station is an example of a utopian, liberating medium. No wonder Dick's solution to the problem – Hoppy's psychic and technological aggression, but also the psychological illness of the space DJ (possibly suffering of the consequences of isolation and the trauma of his wife's death)[21] – is to have Dr. Stockstill, a psychoanalyst, establish a two-way communication with Walt Dangerfield to cure him. This long-distance psychotherapy (281-4) is based on the possibility of the former (passive) listener talking to the DJ, breaking the latter's isolation: thus, it is an enhancement of the democratic and open character of Dangerfield's use of the medium.

But the way radio is used in a single novel is, of course, not enough to authorise a general interpretation of that medium in Dick's oeuvre. Yet a similar positive image of radio (provided it is in the hands of the Dickian little men) can be also found in other works.

We might start with *Time Out of Joint* (1959), Dick's first mature novel according to some critics,[22] where the radio is endowed with a remarkable potential for revelation and unmasking. We know that the protagonist, Ragle Gumm, is the victim of a complex simulation apparatus aimed at making him think that he is an idler living in the 1950s in a residential suburb of a nondescript town of the USA; in fact, the year is 1998, and a war is raging between the lunar colonies and the Earth, which is ruled by an authoritarian global government called "One Happy World". The fake daily life of the Fifties surrounding Ragle Gumm and his close relatives is intended to keep him working for the One Happy World regime, as he is the only one who can predict the targets of the missiles that the Moon rebels launch randomly (but not randomly enough) towards the cities of Terra.

Though the reproduction of Eisenhower-era America is excellent, a series of increasingly evident clues tells the novel's readers (though not always its characters) that there is something definitely wrong in that little patch of *America Felix*: Richard Nixon is the director of the FBI, Marilyn Monroe is unknown, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was written recently. Above all, there are no more radios. This is suggested by what grown-ups say when Sammy, Ragle's eight-year-old nephew,

talks about the crystal radio set he is building, helped by his uncle:

> "Radio," Margo said. "Doesn't that take you back?" [...]
>
> Junie said, "Remember those radio programmes we used to listen to before World War Two? [...] Sometimes I miss radio," [...]
>
> "What would you get on your crystal set?" Vic asked his son. "Are there any stations still transmitting?" It had been his impression that radio stations had folded up several years ago.
>
> Ragle said, "He can probably monitor ship-to-shore signals. Aircraft landing instructions."[23]

These remarks would have seemed rather strange to a 1959 reader, if we remember what radio historians tell us: while radio was the most important electric medium in the 1930s and 1940s (practically the first two decades of Dick's life), it was dethroned by television in the early 1950s; "by 1954 network radio, with its prime time-time programming that brought national stars to a huge national audience had all but gone".[24] But radio made its comeback in the late 1950s, when it turned into an essentially local medium, and the number of broadcasting stations doubled compared to 1948.[25] Suffice it to say that AM radio stations made rock'n'roll music famous and played a fundamental role in moulding juvenile subcultures from the mid-1950s until the early 1980s.[26] Yet readers soon realise that the apparently ordinary town where the novel is set is quite abnormal: there are no radios whatsoever, and Sammy's home-built crystal set is the only exception to this rule.

Since the anonymous town of the 1950s is – as we readers come to know before Ragle realises this – totally bogus, the absence of radio sets is simply necessary, as they might pick up tell-tale signals and conversations and expose the conspiracy. In fact, when Sammy's crystal set begins to work, it allows Ragle to understand that he is not paranoid when he feels that there is something hidden behind the reassuring reality of his daily life:

> The clubhouse shook. [...]
>
> The voice continued, "...entirely clear. No, it's fine. You're passing over him now."
>
> *Him*, Ragle thought.
>
> "...down there," the voice said. "Yes, you're looking down at Ragle Gumm himself. [...]"
>
> The vibrations subsided. (88)

Until this moment Ragle has been the prisoner of a chilling doubt: is he the victim of a conspiracy or a crackpot dropout unable to act his age and dazed by psychotic hallucinations? The radio proves he is so famous that aeroplane pilots (actually – as he and readers will discover soon – starship pilots) want to take

a look at the place where he lives. This knowledge triggers his first attempt to escape from his seemingly ordinary neighbourhood (88); though the attempt will fail,[27] it starts a crisis which will ultimately lead to Ragle's liberation. At the end of the novel he will leave the fake town and fly to the moon in a rocket belonging to the rebels whom he had previously decided to join before his psychic regression set in (the mise en scène set up by the regime was actually aimed at strengthening and stabilising that regression). So the radio plays a highly positive role: it delivers a revelation, a liberating message which will initiate a form of self-therapy which will restore Ragle's real memories. (In fact we are presented with two flashbacks of his real childhood in the 1950s almost at the end of the novel [180-3].) Anyone who is aware of the importance of anamnesis[28] in Dick's oeuvre will understand that radio, by helping the protagonist to set himself free from the delusional world built by psychosis and a totalitarian government, is – in Gnostic terms – on the side of Sophia against the bogus world created by the Demiurge.[29] This frame of reference will be more fully explained later.

If radio is on the side of truth and knowledge, the other media that are present in the bogus town are undoubtedly on the side of falseness and ignorance: they are the *Gazette*, the local newspaper which publishes *Where Will the Little Green Man Be Next?*, the bogus quiz whose undisputed champion is Ragle Gumm: apparently a harmless game, it is actually the channel which allows the authorities to submit Ragle the data he needs to spot where the next missile will fall. The newspaper is a manipulative tool, as are the omnipresent TV sets, which do not show the ongoing war between Earth and Moon, but only tranquilising ball games: TV is part of the texture of everyday reality itself according to Vic, Ragle's brother-in-law, who pictures it as a "sunny universe. Kids romping, cows mooing, dogs wagging. Men clipping lawns on Sunday afternoon, while listening to the ball game on TV" (79-80). When that reality is finally denounced as completely fake, TV is obviously included.

Even in Dick's realistic novels TV is always a suspect medium. We might offer as an example *Puttering About in a Small Land*, posthumously published in 1985, but written in 1957 and rewritten in 1958,[30] that is, the same year that Dick was writing *Time Out of Joint*.[31] The novel tells the story of a married couple, Virginia and Roger Lindahl, who meet another couple, Chick and Liz Bonner, a small and apparently meaningless event which, however, prompts Roger's and Liz's adulterous affair, and ultimately brings about Chick's takeover of Roger's small television sales and repair shop. The novel is mostly focused on the adultery, but in the painstakingly built background we are shown the rise of the TV in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Roger is a sort of visionary, who has seen the oncoming future of a TV society: "There's going to be television inside one year – I read all the trade journals and I know: it's the truth. This time next year you're going to have as big a television inventory as everything else put together".[32] Roger is also the typical Dickian little man, and the novel tells how he is ultimately defeated by his ambitious wife, who takes advantage of the adultery to force Roger to

sell his shop to Chick Bonner. The small shop of the individualistic repairman is thus turned into something totally different: in Chapter 21 we are shown the renovated store, now styled "L & B Appliance Mart", an elegant establishment whose lavish appearance is described in detail (255-6). The luxurious surface of the store, however, hides a place of resentment, envy, falsity and coldness. The employees are in competition with each other, and surely do not love their jobs like Roger did his: they are only in it for the money.

As for the two owners, Virginia and Chick, they are shown as successful but lonely business people. A remark by Virginia is enlightening: "For [Chick] the world beyond the store had no substance. And for her, too, she thought" (261). These sentences can be read as simply meaning that the couple have sacrificed their partners and feelings to business, success and money, but they also say something about the symbolic value of places: Virginia and Chick live in a place which is not a house, but a display of consumer goods, special goods whose purpose is displaying other consumer goods – the birth of TV in the States was a purely commercial enterprise, as there were no public networks (things were quite different from what happened in the United Kingdom, Italy and other European countries). The store is not a real place, it is basically a medium, something that allows consumers to get in touch with commodities, commodities whose main purpose is to display other commodities, in an endless recirculation which anticipates Jean Baudrillard and other theorists of the postmodern condition.

Virginia and Chick may believe that the world beyond the store lacks substantiality, i.e. that it is not real, but the substantiality of their store, notwithstanding its luxurious and hyper-modern aspect, is definitely more dubious; and that store has been designed to sell TV sets. Even when it comes to physically selling TV sets, the medium is tainted by insubstantiality and unreality in Dick's fiction. One might mention here the novels where TV becomes a key component of the plot itself: the issues of unreality and simulations reaches their utmost intensity in such works as *Flow My Tears, The Policeman Said, The Penultimate Truth*, and the paradigmatic *The Simulacra*. And in *The Man in the High Castle* it is the evil Nazi Germany which is introducing television in the alternate universe where Hitler and his allies won World War II, [33] a universe where space travel has been developed well before TV, and where radio is still the most common medium in the early 1960s.

While television is almost always the instrument of fakery and manipulation,[34] radio is almost always an instrument of revelation and liberation, even when the figure of the DJ is rather ambiguous, or decidedly shady. In fact this adjective well suits Allen Faine, the space disc jockey who is a minor character in *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* (1964). Faine is a much less disinterested character than Walt Dangerfield: he is an employee of Leo Bulero, the toy manufacturer and drug dealer who uses the P.P. Layouts satellite to advertise the Perky Pat Layouts and the Can-D illegal drug which the Martian colonists use to become the two dolls, Perky Pat and Walt. It does not matter that the drug is actually

pushed by Impatience White: Faine knows perfectly well that he is supporting an interplanetary drug traffic. This might make us think that radio people are not always heroes in Dick's fiction, but we should not forget that the novel was written in 1963 and published in 1964, when the enthusiasm for the liberating potential of drugs was at its peak, and Dick himself wrote his novels thanks to huge doses of amphetamines. Moreover, the role played by Allen Faine in the brief scene where he contacts the protagonist, Barney Mayerson, [35] who has been forced to emigrate to Mars to lead a life of squalor and alienation, is not completely negative. By accepting the deal proposed by Bulero through Faine, Barney will, after consuming Chew-Z (the drug merchandised by Bulero's competitor, Palmer Eldritch), ingest a toxin that simulates epilepsy, in order to start a legal action against Eldritch. This will give him an opportunity to escape the bleak and purposeless life on Mars. "We'll get you off Mars. That's your payment" (139), says Faine, thus offering Barney the chance of liberation from his predicament. In the context of the novel, Eldritch and his Chew-Z are the agents of unreality, or better, to use Dick's own words, "the evil, negative trinity of alienation, blurred reality, and despair" (203) whose symbols are Eldritch's artificial arm, eyes and teeth: and whoever fights against that unholy trinity is on the side of the oppressed people, like Barney and the other Martian colonists – even when they are shady figures like DJ Allen Faine.

But the liberating, democratic potential of the radio is also present, with less ambiguity and greater strength, in Dick's late fiction: *Radio Free Albemuth* (1985, posth.), *The Divine Invasion* (1981), and *The Transmigration of Timothy Archer* (1982). With the first of these novels, the most evident reference to radio is in its very title. This has already been noticed by Darko Suvin, who reads it thus:

> The whole title of Radio Free Albemuth imitates in its form the various "freedom stations" – true or fake – of anti-Nazi and anti-Stalinist resistance as well as "the free University" and indeed "free" radio stations (e.g. in the U.S. and Japanese student revolt).[36]

There is no doubt that the title refers to politically engaged and subversive (or at least countercultural) radio stations which existed historically, and this is not surprising in a novel written in 1976, right after the short but intense season of freeform radio:[37] given Dick's passion for music, including psychedelic rock and folksong, he must have been familiar with freeform radio.

However, the concept of a free radio, as opposed to a society which is not free, is not just an echo of the historical events which occurred in the years immediately before the writing of the novel: it is its narrative engine. In the novel Nicholas Brady, the manager of a small record label, receives messages from a satellite orbiting Earth; those messages lead him to record the songs of a young folksinger, Sadassa Silvia, inserting subversive messages in the lyrics which reveal the scandalous secret of the reactionary president Ferris F. Fremont,

namely that he is a Communist sleeper agent. The situation is quite similar to that of the anti-Nazi resistance in Italy, France and other European countries occupied by the German armies during World War II: Nicholas, his friend Phil (a fictional alter-ego of the author) and Sadassa are the partisans; Ferris F. Fremont is a quisling who has gradually crushed civil rights and political freedom in the USA; the satellite is the science-fictional equivalent of the BBC World Service (known as Radio London in many occupied countries) which broadcasts coded messages to the partisans.

Basically, if we accept the Gnostic frame of reference which is one of the main subtexts of the novel – but not the only one – political oppression, fakery (i.e. propaganda, censorship, manipulation of public opinion, etc.), violence, paranoia, and death are all on the side of President Fremont and the New American Way: their dismal world of deception and falseness is the bogus world of the Demiurge, which is undoubtedly evil. On the other side there are the little men (Nick and Phil), the inspired artist (Sadassa), music and art, freedom of opinion and speech, records and, above all, the radio. In fact, the messages and images received by Nick are explained by Sadassa thus: "What we receive [...] is pararadio signals, a radiation enclosure of the radio beam, so that if the radio message is decoded it signifies nothing [...] the violent phosphene activity you experience from time to time [...] is stimulated by radiation, not the radio signal".[38] Though Dick makes Sadassa add that "that kind of radiation is unknown to us here", relying on the conventions of sf, any encyclopaedia may tell us that radiation includes those very electromagnetic radiations which in turn include radio waves. Radio operates by modulation of electromagnetic waves with frequencies below those of visible light, and the unknown radiation used by Valis behaves in a remarkably similar way. No wonder then if Phil sees the alien satellite as a radio station: "Radio Free Alpha Centauri, I said to myself bitterly. Radio Free Albemuth, as I had come to call it" (207); it is an illegal, subversive radio station "overriding our own managed TV and FM transmissions. Adding God knew what information we weren't supposed to know" (207).

All in all, Radio Free Albemuth – and Valis behind it – can be read as an avatar of Sophia,[39] which is wisdom in Christian traditions (especially in Orthodox Christianity) and Gnosticism. The "information we weren't supposed to know" is wisdom which contradicts false knowledge, thus liberating men from the bogus world of the Demiurge. But this mystical or religious reading does not exclude the political interpretation where Fremont is basically a fictional avatar of Richard Nixon (the stories of their political careers have several striking similarities, e.g. they were both born and raised in Yorba Linda, CA), so the novel can be also read as an allegory of the struggle between countercultural media and a conservative, oppressive government – more or less what happened in the USA from the mid-1960s to the mid-1970s.

Radio also plays a liberating role in the two subsequent novels, though it is not as important an element as it is in *Radio Free Albemuth*. In *The Divine Invasion*

commercial radio haunts the mind of the protagonist, Herb Asher, with mawkish muzak while he lies in cryonic suspension. This exploitive use of the medium is countered by Elias (who is actually the prophet Elijah reborn, or immortal) who decides to buy Radio WORP FM to broadcast his fiery preaching, which will awake the sleepers,[40] that is, open humankind's eyes and allow it to understand the nature of the world-wide totalitarian regime depicted in the novel. The purchase of the radio station, which will also air the songs of Linda Fox, Herb's pop idol, is only discussed in the novel, but its countercultural purpose is undeniable. On the other hand, we have no political content broadcast by the radio in Dick's last novel, *The Transmigration of Timothy Archer*, which (unlike *Radio Free Albemuth* and *The Divine Invasion*) is effectively a realistic novel. Yet it is radio that brings Angel Archer, the protagonist, to meet Edgar Barefoot, the new-age guru who "awakens" her in Chapter 14, helping her to understand what her psychological condition really is, unearthing her sense of guilt, and exposing her unrestrained love for words more than people. Barefoot sets Angel free from a psychological, existential oppression, not a political domination; yet their meeting is a liberating moment nonetheless, and Barefoot is a radio personality in the Bay Area, because the first page of the novel mentions his "weekly radio program on KPFA in Berkeley".[41]

Hence, the idea that radio is a good medium, as opposed to lying newspapers and manipulative TV, can be found in several works by Dick. This countercultural medium may be threatened by sheer violence (the satellite in *Radio Free Albemuth* is destroyed by Soviet nuclear weapons) or commercial exploitation (we have already said that the figure of DJ Allen Faine in *Stigmata* is rather ambiguous, and there is the moronic muzak broadcast by Radio WORP FM in *The Divine Invasion*); this contradiction between the artistic freedom of DJs and the conditioning imposed by sponsors was already present in a non-sf novel Dick wrote in 1963, *The Broken Bubble*, where small-time DJ and classical music connoisseur, Jim Briskin, endangers his career at Radio KOIF, San Francisco, by refusing to read a tacky commercial from a chain of used-car dealers. Dick was well aware that radio could be subjugated by merely commercial interests or by political censorship,[42] yet he mostly presents it as a channel for liberating messages in his fiction.

We might now ask ourselves why that is, and there are several possible answers: we have already mentioned his more or less direct contact with the world of local radio in Berkeley in the 1940s, which made this medium more familiar and thus less threatening than TV. There may also be a more Oedipal reason, because as a boy Dick could listen to his father over the radio. In fact Edgar Dick appeared on *The Western Farm Hour*, a program broadcast by Radio AM KNBR, "in his capacity as head [...] of the Department of Commerce's domestic trade program in California".[43] Was Dick motivated, in his love for radio and his repeated depiction of DJs, by a wish to identify with an absent and distant paternal figure?

Then we have the undeniable fact that radio was the ideal medium for music (FM radio in Dick's time offered stereo sound, something that TV did not have then), and music is the most important form of art for Dick after literature. The existence of such countercultural, politically engaged radio stations as KPFA in the Bay Area, models of an alternative way to manage mass media, may also have played an important role, as well as – maybe – sheer nostalgia for the golden years of US radio, the 1930s, when Dick, as a boy, listened to the serials on AM stations – many of which were unadulterated sf. Those were the years when the United States were frightened and shocked by Orson Welles' fake commentary of an alien invasion based on H.G. Wells' *The War of the Worlds*,[44] which superimposed one of the early classics of sf onto the fear of an oncoming world war (Welles' adaptation is ominously set in 1939, the year in which there would be another, not-at-all science-fictional invasion, that of Poland by Nazi Germany), and it is quite difficult to imagine that Dick, ten at that time, was not struck by the program or the subsequent clamour about Welles' media feat.

Those are also the years in which US radio broadcast *The Amazing Interplanetary Adventures of Flash Gordon* and *The Further Interplanetary Adventures of Flash Gordon*, a week-by-week adaptation of the Sunday Flash Gordon strip (1935-36); to this serial we should surely add the longer-lived *Buck Rogers*, which was aired four times a week from 1932 until 1947. Radio was instrumental in spreading sf imagery when Dick was a boy, and was surely more powerful than cinema, whose ability to display alien worlds and other science-fictional mirabilia was limited by the state of the art. Radio, based solely on language, sound effects and music, was free to evoke what cinema could only lamely show so many years before the digital revolution of the 1980s. We know that Dick was an unhappy sf writer who strove all his life to publish his non-sf works (which include his posthumously published realistic novels, but also some works which were not initially published as sf – *Time Out of Joint*, *The Man in the High Castle*, *A Scanner Darkly*, *VALIS* – but had to be reprinted as sf for lack of commercial success in the mainstream market); yet he began as a fantasy/science-fiction practitioner, and he was well aware that it was sf which paid the bills and allowed him to publish. No wonder then if radio, which had brought sf to him when he was a boy, was felt to be a more friendly medium than TV or cinema (the same may be said about the other non-visual media available in his lifetime, vinyl records and magnetic tape, which provided him with his beloved classical and renaissance music and those female singers he cherished, such as Linda Ronstadt and Grace Slick).

Our exploration of radio in Dick's fiction has raised at least two important issues. First, we should always read his sf and his realistic works together, regardless of genre boundaries, as they were written by the same man. As we have seen, the theme of radio and DJs is present on both sides of the genre border, and a transversal interpretation, which aims at following a given theme through several works, must necessarily explore Dick's non-sf works. Also interrogations

of other classical Dickian themes (such as empathy vs. schizophrenia, paranoia, music, marital relations, family ties, simulation, etc.) might benefit from an enlargement of the corpus (too often limited to the six or seven purportedly major novels).

Second, there is still much to be understood about the role played by mass media in Dick's fiction. His novels and short stories were written in the years in which the development of a new medium (television) was contributing to the creation of that mass-media-saturated space which is today defined by the term "mediasphere"; that is, the collective ecology of the world's printed, electric or electronic media, from newspapers to the blogosphere. Dick managed to depict the interaction of individuals and groups and media, and the interactions (and competition) between different media; but his fascinating explorations of the mediasphere cannot be traced by means of sweeping generalisations and/or the nonchalant application of the latest form of "th'ry" which is fashionable in some (luckily not all) academic circles; they ask instead for a close reading of his fiction, possibly in a transversal fashion, which may understand what roles are played by each medium in each text. My survey of how radio appears in Dick's fiction and what it actually broadcasts is just a beginning; the role played by vinyl records or magnetic audio tape should be analysed too, or the use of cinema/TV as a means of entertainment and political propaganda but also as a surveillance device (as in *A Scanner Darkly*); not to mention the increasing presence of computers as providers of virtual reality (as in one of Dick's last and most impressive short stories, "I Hope I Shall Arrive Soon" [1980]). But I leave this to other PKD scholars, in this old-fashioned medium (printed texts) or others.

(ENDNOTES)

1 I love radio because it reaches people / Enters their homes and talks to them / If a radio (station) is really free / I like it even more as it sees the mind free (my translation).

2 Fredric Jameson, "After Armageddon: Character Systems in *Dr Bloodmoney*" (*Science-Fiction Studies* 2, [1975]), rpt. *Archaeologies of the Future: The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions* (London: Verso, 2005), pp. 349-62, at p. 360-1.

3 Darko Suvin, "Goodbye and Hello: Differentiating Within the Later P.K. Dick," *Extrapolation* 43,4 (2002), pp. 368-97, at p. 395.

4 For a discussion of media in Dick, cf. Christopher Palmer, *Philip K. Dick: Exhilaration and Terror of the Postmodern* (Liverpool: Liverpool UP, 2003); Gabriele Frasca, *L'oscuro scrutare di Philip K. Dick* (Roma: Meltemi, 2007); Scott Bukatman, *Terminal Identity: The Virtual Subject in Post-modern Science-Fiction* (Durham: Duke UP, 1993), pp. 48-55; Jean Baudrillard, "Simulacra and Science-Fiction" *Science-Fiction Studies* 55 (1991), pp. 309-13; interesting remarks are also

to be found in the "Media" entry of Antonio Caronia and Domenico Gallo, *La macchina della paranoia: Enciclopedia dickiana* (Milano: X Book, 2006), pp. 166-70.

5 For a general discussion of the relevance of media landscape in sf, cf. John Clute and Peter Nicholls, *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction* (New York: St Martin's Griffin, Orbit, 1993), pp. 792-4.

6 This is a pivotal issue in the first part of Jameson's recent book, *Archaeologies of the Future*.

7 First formulated in his 1964 study *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*.

8 One might mention the message brought to Hawthorne Abendsen by Juliana Frink in *The Man in the High Castle*, or the cryptic messages sent by Glen Runciter to Joe Chip and his companions in *Ubik*, plus the proliferation of messages in the VALIS Trilogy.

9 Umberto Rossi, "From Dick to Lethem: The Dickian Legacy, Postmodernism, and Avant-Pop in Jonathan Lethem's *Amnesia Moon*" *Science-Fiction Studies* 86 (2002), pp. 15-33; "Fourfold Symmetry: The Interplay of Fictional Levels in Five More or Less Prestigious Novels by Philip K. Dick" *Extrapolation* 43, 4, (2002), pp. 398-419.

10 For an excellent analysis of Dick's approach to books in his own fiction – albeit limited to a single novel – cf. Andrew M. Butler "LSD, Lying Ink and *Lies, Inc.*" *Science-Fiction Studies* 96 (2005), pp. 265-80. In a more traditional vein, see also Valerio Massimo De Angelis, "Storiografie multiple in *L'uomo nell'alto castello*", *Trasmigrazioni: I mondi di Philip K. Dick*, eds. V.M. De Angelis and U. Rossi (Firenze: Le Monnier, 2006), pp. 168-77.

11 Lawrence Sutin, *Divine Invasions: A Life of Philip K. Dick* (New York: Harmony Books, 1989), at p. 53.

12 Philip K. Dick, *The Selected Letters 1975-1976*, Novato: Underwood-Miller, 1992, p. 198. In this letter to another sf writer, Robert A. Heinlein, dated August 5, 1975, Dick complains that being on a commercial radio he had "to do ads", and states that the title of his program was "Dr. Jeckyl [sic] and Dr. Haydn".

13 Gene Fowler and Bill Crawford, *Border Radio: Quacks, Yodelers, Pitchmen, Physics, and Other Amazing Broadcasters of the American Airwaves* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002), p. 32.

14 Philip K. Dick, *The Man in the High Castle*, (1962. Rpt. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1987), pp. 16, 86.

15 Philip K. Dick, *Dr Bloodmoney, or How I Got Along After the Bomb* (1965, rpt. London: Arrow, 1987), p. 23.

16 The coupling of an antiestablishment stance and a programming which was not aimed at entertaining listeners, presenting "ideas or works [...] outside the mainstream, more radical than elite" (Jack Mitchell, "Lead Us Not Into Temptation: American Public Radio in a World of Infinite Possibilities", *Radio Reader: Essays in*

the Cultural History of Radio, ed. Michele Hilmes and Jason Loviglio, New York: Routledge, 2002, pp. 405-22, at p. 410) was typical of the FM Pacifica stations.

17 One of the members of HUAC is a future President of the United States, Richard Nixon, who can be considered, as we shall see, as Dick's political nemesis.

18 Philip K. Dick, *The Transmigration of Timothy Archer* (1982, rpt. London: Panther, 1983), p. 7.

19 Jameson, op. cit., p. 359.

20 There is no documentary proof of Dick having read the story, though it had been published in several collections after 1953 and was voted by the Science Fiction Writers of America in 1970 as one of the twenty finest sf stories ever written. Yet the surname of the psi-empowered child is the same – as we shall see – as that of the evil dictator Ferris F. Fremont who manages to seize power in Dick's posthumous novel, *Radio Free Albemuth*.

21 A death which was quite shocking as the woman committed suicide (111); Dangerfield's psychological weakness, shrewdly exploited by Hoppy Harrington, may also be caused by a repressed sense of guilt.

22 This is Andrew M. Butler's opinion in his guide *Philip K. Dick* (Harpenden: Pocket Essentials, 2007), p. 44. Though this is a non-academic popular guide to the author, it has been written by one of the most accomplished Dick scholars currently active.

23 Philip K. Dick, *Time Out of Joint* (1959, rpt. Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1984), pp. 20-21.

24 Susan J. Douglas, *Listening In: Radio and the American Imagination* (1999, rpt. Minneapolis, Minnesota UP, 2004), p. 220; Eric Rothenbuhler and Tom McCourt, "Radio Redefines Itself, 1947-1962", Hilmes & Loviglio, op. cit., pp. 367-87.

25 Douglas, op. cit., p. 220.

26 See Douglas, op. cit., Chapter. 9, "The Kids Take Over: Transistors, DJs, and Rock'n'Roll"

27 It is interesting to see that during his escape on a hijacked pick-up truck Ragle listens to the messages received by the radio on board, but he misinterprets them (104); the radio might offer him vital information to make his escape successful, but Ragle is not yet psychologically ready to take advantage of it.

28 This word, derived from ancient Greek, should not scare readers who are not knowledgeable about ancient philosophy (especially Plato and the Neoplatonics), religion, medicine and psychoanalysis, as the original meaning of μ is quite simple: it originally meant "recollection, reminiscence".

29 The issue of Gnosticism in Dick has been widely discussed by several commentators, among whom one has to mention Jean-Noel Dumont, "Between Faith and Melacholy: Irony and the Gnostic Meaning of Dick's 'Divine Trilogy'" *Science-Fiction Studies* 45, (1988), pp. 251-3; Lorenzo DiTommaso, "Gnosticism

and Dualism in the Early Fiction of Philip K. Dick" *Science-Fiction Studies* 83 (2001), pp. 49-65; Carlo Formenti, "La Gnosi in Philip K. Dick", (De Angelis & Rossi, op. cit.), pp. 35-47; Gabriele Frasca, "Come rimanere rimasti: *La trasmigrazione di Timothy Archer*" (De Angelis & Rossi, op.cit.), pp. 237-60; Paolo Prezzavento, "*Allegoricus semper interpres delirat*: *Un oscuro scrutare* tra teologia e paranoia" (De Angelis & Rossi, op.cit.), pp. 225-36.

30 Sutin, op.cit., p. 296.

31 Sutin, op.cit., p. 297.

32 Philip K. Dick, *Puttering About in a Small Land* (1985, rpt. London, Paladin, 1987), p. 92.

33 Philip K. Dick, *The Man in the High Castle*, op. cit. p. 77.

34 A good example is the Mercerism hoax in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, carried out thanks to a futuristic device which resembles a TV set, and debunked by a TV chat show – which, being broadcast by television, subsequently turns out to be the instrument of another conspiracy.

35 Philip K. Dick, *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* (1964, rpt. London, Granada, 1984), pp. 138-42.

36 Suvin, op.cit., p. 382.

37 Freeform radio is a term used by radio historians to define those FM stations which – approximately from 1967 to 1973 – left their DJs free to choose what music should be broadcast and in which order, as opposed to the "top-40" radios of the 1950s and early 1960s, where programming was strictly controlled by the management. Freeform radio stations also aired unconventional opinions about politics, sexuality, lifestyle, drugs, etc., and are considered an important component of the countercultural movement in the United States. Cf. Douglas, op.cit., pp. 256-83; Michael Keith, *Voices in the Purple Haze: Underground Radio and the Sixties* (Westport CT: Praeger, 1997).

38 Philip K. Dick, *Radio Free Albemuth* (1985, rpt. London: Grafton, 1987), p. 234.

39 Obviously explaining Sophia as it is present in Dick's fiction on the basis of a single religious tradition is pointless. Dick was a syncretistic thinker who grabbed what he needed from Gnosticism (which is not a single organised religion but a family of loosely related religious traditions that we only know through fragmentary documental sources), Protestant theology, ancient Christianity, and the Jewish Kabbalah. He also drew from such maverick thinkers and scholars as his friend Jim Pike, John M. Allegro, and Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, so that all straightforward religious readings of Dick based on a single tradition always fall short of their object. Then we should never forget that Dick was basically a fiction writer, so that the religious element in his novels and stories should always be read inside the framework of his fictional text.

40 Philip K. Dick, *The Divine Invasion* (1981, rpt. London: Corgi, 1982), pp. 222-5.

41 Philip K. Dick, *The Transmigration of Timothy Archer* (1982, rpt. London: Panther Books, 1983), p. 7.

42 This is a contradiction which is not only found in Dick's fiction, but also in the works of other American writers and artists, and in most histories of US radio. I have already discussed it by reading several American novels, films, and Eric Bogosian's play, *Talk Radio*, in my essay "Acousmatic Presences: From DJs to Talk-Radio Hosts in American Fiction, Cinema, and Drama", *Mosaic* 42,1, (2009), pp. 83-98.

43 Rickman, Gregg, *To the High Castle. Philip K. Dick: A Life 1928-1962* (Long Beach: Fragments West/The Valentine Press, 1989), p. 22.

44 Broadcast by CBS on October 30, 1938, directed and narrated by Welles himself.

Hollywood and the Imperial Gothic

Johan Höglund

Introduction

Towards the end of J. M. Coetzee's remarkable novel *Waiting for the Barbarians*, a deposed, brutalized and unnamed Magistrate ponders the essence of Empire:

> Empire has located its existence ... in the jagged time of rise and fall, of beginning and end, of catastrophe. Empire dooms itself to live in history and plot against history. One thought alone preoccupies the submerged mind of Empire: how not to end, how not to die, how to prolong its era. By day it pursues its enemies. It is cunning and ruthless, it sends its bloodhounds everywhere. By night it feeds on images of disaster: the sack of cities, the rape of populations, pyramids of bones, acres of desolation. A mad vision yet a virulent one.[1]

While the focus of this passage is on the nature of Empire, it also sheds light on the relationship between imperial practice and imperial ideology and culture. The imagination of Empires is catastrophic, Coetzee argues. It revels in "images of disaster, the sack of cities, the rape of populations, pyramids of bones, acres of desolation". In fact, these images are what the Empire feeds on, what makes it strong and virulent. To survive, this Empire – which is at the same time real and of the mind – must rehearse the destruction that constantly appears to threaten to bring about its demise.

Few genres describe this destruction and its accompanying horrors better than the gothic. What Paul Brantlinger has named the "imperial Gothic" is especially fraught with apocalyptic images of disaster.[2] According to Brantlinger, the "imperial Gothic" consists of a "blend of adventure story with Gothic elements."[3] Furthermore, these novels often combined "the seemingly scientific, progressive, often Darwinian ideology of imperialism with an antithetical interest in the occult."[4] As if to make Coetzee's point above, Brantlinger also argues that "[a]pocalyptic themes and images are characteristic of imperial Gothic, in which, despite the consciously pro-Empire values of many authors, the feeling emerges that 'we are those upon whom the ends of the world are come'"[5]. In this way, the imperial Gothic is not only informed by its imperial context but also densely

catastrophic, featuring evil plans by Dracula aiming to transform London into a city of the dead in Stoker's famous novel, the apocalyptic attempt to colonise Earth by Martians in Wells' *The War of the Worlds* and the plan by an incredibly beautiful and immortal Egyptian to rule the world in *She*. To this list can be added innumerable conventional, non-gothic fantasies about French, Chinese or German military attempts to invade the British Isles.[6]

Thus, Coetzee is not the only one to suggest that the Imperial Gothic feeds the controlling frenzy of Empire by presenting it with its own worst nightmare. Similar claims have been made not only by Brantlinger, but by Elaine Showalter in *Sexual Anarchy* and by Stephen D. Arata who, in an influential paper, discusses *Dracula* as precisely a narrative that describes the potential destruction of the imperial capital through an invasion, or counter colonisation, of the (oriental) undead.[7] In other words, while it can be argued that Stoker's novel seemingly offends Victorian propriety, Dracula's intention to turn London into a city inhabited by his undead servants is exactly the kind of disastrous image that the British Empire fed off of. The mad and virulent images of impending disaster that the novel conjures up nourished imperial fears and rather than questioning the imperial ethos, the story prompted the public to encourage sending more "bloodhounds" into the dark periphery of the imperial dominions.

To move from the turn of the nineteenth century to present day, it may be noted that many claim that the United States has picked up the imperial burden that began to slide off of Britain's shoulders after the First World War.[8] This is not a new notion, but since the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, it has received new currency. The question "why" that was voiced by so many as the Twin Towers crumbled has been answered partly with "Empire". In other words, it has been argued that the United States was attacked because it has taken the role of an Empire and is trying to mould the world according to its material, financial, religious and military needs.

Many of the historians and political scientists forwarding this idea are critical of this development. Noam Chomsky and Chalmers Johnson, to name but two, view this development as a threat to what is left of American democracy, to world peace and even to the very survival of mankind. Interestingly, some that agree with Chomsky and Johnson in labelling the United States as essentially an empire view this as an inevitable and not undesirable development. Neoconservative political advisor and historian Max Boot has famously argued that American imperialism has been "the greatest force for good in the world during the past century".[9]

Meanwhile, Hollywood has been busy describing the type of disastrous images that Coetzee outlines in his novel. In countless films, we are treated to the destruction of civilisation as we know it caused by falling meteors, alien invasions, unknown viruses, strange monsters, old gothic villains reborn or, quite blatantly, by Middle Eastern terrorists. From this perspective, the current paper aims to investigate how a number of Hollywood films testify to the kind of gothic and apocalyptic obsession that can be linked to modern Empire. This paper thus

argues that the "Imperial Gothic" is alive and well in Hollywood cinema and that many films rehearse a gothic apocalypse in ways that are reminiscent of the British novel some 100 years ago. The paper furthermore contends that like the British "Imperial Gothic" most of the modern Hollywood gothic portray the destruction of modern society only to reinforce conservative notions of nation, race and gender. The main focus, however, will be to investigate the possibility that Hollywood's apocalyptic and gothic movie industry is also able to critique the imperial discourse that helped spawn these films. Whether the gothic is able to critique the conservative ideologies that often fuels them has been examined by a number of scholars, most notably Teresa Goddu who argues in *Gothic America: Narrative, History, and Nation* that "the gothic can remain continuous with official narratives, even when it apparently contradicts them. The gothic may unveil the ideology of official discourse, but its transformative power can be limited".[10] It may perhaps be assumed that for Hollywood gothic, transforming official discourse is particularly difficult. As shown in a number of recent studies, Hollywood is often dependent on financial and material aid from the military-industrial complex.[11] Even when not receiving money and orders from the Pentagon, critiquing official discourse may perhaps be a financially dangerous enterprise.

Hollywood and Empire

It should be noted that the number of recent films that deal with the rise and fall of empires, with world apocalypse and with gothic threats to the western world is absolutely remarkable: From *Gladiator* and *Troy* to *Alexander* and *Star Wars*, empire is a staple in the Hollywood diet. Furthermore, Hollywood seems particularly interested in retelling the Imperial gothic. Any number of villains from the gothic novel of a hundred years ago, Dracula, Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde, the Invisible Man, the Mummy, Dorian Gray and Haggard's She for example, have all made appearances in recent Hollywood blockbusters and more are on their way.[12] I would furthermore argue that the span of a hundred years seemingly has not separated these gothic protagonists from their imperial association. In fact, it would seem that these films make sense precisely because of this association. The more the US perceives its enterprise for global control threatened, the more eloquent these narratives become.

One person who has frequently directed films that describe the Coetzeean Imperial apocalypse through gothic metaphor is Stephen Summers, maker of the *Mummy*, *The Return of the Mummy* and, most pertinently, *Van Helsing*. Recycling a host of gothic villains such as the Mummy, Dracula, Mr Hyde, Frankenstein and the Wolf Man, Summers has created films where American heroes, operating more like CIA field agents than the protagonists of the British originals, obliterate the old monsters in the Middle Eastern or oriental settings they presumably belong to.[13] The mummy in *The Mummy* and Dracula in *Van Helsing* threaten the world with bizarre weapons of mass destruction in a grab for global supremacy. The Mummy launches his projects from the deserts of Egypt while Dracula resides in

a setting more reminiscent of Afghanistan.

In short, Summers' films come across as modern-day exercises in what Edward Said has called Orientalism.[14] From this perspective, films like *Van Helsing* are not only involved in entertaining their audience (and generating profit for Hollywood production companies) but also, and importantly, with producing a dangerous Other that can be contrasted with Western civilisation and consciousness. This oriental Other, bent on the destruction of the West for the benefit of a new (oriental) empire, can only be dealt with through excessive military violence. Thus, by exacerbating rather than challenging official discourse, these films ultimately function as excuses or justifications for actual neocolonial and military practices in the Middle East.

In this way, Summers' films are a part of what Melanie McAlister has referred to, in *Epic Encounters: Culture, Media, and US Interests in the Middle East, 1945-2000,* as a "new version of Orientalism", an Orientalism which insists that "cultural differences must structure the organization of political power".[15] From this perspective it may be argued that films like *Van Helsing*, firmly rooted in gothic narratives first published during the zenith of the British Empire, emulate the ideological content of these earlier narratives without great effort. Thus, this type of Hollywood movie repeats, perhaps automatically, perhaps as a result of conscious effort, the notion that the West has a sacred obligation to battle the insidious evil lurking within the alien geography of the Middle East.

In this way, any detailed scrutiny of Summers' films appears to second Teresa Goddu's claim that the transformative power of the gothic may be limited. Indeed, if Summers's films are transformative, they are most likely to transform their audience into subjects willing to don automatic crossbows and go out and rid the world of the evil that lurks in the vast deserts and deep caves of the Middle East. The question is whether Goddu's contention is true for all Hollywood films dealing with the gothic and the fantastic. This question is best examined, rather than finally answered, by looking at two films that mix the gothic with the fantastic: David Twohy's *The Chronicles of Riddick* (2004) and Spielberg's *War of the Worlds* (2005). While there are differences between these films, especially in terms of audience response and the make-up of the protagonists, both films were big Hollywood productions and both clearly grapple with imperial themes as they describe the Coetzeean apocalyptic colonisation of space/earth.[16] Furthermore, these two films are relevant as they seem to provide different answers to Goddu's question whether the gothic can actually transform official gothic. From this perspective, a discussion of *The Chronicles of Riddick*, while unsuccessful in the theatres, is still relevant.

War of the Worlds

War of the Worlds is not Spielberg's first venture into problems of Empire. The *Indiana Jones* films, *Schindler's List, Empire of the Sun* and *Saving Private Ryan* all deal with the clash between Western civilisations – and between Western

civilisations and their servants – in predominately exotic settings. Interestingly, after the events of 9/11, Spielberg stayed away from the imperial theme and did not direct any large-scale productions to instead focus on minor dramas through the films *Catch Me if You Can* and *The Terminal*.[17] When eventually returning to the apocalyptic theme seen in previous Spielberg films such as *AI*, *Schindler's List* and *Saving Private Ryan*, Spielberg did not advertise *War of the Worlds* as a political allegory. Even so, *War of the Worlds* earned considerable attention due to the political nature of the film.

Spielberg reputedly dropped all his current projects in August 2004 to turn H. G. Wells' apocalyptic classic from 1898 into film.[18] Wells' story has of course been dramatised a number of times before, most famously by Orson Welles in a radio version that caused widespread panic.[19] Before Spielberg's film, the most recent movie version was *Independence Day* (1996), where apocalyptic scenes of the destruction of American cities and centres of government were coupled with an overpowering dose of American patriotism.

Spielberg's 2005 version of Wells' novel is surprisingly close to the original, beginning and ending with verbatim passages from book. In the film, we see the invasion of Earth through the eyes of Ray Ferrier, played by Tom Cruise, a divorced and highly inept father of two teenage children. During the greater part of the film, Ray is running from the alien tripods while trying to save the lives of his children, in the process rediscovering his paternal instincts. The transposition of the British, late nineteenth century setting to modern day America in itself does not alter the basic narrative structure of Wells' novel. What turns Spielberg's film into a different kind of story is the focus on the relationship between the father and his children. The film ends not with the virus killing off the alien invaders but instead with a family reunion, suggesting to the audience that the story of destruction and mayhem was on some level essentially an allegory concerning parental instincts and duties.

From this particular perspective, *War of the Worlds* is a highly conservative narrative, firmly re-establishing the prominence of the nuclear family as the centre of American society. However, from other points of view it is more difficult to position the movie politically. On one level, it is a two hour long re-enactment of the trauma of September 11, and some critics have attributed its popularity in the US to the similarity in imagery between the people running from the devastation wrought by the Martian tripods and the people running from the devastation caused by the collapsing Twin Towers.[20]

At the same time, Wells' original intention with his story still looms over the film. In the opening chapter of his novel, Wells draws no uncertain parallels between his narrative and the form of colonisation Britain and many other European nations were involved in during the late-Victorian period:

> Before we judge them [the Martians] too harshly we must remember what ruthless and utter destruction our own species has wrought, not

> only upon animals, such as the vanished bison and the dodo, but upon its own inferior races. The Tasmanians, in spite of their human likeness, were entirely swept out of existence in a war of extermination waged by European immigrants, in the space of fifty years. Are we such apostles of mercy as to complain if the Martians warred in the same spirit?[21]

This passage never appears in Spielberg's film, but the force of the story, to which Spielberg stays true, is such that it is still implied. After the initial attack and chaos, the alien invaders stop appearing like (Islamic) terrorists and instead come across as invaders.[22] In a supremely gothic moment Ray observes how an alien tripod harvests and then drains people of their blood, a process that engulfs the entire landscape in a red mist. By feeding vampirically on the human population in this way, the aliens are not, in fact, out to merely disrupt society to achieve some inconceivable goal, but are instead colonisers who have arrived, much like Dracula, to feed on the supply of fresh blood supplied by the unwitting citizens of the Earth. Their aim is thus to harvest the natural resources of the Earth, not frighten the population into submission or surrender. The Darwinian subtext of Wells' original novel, which is given space also in the film, underscores this reading of both Wells' story and Spielberg's movie. In the novel, an "artilleryman", obviously informed by the socio-Darwinist and eugenic discourse of the period, explains the arrival of the aliens as a case of the fittest having come to survive the not so fit. At this same time, he explains how this is an opportunity for the human race: "We can't have any weak or silly. Life is real again, and the useless and cumbersome and mischievous have to die. They ought to die. They ought to be willing to die. It's sort of disloyalty, after all, to live and taint the race".[23] In Spielberg's version, the artilleryman is given the name of Harlan Ogilvy and he presents a similar case, arguing that the human population of the Earth now faces a superior species: "This is not a war any more than there's a war between men and maggots".[24]

From this perspective, the subtext of the original narrative, the reference to gothic counter invasion, and the focus on the Darwinian struggle for survival, routinely employed by the supporters of imperial practice, make it possible to see the film as an allegory not only of September 11, but of imperial practice in general and perhaps of American neoimperialism in particular. Ogilvy suggests that resistance of the alien invaders must be organized from underground, and he proposes that Americans must hide, Taliban-like, in tunnels and caves. In this way, the film remains torn between political defiance and obedience, at the same time celebrating official discourse and seemingly aiming to transform it by introducing images of the world and reality of the invaded and colonised. The latter aim is certainly not clearly stated at any point in the film, but the imperialist and Darwinist logic of Wells' original text manages to break through even in Spielberg's adaptation.

The Chronicles of Riddick

Unlike *War of the Worlds*, *The Chronicles of Riddick* was unpopular with the critics and did not lure many visitors to the cinemas. Also, unlike *War of the Worlds*, it did not prompt a public debate concerning its relationship to the foreign and domestic policies of the United States. Only a few critics noted *The Chronicles'* very ambivalent position towards the current historical and political situation. Of those, some perceived it is as a film that certainly attempts to transform official discourse. For example, Tomasz Kitlinski and Joe Lockard called the movie "a film of resistance" in one of the most interesting reactions to the movie.[25]

Although taking place largely in space and on different planets, *The Chronicles of Riddick* qualifies as gothic as much as science fiction partly due to the gothic architecture that characterizes most of the CGI scenery, but also because of its continuous use of traditional gothic themes and imagery. In the film, multicultural antihero and penal customer Riddick, played by Vin Diesel, is recruited to help the universe resist a quickly spreading empire known as the Necromongers. The Necromongers move from world to world, presenting each population with the option of either becoming brainwashed into worshipping the overtly fascist ideology the Necromongers adhere to or being obliterated.

Interestingly, it should be noted that unlike Cruise's errant but mending father figure in *War of the Worlds*, Vin Diesel's Riddick is devoid of familial ties.[26] In addition to this, Riddick never forms a romantic relationship with anyone; his relationship to the heroine is like that of brother and sister. This situation prompts Kitlinski and Lockard to view Riddick as "an arch-male dandy, an Oscar Wilde hunk, dripping with pheromones and bisexual Byronic seduction".[27] While families do surface in *The Chronicles of Riddick* – as they do on occasion – the film steers clear of the family-focused discourse that saturates Spielberg's *War of the Worlds*.

To continue, one of the planets invaded by the Necromongers is Helion Prime. The action on this planet takes place in an obviously Islamic city called New Mecca. Riddick arrives at the house of one of the more prominent members of this planet, the Imam Abu al-Walid. The Imam wants to convince the indomitable Riddick to take on the Necromongers, and he is still talking when the Necromongers arrive with their invasion force. Before long, the bombs start falling over New Mecca and military forces invade the streets.

The visuals of this particular phase of the movie are highly reminiscent of the CNN coverage from Bagdad at the beginning of the Gulf War in 1991. The invasion of Iraq by coalition forces started with a massive bombing campaign that included parts of Baghdad. CNN filmed the bombing and the responding ground-to-air artillery which, in a now famous phrase, lit up the city like a "Fourth of July display at the Washington Monument".[28] The same type of strangely conventional warfare is used in the pointless defence of New Mecca, creating images very similar to those actually broadcast by CNN on the morning of the bombing campaign.

From this intertextual vantage point, it is indeed difficult not to perceive *The Chronicles of Riddick* as an explicit critique of American involvement in the Middle East in general and of the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq in particular. Like *War of the Worlds*, *The Chronicles of Riddick* encourages the audience to identify with the invaded and colonised rather than with the invaders. In other words, the imagery of the invasion sequence is not only reminiscent of Baghdad at the beginning of both the first Gulf War and the 2003 invasion of Iraq; the audience is positioned not with the invader but with the invaded, and the bombs that fall in this sequence seem to target civilians rather than the military. In fact, the only real resistance that the Necromonger marines encounter comes from Riddick. In this way, the apocalyptic imagery that this film furnishes does not describe the sacking of the Empire, but the destruction of the colonised Other. By positioning the subaltern as the people being pummelled by the Necromongers' military technologies, the invading Necromongers can only be presumed to represent the modern, Western invader. Indeed, the Necromongers are culturally, ethnically and ideologically homogeneous. While the Necromongers' outfits and iconography is appears as a combination between Roman Gladiator, Fascist Chique and S&M fashion, and while their ideology smacks of the European Crusades of the Middle Ages, they represent, from this perspective, American neo-imperialism in the Middle East as much as any previous oppressive state or political ideology.

Thus, through *The Chronicles of Riddick's* seeming attempt at allegorizing the invasion of the Middle East, at casting a multicultural, sexually ambiguous and antiheroic character as the centre of the story, and by contrasting this hero with the an oppressive, ideologically conservative and militarily superior empire, the film does indeed seem to be a gothic narrative that attempts to transform, at least on a subliminal level, official discourse.

Popular imperialism

Although the Magistrate's analysis in *Waiting for the Barbarians* quoted in the opening paragraph of this paper cannot precisely be defined as political, cultural or literary theory, it certainly aligns itself with a lot of post-colonial research into the function of culture. A great deal of scholarly literature on Empire and imperialism testify to the same preoccupation of empires with their own survival and their own possible ruin in flames reminiscent of Rome at the hands of the barbarians. The pursuing of enemies and the sending out of bloodhounds that Coetzee describes was institutionalized practice during what has been termed the Age of Empire by historians. In a similar way, the Bush presidency – including the invasion of Iraq and Bush's second election campaign – was constructed around the notion of pending, apocalyptic doom.[29] When re-elected, Bush attempted to postpone, rather than finally appease, this fear of a pending doom at the hands of those who supposedly hate democracy by sending out bloodhounds in the shape of CIA agents, soldiers, prison guards, unmanned and

manned bomb planes and ballistic missiles.

However, while Bush was adept at reaching out to people through television, he did not have the appeal or the audience of Hollywood blockbusters. From this perspective, the politics of empire – or the transformation of official discourse – is much more effectively disseminated by popular culture. Again, Hollywood cinema concerned with gothic apocalypse is virtually designed to explain, retell and simplify current power politics, including US relations to the Middle East. Furthermore, judging from the many gothic narratives being retold since 9/11, Hollywood gothic seems more than keen to take on this role at the moment. Through gothic allegory the US invasion of the Middle East can indeed be cast as the battle between good and evil that the Bush administration always insisted it was. The gothic thus aids official discourse in describing the tension between the Middle East and the United States as unrelated to the American bid for global hegemony and to the socio-political situation in the Arab world.

At the same time, the realisation that the gothic may be a vehicle of official discourse may well in itself spawn interesting variation in popular culture. The gothic has always been a genre that transcends boundaries, and it is quite possible that a criticism that is difficult to express openly in the US finds a voice in gothic film. *War of the Worlds* is a good example of how such criticism is formed almost as a by-product when retelling a classic gothic story. The story of an alien invasion of the American landscape is at the same time a conservative and a radical statement, reaffirming traditional family values and regurgitating the culture of fear that has permeated the United States after 9/11, while at the same time allowing a counter-current of imperial critique through its depiction of a people suffering the ruthless exploitation of an inhuman coloniser. *The Chronicles of Riddick*, meanwhile, appears as much more radical in its refusal to confirm the conservative ethos of mainstream American politics. The film encourages its audience to identify with what would have been the gothic villain in the late-Victorian novel. Unlike the Joe six-pack, (absent) father figure of Cruise in *War of the Worlds*, the morally, sexually, politically and ethnically transgressive Riddick confronts the audience with a disturbing vision of western neoimperial practice and enlists their support not for the oppressor but for the oppressed.

From this perspective, modern visual gothic does indeed have the potential to be politically radical even when given Hollywood budgets of more than 100 million dollars. It would seem, however, that most of Hollywood's gothic big-budget productions reproduce the imperial apocalypse for the reasons described by Coetzee. In this way, the consumption of the modern, visual gothic becomes not only an innocent pastime but, in many cases, a ritual of ideological priming. Few narratives appear to aim, consciously or unconsciously, to transform official discourse. For the most part, Hollywood Gothic couples the pleasure of watching the invasion and catastrophic destruction of geographies, bodies and minds with an oppressive desire to remain on the imperial bandwagon. The images of

the raped populations, pyramids of bones and acres of desolation that saturate many movie screens today, appear more likely to feed neo-imperial desire than to critique official discourse.

(ENDNOTES)

1 J. M. Coetzee, *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980. London: Vintage, 2000), p. 140.

2 Paul Brantlinger, *The Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism, 1830-1914* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1988), p. 227.

3 Ibid

4 Ibid

5 Ibid 230

6 These novels are commonly referred to as military invasion novels or invasion narratives. The most famous example of the genre, outside Wells' science fiction adaptation, is William LeQueux's *The Invasion of 1910* (1906). See I. F. Clarke, *Voices Prophesying War 1763–1984.* (London: Oxford UP, 1966) and Johan Höglund, *Mobilising the Novel: The Literature of Imperialism and the First World War.* Diss. (Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, Studia Anglistica Upsaliensia, 1997) for a discussion of these narratives.

7 Elaine Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy: Gender Culture at the Fin de Siécle.* (London: Virago, 1990) and Stephen D. Arata, "The Occidental Tourist: Dracula and the Anxiety of Reverse Colonisation," *Victorian Studies* 33.4 (1990), pp. 621–645.

8 Max Boot, "U.S. Imperialism: A Force for Good," *National Post*, 13 May, 2003, Noam Chomsky, *Hegemony or Survival: America's Quest for Global Dominance* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2003), Chalmers Johnson, *The Sorrows of Empire: Militarism, Secrecy, and the End of the Republic* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2004), David Harvey, *The New Imperialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003) and Niall Fergusson, *Colossus: The Price of America's Empire* (New York: Penguin, 2004).

9 Boot, op. cit., p. 1. Whether the Obama presidency will transform the current trajectory of American international politics or not is too early to say. While Obama has signalled an exit from Iraq, the inertia of the system as such may prevent any sharp deviation from the current direction. Both Chomsky and Johnson have voiced concerns that even if Obama will attempt to steer US foreign policy away from what they describe as an imperial strategy, this will prove virtually impossible to accomplish as much of the executive power resting with the president is actually in the hands of what Eisenhower called the military-industrial-complex (see Chalmers Johnson, "Obama McCain and the Empire," transcribed television interview. Oct 7, (2008) <http://therealnews.com/t/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=31&Itemid=74&jumiv

al=2513>

10 Teresa Goddu, *Gothic America: Narrative, History and Nation*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), p. 2.

11 Carl Boggs and Tom Pollard, *The Hollywood War Machine; U.S. Militarism and Popular Culture* (Boulder: Paradigm Pub., 2006) and Jean Michel Valantin, *Hollywood, the Pentagon and Washington: The Movies and National Security from World War II to the Present Day* (London: Anthem Press, 2005).

12 As an example, Guillermo Del Toro is planning to direct adaptations of both *Frankenstein* and *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, see Richards Olly, "Del Toro to Ressurect Frankenstein" *Empire* Jan 3, (2008). <http://www.empireonline.com/News/story.asp?nid=21720>

13 For a more extensive discussion of these films, see Johan Höglund, "Gothic Haunting Empire," in *Memory Haunting Discourse*. Maria Holmgren Troy and Elisabeth Wennö, eds. (Karlstad: Karlstad University Press, 2005).

14 Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage. 1978).

15 Melanie McAlister, *Epic Encounters: Culture, Media, and US Interests in the Middle East, 1945-2000* (California: California U P, 2001) p.12.

16 The estimated budget for Chronicles of Riddick is $ 110,000,000 <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0296572/business> while for War of the Worlds this figure is $ 132,000,000 <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0407304/business>.

17 *Minority Report*, released in 2002, an expensive science fiction thriller set in a partly totalitarian future does ask interesting questions regarding privacy and civil rights, but it was announced as far back as 1999 and by 9/11 the film had been shot. Similarly, *Catch Me if You Can* was also planned before the events of September, 2001, making *The Terminal* Spielberg's first real post-9/11 film.

18 Anon. "Spielberg and Cruise Rush to 'War'" *Imdb*. Aug. 12. (2004) <http://www.imdb.com/news/ni0099469/>

19 Jonathan Rosenbaum, *Discovering Orson Welles* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), p. 13.

20 Mark Kermode, "Be afraid, very afraid – again". *The Guardian* and *The Observer*, 3 July, (2005), <http://www.guardian.co.uk/film/2005/jul/03/markkermode>

21 H. G. Wells, *War of the Worlds*. 1898. (New York: Bantam, 1988), p. 7.

22 From this perspective, Spielberg's film is very different from *Cloverfield*, the 2008 update of Wells' *War of the Worlds*. The poster for *Cloverfield* shows the beheaded Statue of Liberty, suggesting that the gigantic monster that pulverizes Manhattan in the film, ultimately prompting a nuclear attack on New York in attempt to deal with the infestation, is ultimately a political allegory. However, the *Cloverfield* monster never ceases to be a mindless terrorist.

23 Wells, op. cit., p. 150-1.

24 Josh Friedman, and David Koepp, "War of the Words Screenplay," <http://www.imsdb.com/scripts/War-of-the-Worlds.html>

25 Tomasz Kitlinski and Joe Lockard, "Troy, The Chronicles of Riddick, and Bush Culture" *Bad Subjects* July 23, (2004), < http://bad.eserver.org/reviews/2004/2004-7-23-6.23PM.html

26 In fact, we discover that not only does Riddick lack a family, he is the last of an entire species, the Furians, which has been all but annihilated by the Necromongers.

27 Kitlinski and Lockard, op. cit.

28 Kit Boss, "Firsthand View Of The War – CNN's Crew Outshines Rest In Baghdad" *Seattle Times,* Jan 17, (1991), <http://community.seattletimes.nwsource.com/archive/?date=19910117&slug=1261140

29 Greg Hitt and Shailagh Murray, "Fear is the Key as Election Nears", *Wall Street Journal.* 244.77 (2004), A4-0

Cryptomimetic tropes in Yoshinori Natsume's *Batman: Death Mask*

Julia Round

This article discusses the gothic and science fiction influences apparent in Yoshinori Natsume"s *Batman: Death Mask* with reference to poststructuralist criticism; in particular the notion of the crypt and Jodey Castricano"s linguistic model of cryptomimesis. After establishing a critical context for both science fiction and the gothic, it discusses the gothic nature of the superhero, whose fragmented identity and use of motifs such as the mask most clearly reference the gothic. It also relates this figure to science fiction (making reference to tropes such as the pseudo-scientific origin and alternate worlds), with specific reference to Batman as the epitome of many of these archetypal traits. It then introduces the notion of the crypt (from the work of Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok and as later applied by Jacques Derrida), and Jodey Castricano"s theory of cryptomimesis. It situates these models within the context of gothic criticism and relates them to both the comics medium and the Batman myth. Using a case study of Yoshinori Natsume"s *Batman: Death Mask* it proceeds to establish and analyse the vital role that cryptomimesis plays in the construction of this narrative by demonstrating its reliance on absence, reversal and the notion of the "other within".

Historicist approaches to the gothic argue that this literary tradition emerged from an eighteenth-century architectural trend for the medieval and subsequent parodic reinterpretations. These led the way towards an inwards turn in gothic literature towards the subversive and decadent that was aided culturally by the emergence and popularity of psychoanalysis. Conversely, a cultural materialist approach situates the gothic as a response to social trauma, defining it as an overall tendency in literature rather than a historically limited genre (Punter 1980, 14): the existence of which is simply one instance of the effects of this literary mode. This has the advantage of reconciling the gothic"s subversive elements and subcultural status with its canonical position and is continued in the work of Fred Botting, who similarly identifies the gothic"s focus on marginalised and excluded cultural elements.

Botting summarises the dual impulse the gothic provokes historically, identifying its turn from external horror (where the object of terror was objectified and cast out) to internal horror and associated notions of guilt,

anxiety and despair. Whereas eighteenth-century gothic texts located horror in the form of an outsider or mysterious external forces that could ultimately be overpowered, expelling the horror and restoring normality, later gothic works focus on the internal effects and causes of such events and resolutions reflect this. This turn is linked by many critics to the Freudian school of psychoanalysis, which relocated horror inside the psyche. The movement from external to internal can also be seen as exemplary of the Gothic"s thematic of inversion:

> If terror leads to an imaginative expansion of one"s sense of self, horror describes the moment of contraction and recoil...The movement between terror and horror is part of a dynamic whose poles chart the extent and different directions of Gothic projects. These poles, always inextricably linked, involve the externalisation or internalisation of objects of fear and anxiety. (Botting 1996, 10)

These principles affect both the structuring and content of gothic fiction. Many key elements and movements within the gothic tradition appear to be reflected in the comics medium and industry at the widest level. Historically speaking, the gothic has sustained itself through the absorption of other genres; parodying and subsuming them in the process. This process is in many ways echoed by the development of the American comics medium in processes such as retroactive continuity (the overwriting or addition of events to create a coherent character history). The gothic"s subcultural status is similarly reflected in the marketing and audience of contemporary comics, as are themes of commodification and consumerism. Finally, it could even be argued that a kind of gothic structure is apparent in comics, as the narrative is presented in a non-linear form where all moments co-exist on the page, recalling the characteristically gothic tropes of haunting and multiplicity.

In terms of comics content, the dual identity of the comic-book superhero clearly represents some features of the gothic. The underlying thematic of the gothic may best be described as a notion of reversal or inversion: it often links mutually opposing ideas such as decay/growth and fear/attraction. It also brings into play notions of postmodern duality as the internal and external are contrasted, combined or exchanged; the horror without is reflected within. The superhero"s use of multiple identities and alter egos not only represents the existence of such plural possibilities within an individual and the sustenance of the multiple by the postmodern, but can also be read as symbolising the gothic notion of constitutive otherness, where marginalised elements define the text and apparent unity is maintained only by processes of exclusion and opposition.

The fragmentation of identity apparent in the superhero genre is at the basis of this, the superhero condition. The alter ego is often directly opposed

to the superhero identity – as evidenced by the frivolous playboy Bruce Wayne (versus the obsessive Batman) or the mild-mannered, clumsy Clark Kent (versus the omnipotent Superman), and in this sense the two halves define each other. Motifs such as the mask/costume are used to sustain this divide and also support a gothic interpretation as within the industry this symbol functions both as a symbol of internal power and simultaneously as an external disguise, calling to mind the associated gothic themes of isolation and the internal/external. The mask motif can be further related to Jung"s notion of the persona as a mask that is formed during the civilisation process to hide negative character traits/the unconscious (Fordham 1966, 47).

All the above elements find a secure home in the Batman myth, more so than in any other superhero myth. References to the tradition"s most famous tropes and motifs are apparent in the character"s most basic tenets. Gotham City, the psychogeographic landscape for the Batman"s escapades, most obviously recalls the gothic both in terms of etymology and theme. Comics writer and editor Denny O"Neil has famously commented that "Gotham is Manhattan below Fourteenth Street at 3 a.m., November 28 in a cold year" (Boichel 1991, 9) and here the tropes of night-time, midnight, winter and so forth most obviously recall the gothic.

These tropes are represented in the Batman character: whose animalistic identity again recalls the night, and even notions of vampirism via the vampire bat. Again, a theme of inversion is apparent in this motif"s progression from the external to the internal. Nina Auerbach traces the development of the vampire over the last two centuries: from their origins as singular, charming f(r)iends to predators set apart and their consequent rehumanisation in the twentieth century. In contrast to their bestial depiction in early folklore (see for example the work of Carol Senf or Montague Summers), the twentieth-century vampire is sexual, decadent and humanised. Modern media have broken down the Manichaean element in their portrayal still further and, as Fred Botting comments, "The vampire is no longer absolutely Other." (1996, 178) The vampire figure has thereby been brought closer to humanity, no longer a simple outsider but now an internalised "other" that represents our darkest impulses.

Both Batman"s history and menacing appearance evoke this duality of internal/external and self/other via vampiric and satanic references – for example in his mask and cowl with its extended ears that so often appear horn-like. Batman"s whole outfit is deliberately designed to strike fear into the hearts of criminals. The underlying notion (that violent and dynamic mobsters are simultaneously "a superstitious and cowardly lot" (Finger 1939)) incorporates a further duality that recalls the gothic.

Duality, inversion and repression are therefore themes picked up in multiple Batman texts, such as Alan Moore/Brian Bolland"s *The Killing Joke*, which links psychological themes of repression and memory to the internal/

external divide, calling to mind gothic notions of inversion and reversal via psychoanalytic criticism. Although a patient"s avoidance or refusal to discuss trauma may lead a psychologist to hypothesise about repression, this can only be confirmed once the blocked memories resurface. Similarly, memories that are cherished as deeply internal and personal can also be defined as only the effect of external influences. This questions the divide between the internal and external, reversing these notions, for example as when the Joker says: "so when you find yourself locked onto an unpleasant train of thought ... *madness* is the *emergency exit* ... you can just step *outside*, and close the door on all those dreadful things that happened" (21). Inversion is apparent as madness is described as "the *emergency exit*", which leads "*outside*", whereas the "dreadful things that happened" (that is, external events), are positioned inside the metaphorical ghost train. In this way, the fragmented identities of superheroes, and specifically Batman, are linked to the gothic notions of internal/external and inversion.

The transvaluation of moral issues in the contemporary gothic can also be explained with reference to its reliance upon inversion: as notions of "evil" and "monsters" become less clear-cut, as in the case of the vampire. Again, we can see the applicability of this statement to Batman, whose methods have frequently come under attack for their brutality. For example, Frank Miller/ Lynn Varley"s *The Dark Knight Returns* tells the story of an aged Batman, set in a Gotham City where psychiatrists argue for the release of the Joker and critics badmouth Batman as a fascist and vigilante. It is also worth noting that, in contrast to the internal narrative of *The Killing Joke* (whose psychological themes seem to be those of repression and memory), Miller"s political and social agenda might be said to represent the external concerns of the superhero.

Science fiction obviously has more than a peripheral place in the world of comics. The pseudo-scientific origin has its basis in the Silver Age, as in characters such as the Fantastic Four (who gained their powers from exposure to "cosmic rays" while on a space mission) and Spiderman (whose abilities come from being bitten by a radioactive laboratory spider). This trope became popular in the 1950s, along with fantastic settings, space travel, other worlds and so forth – motifs that locate comics firmly within the boundaries of science fiction.

Although scientific tropes of this type are not particularly apparent in the Batman, the character is firmly situated in science fiction. He has no apparent superpowers and instead uses extensive martial arts training, detective skills, his intellect, technology and psychological warfare to combat crime. Although the notion of a non-powered superhero that can do what Batman does is actually in many ways *more* unbelievable than the standard superhero template, the Batman"s methods ascribe a sense of realism to the superhero. It also adds the "everyman" motif, implying that any reader could become a hero if they wanted it enough.

Batman"s reliance on gadgets and his utility belt have been exploited in many ways over the years, ranging from the ingenious to the ridiculous. The character"s tenets, however, add an extra dimension to the treatment of science fiction in this regard. The numerous genre rules integral to the superhero myth (which include the protection of innocent life at all costs, the prohibition of guns and firearms, and the rehabilitation or punishment of the villain rather than his destruction) requires that his gadgetry, rather than being effective weaponry, in fact prevents deadly force and, in this respect, "fiction" is privileged over "science".

Yoshitomo Natsume"s *Batman: Death Mask* addresses the combination of gothic and science fiction Batman represents, referring to Batman"s extensive training in Japan during his youth and tying the emergence of his secret identity to a longer historical tradition of the Oni, a demon from Japanese folklore: humanoid, masculine and often pictured with horns. *Batman: Death Mask* is set in contemporary Gotham where Batman investigates a series of murders in which the victims" faces have been removed. The investigation takes him back to his formative years spent training in Japan and many of the characters he encounters are doubled by these memories.

This article will now explore some of these motifs in light of the gothic critical model of cryptomimesis. This semiotic reading of the gothic"s thematic structures is defined by Jodey Castricano "as textual production that is predicated upon haunting, mourning, and the return of the so-called living dead" (Castricano 2001, 32). The sense of haunting (as both a legacy and a promise) in the work allows it to resist lineation just as the gothic itself resists this sort of historical interpretation by its free appropriation of other genres and fads and by its constant evocation of the old, sustained in the postmodern present.

Castricano"s theory follows the work of Jacques Derrida in considering the subject as phantom and the possibilities of approaching language and writing as non-linear. These notions also figure in Abraham and Torok"s *The Wolf Man"s Magic Word*, a semantic discussion that identifies encrypted linguistic structures via the "cosymbol" of The Thing (as neither word nor thing-in-itself, but a mark or cipher). In "Fors" (the introductory essay to this text) Derrida further discusses the psychoanalytic elements of semantics, taking the symbol of the crypt beyond easy metaphors by exploring its simultaneous internal/external nature (for example as above, where it is hidden inside the word "en*crypt*ed"), notions of absence (as seen in psychoanalytic themes whose nature is to escape from discourse), and reversal, where that which is buried alive (such as certain emotions) is also in some ways satisfied by this process. As such, the object is defined as a thing to be deciphered according to a cryptographic structure, and narrative is viewed as an encrypting process.

These approaches appear to be consistent with contemporary cultural criticism and psychoanalysis in identifying the gothic "other within" – Punter

and Bronfen comment that the unconscious invoked by the gothic is not the kernel of the self but the other implanted within us (2001, 21). Marcus LiBrizzi takes a similar cultural materialist perspective for his consideration of the Anunnaki as modern vampires: invoking notions of the outsider/alien among us and the commodification of the self.

By linking semiotics to gothic themes, we can perceive a kind of gothic structuring within the comics medium that presents its narrative in a non-linear form (where all moments coexist on the page). The subsumation of individual story arcs within the wider plot (in this instance, of a four-part mini-series) again replicates this kind of dual narrative. However, the cryptomimetic model seems particularly applicable to the Batman character, which revolves around the notion of memories locked inside and the reversals of "secret identity" and "alter ego". *Batman: Death Mask* proceeds from this position, opening by raising the eternal question "is what"s behind the mask .... really the false identity?" (3), continuing:

> what if the batman isn"t bruce wayne wearing a mask?
> what if he exists as a completely separate personality?
> what if the real mask is bruce wayne? (11)

Of course, this question is not new to the Batman myth: after all, it can be argued that the façade of playboy Bruce Wayne is inherently false, that the "real" persona is the boy seeking justice after the murder of his parents, not the extravagant and frivolous millionaire. However, Natsume offers us a different treatment, adding in the identity of George Woodbridge, the alias that Batman used while training in Japan in his early years. This alias is kept strictly separate from both his other identities: as Bruce muses: "back then ... i wasn"t bruce wayne" (15).

Natsume also redefines Batman in accordance with Japanese folklore, telling the story of an orphaned boy who lost both of his parents in a war, who was then trained by a Tengu (a goblin-like creature) so he might one day rid the world of war. The boy ended his training early, impatient to test his powers, and upon descending down into the world discovered the war had already finished. Trying to use his strength for good, he crushed many opponents, but in the process became ostracised for stirring up echoes of war and violence, so eventually returned to his mountain "as if to hide his face" (62). A mysterious masked figure reminiscent of an Oni (ogre, demon) was seen there afterwards; wearing a mask that is allegedly installed with all the fighting skills known to the young man.

Death Mask therefore proposes that, in his formative years, Bruce Wayne (known here as George Woodbridge) encounters the Oni. A spirit of this type appears to George, naming him as "my next body" (69) and they fight. Shortly after, George is asked to leave the dojo, having developed a horned shadow

(80). In this way Natsume redefines the secret identity/alter ego split: not as a divided personality, but as the other within, as both aspects of Bruce/George"s personality are taken over by the Batman/Oni. Other characters reflect similarly on this; after George has had contact with the Oni, his friends muse "it"s like he"s another person" (77). It seems clear that *Death Mask* seeks to redefine the Batman as an outside presence, a symbiotic addition to an already-divided body.

This literal representation of the "other within" is emphasised both visually and textually. Pages 70-71 show a double-page spread of George preparing to fight the spirit incarnation of Batman who is represented entirely as a black absence, a literal shadow. Throughout the comic the outlines of this figure are frequently blurred or surrounded by a lighter tone (see fig. 1): perhaps visually representing the loss of boundary between of self and other. The shadow motif is also echoed textually, as George states "by fighting my shadow ... i can take myself to the next level" (78) and his Sensei also later comments "so the shadow *is* with you" (80). At the climax of the book, Oniyasha (the masked *Oni* killer, who is later revealed to be an aged Sensei Kurosaki), literally emerges from within the skin of Agurama, the entrepreneur responsible for Sakura and Aya"s loss of fortune and who is manufacturing the death masks in the present.

This "other within" is also defined in temporal terms: in the midst of the climactic battle, while fighting the Oniyasha, Batman is transported back twenty years and finds himself incorporeal. Saying "I"ve become some kind of shadow form" (147), Batman takes on the role of the "shadow" Oni who trained the young George Woodbridge. In this way Natsume adds a temporal strand to his narration: allowing the past and present to converge. We can see a kind of gothic structuring at play as the linear narrative of the comic is revealed to be circular, revolving around a series of pivotal battles between the Batman/Oni and Bruce/George. Their fight is initially presented in Batman"s retrospective narration which reflects on his time spent training in Japan, and after this scene George"s sensei instructs him to bury these events in the past and instead to look to the future (81). When we reencounter the battle from Batman"s perspective, in the present, it is again defined as a "fight with the past" as Batman implores George instead to "fight for the future" (151). Castricano"s notion of haunting (as both a legacy and a promise) is in this way invoked through temporal references. As the comic concludes: "the present is bound up with the future... as well as the past." (194)

Similar treatment is given to standard gothic motifs such as the mask, which becomes a reversed symbol in *Death Mask*. Rather than providing a distinct identity, it merges its wearers, subsuming them into its history in a manner again reminiscent of the gothic. Instead of providing a new identity (as in the origin of Batman) it offers a return to a previous identity: that of the power and skills of the Oni. This inversion is also apparent in the title itself, whose etymology presents the object as a threat rather than a shield or disguise

Fig. 1

("death mask"). This is reinforced by the events of the narrative, as countless criminals are sacrificed to grow new death masks, their faces removed (24). Deaths such as this also find a parallel in Batman"s subconscious as he dreams of a similar event happening to him (29).

This comic also invokes a sense of duality common to the gothic, for example in the construction of these identities. "what i really am ... is ***you***" (132) says the Oniyasha to Batman, shortly before he is revealed to in fact be Kurosaki. This apparent contradiction is referenced at other points in the comic, for example in a conversation between Bruce Wayne and a shopkeeper on Japanese décor. The salesman muses on the simultaneous fragility and strength of barriers, saying: "even a single rope can divide the space between two people" (31). At the climax of the book this point is again referred to as the Oniyasha describes the barrier in his mind as "a wall that cannot be surmounted for all eternity" (160) while Batman proposes the opposite: "your own mind made that wall...so your mind... can break through it!" (161)

This duality of conflicting notions such as old/new or fear/play can be seen as another touchstone of the gothic and is referenced by other features of the text, such as the new breed of synthetic death masks that Agurama is manufacturing from the removed faces of criminals. The *deus ex machina* of hallucinogenic smoke and a fungus that can only be cultivated on disembodied human faces also invokes the pseudo-scientific, as does the reference to mass production (107). Here, factory-line production and modern marketing combines with tradition and superstition, referencing a gothic duality and perhaps even the gothic tradition"s emphasis on parody and recycling. Whether couched in terms such as nature/culture, old/new or innovation/tradition, the opposition is clear. Other scenes in the narrative, such as the flashback on page 57 where the children at the dojo pretend George has turned into an Oni, also reference this combination of mutually opposing ideas (see fig. 2). Here, the manga becomes simpler, almost parodic in style, while still invoking a combination of fear and play that recalls the gothic.

It can even be said that as a whole *Death Mask* represents this type of juxtaposition, where the combination of manga stylistics and format with American comics tropes produces an alien and futuristic effect to Western readers. This contrasts with the historical storyline that draws on Japanese tradition, producing a hybrid text that combines gothic and science fiction in equal parts.

As noted, then, the narrative of *Death Mask* utilises cryptomimetic tropes in both its structure and content. Presenting a circular narrative that relates the present equally to both the future and the past most obviously recalls this type of haunted narrative, where past and future are shown to be equal. Similarly, the superhero is re-presented, not in terms of secret identity/alter ego, but instead as a man inflicted by a literal "other within": in this instance, the shadow of the Japanese Oni, that is both himself and yet not.

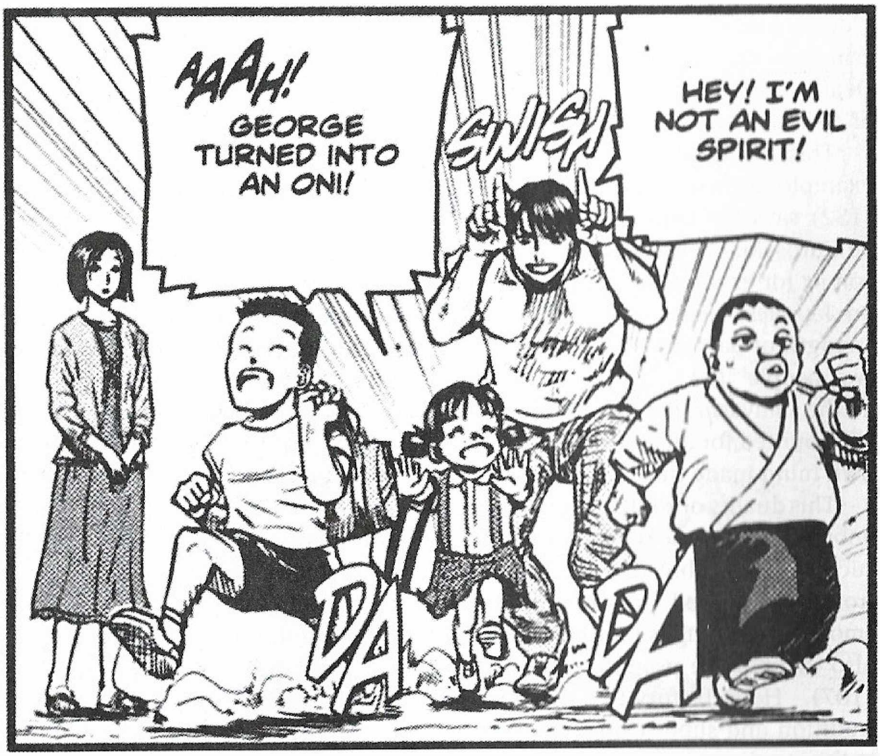

Fig. 2

It is this that most obviously references the crypt, as a place both internal and external, and which symbol is most applicable to Batman. As a figure whose every motivation can be traced back to the repressed memories locked inside, Batman seems particularly representative of this type of model. Introducing the Oni via Bruce/George"s dreams (29) points towards this sort of interpretation, which is made explicit when George asks whether the Oni has "escaped from my dreams to chase me in reality?" (50). The Oniyasha mask is presented in similar terms: having aligned himself with Batman ("what i am ... is you" (132)), Kurosaki"s decision to put on the Oniyasha mask is then presented in terms evocative of the coffin and crypt, as he decides to "open the cabinet. break the seal." (158)

Batman"s repressed memories, his origin experience, form the basis of the perpetual tension that drives the character. While *Batman: Death Mask* continues this theme, it goes beyond this simple construction, weaving a narrative that blurs past and future, self and other, and inverts and reconstructs superheroic motifs such as the mask. The story concludes by telling us that Gotham "eventually, forgot what happened" (188), again aligning the hero

and his city as memories are returned to the crypt and buried in time. This draws to a close the overarching cryptomimetic structure of the text, which thrives on its contradictions and juxtapositions. As such, it seems clear that the presentation of all these elements is cryptomimetic: reliant on absence, reversal and the notion of the other within.

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The Vampyre, the Wampir and the Vampire

Martyn Colebrook

> Sterling O'Blivion, a character in the 1984 *I, Vampire* by Jody Scott, introduces herself with a bizarre confession: 'To remain young and adorable, I must drink six ounces of human arterial blood once a month. This is not an ethical choice. I was born this way. If society wants to kill or cure me, that's not up to me'. She adds that she has been like this for seven hundred years, but she offers no apologies, no complaints.—Carol A. Senf, *The Vampire in Nineteenth-Century English Literature*.[1]

In the fiction under discussion in this paper, we live in a world of vampires as a given statement much like the one referred to above. Tom Holland and Kim Newman present their vampires in quite divergent ways but which share an underlying premise, it is a common SF premise: both speculate on how that change between our world and their proposed parallel would affect the history they are writing. The vampire in the fiction of Kim Newman is not just a metaphor for some aspect of the human condition, it is not a symbol of social disease or a revenant of the class struggle (although all these things and more may become attached to it, much as they may to any group identity); the vampire does not stand for anything other than itself: it is a particular type of historical being possessed of specific physiological attributes and a particular pathology. This is important because Newman's vampire fictions are concerned with the political aspect of the 'monster' and the 'hero' in the popular imagination, and the figure of the vampire is one around which such categories become blurred.

Kim Newman's *Anno Dracula*:

Part 1: *Anno Dracula* the Macrocosm: King Vampire

In *Anno Dracula* we are presented with a universe where Stoker's novel is a seditious and banned Fantasy novel and the original heroes are enemies of the state because Count Dracula, King Vampire, is now also Prince Consort to Queen Victoria and has ascended the throne of the British Empire. In other words, he has become the ultimate subversive insider: a foreign national without legitimate claim to the British Royal family who has established the British

state as his own: nineteenth-century Britain is thus becoming Draculaen rather than Victorian. What Dracula is, as King Vampire (in Van Helsing's words from Stoker's text), is the sole representative of a second Royal family in England at the turn of the century. England has its Queen, Stoker has simply introduced its unseen (unportrayable) King; a king obsessed with railway timetables and property ladders, with hoarding ancient gold and acquiring further wealth through the exploitation of others. He is the darker, rejected and repressed shadow of Royalty's glittering pageantry; an unrealised doppelganger to the British self-presentation as an Imperial power. In Newman's version this is made much more explicit, suggesting that Stoker's novel is not merely a Fantasy but is actively subversive of the central culture.

Kim Newman's intellectual context for writing *Anno Dracula* is a complex one, but one that is also very familiar to readers of SF: in this universe, all of the characters from novels, plays and related fictions which are contemporaneous to Stoker's *Dracula* share the same fictional timeline. This concept is based upon a model used by SF writer Philip José Farmer to unify the fictional exploits of different characters, known as the 'Wold Newton' family: Farmer's original Wold Newton proposed that all of the ancestors of the pulp heroes of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries had shared exposure to some sort of radiation while passing through Wold Newton in Yorkshire in 1795, when a meteorite is recorded as having fallen. This device is more commonly recognisable as the comic book crossover, unifying heroes whose adventures could plausibly overlap, and has been used most iconically to deconstruct Victorian heroes in Alan Moore and Kevin O'Neil's *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* and their history of the pre-Victorian League, *Black Dossier*.

As in these other fictions, Newman's approach generates a much wider series of cultural interactions than would be available only using *Dracula*. It creates other, discrete nodes of power relations within the city of London which Newman's characters must negotiate between in the midst of Dracula's Britain where the laws are becoming increasingly harsh and repressive, invoking the irony of the pun on 'draconian'. Newman's Dracula is a feudal head of state in every respect. Modernity is merely a means to the end of creating a society in his own image. Resisting Dracula from within the British establishment, the operatives of the Diogenes Club, the same one of which Sherlock Holmes's brother Mycroft was a member. Newman's work, at this point, correlates with Chris Baldick and his critical assessment of the Gothic, which suggests that Gothic tales evoke

> 'a fear of historical reversion; that is, of the nagging possibility that the despotisms, buried by the modern age, may yet prove to be undead' (Baldick 1992 xxi)

Dracula symbolises this fear through his ascedancy and his status within British society. Similarly in Holland's novels, the figure of the vampire and its

easy assimilation into the upper echelons of London society come to reinforce this 'nagging possibility'. Both Newman and Holland are writing novels which engage 'permanently in a phantasmatic dialogue with the past'. (Nead 2000: 8)

In *Anno Dracula* Newman toys with the different interpretations of *Dracula* as they have appeared in the cinema and literature, constructing from a bricolage of their elements which forms a composite-Dracula. This technique extends far beyond the body of the vampire Count and into the form of the fiction itself. Newman is writing Dracula into a multiverse of existing fictions, his own and others, following the use of this technique in the work of British 'New Wave' author Michael Moorcock. Moorcock developed the linking device of multiple universes within an overarching multiverse from the common SF heritage of alternate or parallel universe narratives as a means of unifying the themes and interests of his fictional heroes. What we are presented with in the stories of Kim Newman in general is a similar structure of linkages which connects the characters from his different narratives with one another and with certain common tropes and motifs. Much of what Newman presents is taken directly from the hundreds of adaptations of Stoker's novel to the silver screen, each flavoured with the socio-historical circumstances of its development. The modernity of the ostensibly medieval Dracula is part of the point in Stoker which Newman accentuates and extends, making one of the central principles of Dracula's power; he is as "medieval" and as "modern" as the British Empire, in so far as he seeks to both enter (Stoker) and seize control of (Newman).

Part 2: *Anno Dracula* the Microcosm: Whitechapel

The central characters of *Anno Dracula* are: Geneveive Dieudonné, a vampire who is the 'get' of Chandagnac, and who is thus older than Dracula but appears to be a sixteen-year old, and Charles Beauregard, an agent of the Diogenes Club, a secretive group of investigators.

They are concerned with the maintenance of normality and social order on a day to day level, in this instance on the streets of Whitechapel. The most immediate threat to ordinary social cohesion in this instance is an altogether different type of predator: a serial killer murdering women on the streets of Whitechapel. This particular killer's modus operandi is to murder and mutilate young female vampires with a silver edged weapon, earning him the sobriquet 'Silver Knife'. In a rewriting of the universe of Stoker's *Dracula*, we witness the 'Silver Knife' killings through the phonograph diary of the killer, Dr Seward.

The connection between the macrocosm of the political landscape with the microcosm of the slum neighbourhoods is summarised by Genevieve:

'Bloodline meant little to the vampires of London, Genevieve knew. Even at a third, tenth or twentieth remove, they all had Vlad Tepes as father-in-darkness.'[2]

In London, 'vampire' means 'Dracula'; the political dimension of vampirism, and its symbolic placement, is fused in the popular imaginary with the cultural dimension, where being a vampire is merely a fact of 'life'. Newman is offering

up the contrast between the imaginary function of the vampire as symbol and his posited reality as a critique of symbolic interpolations of identity.

Silver Knife, as potential folk hero and figure of the mob, recalls Burke's *Reflections*, suggesting that there is a tendency for violence to become valorized involved in the process of making folk heroes which is not merely analogous to the 'monstering' of symbolic out-groups but is directly proportionate to it and even feeds upon it. In this, the serial killer Silver Knife also echoes one of Newman's other problematic personifications of the contrary spirit of the mob, Dr Shade. The story in which he appears, 'The Original Dr Shade' (1990), concerns a populist comic book hero whose politics lie 'somewhat to the right of Bulldog Drummond' (Newman, 'Dr Shade') and in whose name a neo-Nazi cult of 'Shadeheads' springs up in late 1980s London. Dr Shade begins as an imaginary phantom and comes to a kind of incarnation as his myth is taken up, initially by small circles of extremists and then later by more 'mainstream' anti-immigration media. Dr Shade, as a fascistic 'hero', represents the ambiguous, dangerous face of populism, of the judgement of the popular imagination, which the characters in *Anno Dracula* fear 'Silver Knife' might become: a 'vampire slayer', the brutal, psychopathic element lost beneath the symbolism.

Newman's chosen Ripper, Dr Jack Seward, is aware that his encounter with Dracula has 'made a monster of me'.[3] He is not only aware of the symbolic meanings attached to his actions by the press but also how those actions must appear both mythically and politically symbolic in the popular imagination:

> And I *am* a monster, Jack the Ripper, Saucy Jack, Red Jack, Bloody Jack. I shall be classified with Sweeney Todd, Sawney Beane, Mrs Manning, the Face at the Window, Jonathan Wild: endlessly served up in *Famous Crimes: Past and Present*. Already there are penny dreadfuls; soon there will be music hall turns, sensational melodramas, a wax likeness in Tussaud's Chamber of Horrors. I meant to destroy a monster, not become one. [4]

This is then confirmed by a discussion between the Prime Minister, Polidori's Lord Ruthven, and another former member of Stoker's 'crew of light', Lord Godalming. Ruthven says 'When Silver Knife is hoisted to the stake, I want a dead madman not an unkillable legend.'[5] He compares the serial killer stalking Whitechapel with Billy the Kid, saying 'Squalid murder and pathetic crime are forgotten and the American West has a range-riding vampire demigod.'[6] The political danger of symbols is thus stated explicitly within the seat of government in the private chambers of Downing Street. This scene has several counterfictional points of contact, among them *Count Billy the Kid versus Dracula* (dir. William Beaudine, 1966), and returns us to one of this chapter's central points of critique: the difference between 'heroes' and 'monsters' and the process of mythic valorization.

Counterfictionality and meaning in Kim Newman

Newman emphasises the political content of symbolic attribution. He achieves this by a process of overdetermination and an excess of meaning which leads towards necessarily complex readings of his texts as cultural palimpsests composed of densely allusive writing and intertextual cultural borrowing. Matt Hills' article on Newman describes this as 'Counterfictionality' which he derives from the widespread use of counterfactual or 'possible world' writing. Hills writes:

> We need a forth term—beyond factual, counterfactual and fictional—in order to address a specific type of fictional world [....] Previous literary-critical appropriations of possible worlds theory, I suggest, have failed to take seriously the intertextuality of fictional worlds as well as their divergence from 'factual' or 'historical' interpretive givens.[7]

Hills discusses the ways in which 'text worlds' and 'real worlds' interact in terms of a cognitive overlapping of 'extra-textual encyclopaedic knowledge' with experiential knowledge. In this sense, what Hills terms 'counterfictionality' is in opposition to 'metafictionality'. To read counterfictions to take into account an interpretive consciousness of *allusion* within and between texts which does not offer a metafictional break with the fantasy world of the fiction, such as is found in John Fowles, Jeanette Winterson or, more spectacularly, in Alasdair Gray, but which nevertheless signposts how the text can be situated in respect to other fictions. Counterfictional reading is reading fictions *as fictive texts*, within a universe of other contemporaneous fictive texts, *and* as self-contained universes of fiction simultaneously.

This differentiation might be used to partly characterise the break between 'literary' and 'genre' texts: 'genre' respond to counterfictional readings because they are expected to maintain their fictional universe, where literary texts are more commonly expected to situate themselves metafictionally against the background of literary textuality. This might also be thought of as a presumed, though not always actual, differentiation between 'postmodernist' texts and non-postmodernist texts: that they either take their textuality 'seriously' or their fictive universe 'seriously'. It is not, as Newman's texts demonstrate, a rigid divide, but it does offer some interesting perspectives on the reading and production of texts and on the meanings of intertextual allusion. I suggest that Newman's understanding of and use of 'postmodernist' allusion is based on a particular genre history and that it is fundamentally orientated towards political reading. Hills' article quotes a section from one of Newman's rewritings of *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* which can give us a spur towards such an interpretation: where in 'Henry Jekyll's Further Statement of the Case', Jekyll says 'ask yourselves: what manner of society is it that will concede the possibility of one man transforming entirely into another through the agency of a magic potion, but shuts minds

to the actuality of love [...] between one man and another?'.[8] Hills calls this 'Jekyll's performance of literary-theory-as-commentary' (ibid.) and observes that literary theory has a particularly uncanny place within Newman's writing, but the process does not stop with the literary: this is cultural commentary which applies to all semiotic readings of the social in general.

Newman's relationship with social allegory and the attribution of symbolic meaning can best be illustrated with reference to the Ripper sub-plot of *Anno Dracula*. In borrowing one of the most overdetermined London narratives of factual or fictional literature Newman demonstrates how the literary critical content of his work operates in tandem with his historical-cum-cultural critique. An example which typifies this is the matter of the mysterious chalked message which appeared close to the site of the historical murder of Catherine Eddowes: 'The Juwes are The men That Will not be Blamed for nothing'. For 'Ripperologists' and authors of 'Ripperature', this writing on the wall has been taken to represent both historical anti-Semitism and transhistorical conspiracy theory, Stephen Knight's *Jack the Ripper: The Final Solution* offers the suggestion that it is part of a Masonic element, something Alan Moore and Eddie Campbell's graphic novel *From Hell* extended to draw together its exploration of the strata of British society. Newman emphasises the historical in the relation of the two by literary allusion. Here is *Anno Dracula*:

> THE VAMPYRES
> ARE NOT THE MEN THAT WILL BE
> BLAMED FOR NOTHING[9]

Here the misspelling of 'Jews' becomes the archaism of vampires, linking the idea of anti-Semitic libel to the libellous history of Polidori's 'The Vampyre' and the figure of Lord Ruthven. The history of anti-Semitism as it surrounds the Ripper murders is doubly reformulated by Newman in ways that are consistent with studies of racism: objectified peoples find themselves the subject of a process of endless slippage between symbolic and literal attributions. Here is the self-contradictory rhetoric of racialist politics dissected by Mark Neocleous from *The Monstrous and the Dead: Burke, Marx, Fascism* addressing the Nazi and Fascist description of Jewish people as object:

> [T]his object possesses contradictory qualities: a communist intent on overthrowing private property and yet also a capitalist consumed by greed; a figure with too much public influence and yet who retreats into his private sphere; a force behind the institutions of the modern state and yet which also threatens to abolish them once in full control; an avant-garde artist with extravagant and subversive values and yet also a provincial petty-bourgeois white-collar worker; pacifist and yet belligerent imperialist; homosexual ruining strong masculinity and yet

> seducer of Aryan women. [....] The enemy begins to look like the most complex hybrid ever seen and, partly because of its complexity and partly because of the assumption that it has hidden powers and agents secreted everywhere, the fear is constantly being interpreted and reinterpreted, a process which confirms and intensifies the fear.[10]

Christopher Frayling demonstrates that the racist language and semiotic slippage which surrounded the treatment of Jews and foreigners in the popular press of London in 1888 demonstrates a similar process of endless reinterpretation:

> He was a Jewish agitator, an Irish revolutionary, a 'low class Asiatic', a Thug, a Russian Jew seeking to discredit the English police, an insane Russian doctor, 'a low class Polish Jew', a Polish Jewish shoemaker, King Leopold of the Belgians, and a Portuguese sailor. Anyone who could write 'Mishter Lusk' must be Irish. Anyone who could chalk up the 'Juwes' message must really be Jacob the Ripper. Anyone who could mutilate in the Ripper's fashion must either be Portuguese (according to Napier's *History of the Penninsula War*, it was a 'characteristic' of them), or a Malay running amok ('probably primed with opium'). He was certainly not one of us.[11]

Newman's text has an ambiguous relationship with symbolism and meaning. It is concerned with emphasising that in real society the attribution of symbolic values to a specific group is often a function of racism, extremist politics or sectarianism, and that, although it can be a positive force, it is something which is at least to be held in suspicion. On the other hand, his own use of the vampire is one which is clearly aiming for a kind of universal symbolism as a means of describing the 'human condition'.

Conclusions

While the economic reasons for writing counterfictions seem to be more obvious (that they can act as sequels and create spin-offs), their actual textual functions are not constrained by such factors except in cases where they are written within pre-existing (and corporately owned) 'continuities', such as comic book or TV series 'universes' (Batman/Buffy). Literary counterfictions, such as Newman's, depend on characters and stories which have passed into the public domain but also, crucially, maintain a strong position within the popular imagination.

Counterfictionality extends to the phenomena of contermporary genre fictions in general, whether we consider them as 'genre', 'mode' or 'field' there is a certain shared frame of reference and sense of response within a particular network which Newman's fictions play upon. It is a characteristic which is shared by the writing of a large number of contemporary writers and has a

long history, of which Newman's stories demonstrate a considerable awareness. His story, 'The Man Who Collected Barker' about an obsessive completist who collects illicit limited editions of Clive Barker's *Books of Blood* in unique (and sinister) bindings. First, and most immediately, it is a response to the 'wraparound story' of Barker's collections, where the skin of the man who has been written on by the ghosts and monsters featured in the collection, is murdered and flayed so that his skin can be taken by a collector: Newman's story ends with a logical extension of the 'ultimate' Barker edition of *The Books of Blood*, one bound in Barker's own skin (the concept of which apparently amused Barker considerably). Second, the title and structure of Newman's story allude intertextually to an earlier story which is about a similar relationship between two American Horror writers, Robert Bloch's 'The Man Who Collected Poe'. In Bloch's story an obsessive completist fan of Poe has 'collected' and resurrected Edgar Allan Poe so that he can 'complete' his canon of works. Poe's posthumous works, and the story's occult hints, include reference to the work of Bloch's friend H.P. Lovecraft, while the structure of the narrative is borrowed from Poe's 'The Fall of the House of Usher'—Newman's story takes on a similar shape. That his ideal reader will have a knowledge of (at least some of) these layers of intertexts can be presumed by Newman because these references are the networks by which 'genre' fictions operate.

Lovecraft is one of the primary examples of this, his fictions have been continually referred to intertextually or re-written counterfictionally by contemporary writers. To just refer to three examples: we have anthologies such as *Cthulhu 2000* (ed. Jim Turner) where the forms and tropes of Lovecraft's Cthulhu Mythos are interpolated into widely variant scenarios, such as a near-future Japan in Roger Zelazny's '24 Views of Mt. Fuji, by Hokusai', where the transformation narrative of 'The Shadow Over Innsmouth' acts as *mise en abyme* for a story of cyberpunk apotheosis; D. M. Mitchell's anthology, *The Starry Wisdom: A Tribute to H. P. Lovecraft* contains stories which combine Lovecrafian references with quite avant-garde interests, such as Alan Moore's 'The Courtyard' where language itself becomes Cthulhuian and Grant Morrison's auto-Freudian narrative 'Lovecraft in Heaven'; while Michael Reaves and John Pelan's crossover anthology, *Shadows Over Baker Street*, as the title suggests, combines Holmesean and Cthulhuian characters—the lead story of this collection, Neil Gaiman's Hugo award-winning 'A Study in Emerald', presents a Wold Newtonian world similar to that of Newman's *Anno Dracula*.

Such observations can of course be extended further still, to take in the various phenomena of 'fan-fiction', but what these extensions demonstrate is really an underlying common thread which is very strongly a part of the popular taking up of any popular cultural object, such as vampires: the sense of investiture within a shared imaginary space which is where fictional characters interact, and which is composed of 'canonical', 'non-canonical' and 'anti-canonical' fictions. What these manifestations of intertextual reference and counterfictionality all

share is a basic assumption that the reader will accept both the allusive nature of the story, revealing the literary universe in which the text moves as a text, while simultaneously accepting the fictive universe of the story *as if* it were a universe unto itself. Metafiction in this context does not break with or otherwise disrupt the narrative: metafictional elements in counterfictional modes do not predominate over narrative events but operate in parallel by resonating with established fictions. It is something which might be thought of as an opposing current within 'genre' fictions which resists the postmodernist breaches common to texts which fall under such various terms as 'historiographic metafiction' and 'magic realism', or perhaps, 'experimental fiction' while performing markedly similar textual gestures of self-reference, pastiche and parody.

Tom Holland and *The Vampyre*

Moving from Newman to Holland provides an opportunity to illustrate the intertexts at work within Tom Holland's fiction and outline the ways in which his novels differ from Kim Newman's with regard to technique and motivation for the particular style of writing that Holland employs. Unlike Newman, whose approach targets and rewards a specific type of readership, Holland is ostensibly writing for a more conventionally literary audience and this remains the distinction between the two novelists; these two interpretive communities establish markedly different relationships with the idea of postmodernism.

In an interview with George T. Dodds in *Science Fiction Online*, Tom Holland revealed insights into his writing practice and how *The Vampyre* is representative of his oeuvre. Holland claimed that "I'm very interested in historical anachronism" (Dodds 1999) and this presents a significant commentary and assessment of his work in relation to the principles discussed within this paper. The term 'historical anachronism' suggests that the author is relocating an existing narrative into a new time period so it appears to be 'out of joint'.

Later in the interview, Holland responds to a question about why he uses 'historical anachronism' as a technique in his fiction. The answer supports the conclusions drawn from the work of Newman and Holland:

> The reason I chose that approach was a dislike of realism. I'm not remotely interested in realism as a narrative technique, and actually I think that it's those who insist on it who are living in the past. The present is just too fractured, too complex, too... well... post-modern. The past, like the future, is where the present can be refracted. That's what makes the boundaries between genres, and still more between genre and supposedly "literary" fiction, so frustrating: science fiction, horror, magical realism, whatever, all have the same impatience with the "photographic" approach to reality. (Dodds 1999)

This dissatisfaction with and determination to move away from realism is

important when evaluating Holland's work in relation to Newman's. The lack of relevance identified in 'realism' is connected with its inability to represent the contemporary and the postmodern. Holland's idea of 'refraction' is also pertinent when exploring texts which assimilate history with fiction. By using the dispute between Polidori and Byron as a framing device, Newman is able to refract and extrapolate this into *The Vampyre*, a technique he uses equally as effectively in *Supping with Panthers*. This novel (published after *The Vampyre*) engages with *Dracula* and other sources in a number of ways: throughout the different narratives there are sequences of composed letters which mimic those in Stoker's novel, characters such as Dr John Seward and Lord Ruthven have prominent roles throughout and Holland repeats the principle of *The Vampyre* by modulating his work on different foundational texts – in this case the concluding narrative is conducted by the greatly overdetermined Gothic narrative of Jack the Ripper. The refractions at work are appropriate for a historical novelist aiming to satisfy the requirements of his audience in that they provide familiar context and detail but also demonstrate an awareness of contemporary literature's techniques. Returning to Holland's interview, his comments concerning frustrations with the porous and permeable boundaries between genre and 'literary fiction' are also congruent with the argument concerning Kim Newman in that Holland challenges and problematises the apparent distinctions between these two critical positions. Fundamentally, Holland's technique involves a process where he 'takes a period of the past, and then removes its bones as though he was filleting fish. What he puts back in place of the bones is a *new* set of bones: and they fit the frame but they are carrying some sort of disease, maybe, that will leak into the historical present around them. At the very least they will make the historical period that he describes have a strange limp.' (Dodds 1999) The process at work here leads to novels which are a collage of referents, allusions and intertexts but the idea of 'diseased bones' leaking into the historical present does acknowledge a speculative edge to Holland's work and adds to narratives that are fusions and hybrids. Latour argues:

> Gothic tropes can be exemplary symptoms of the horrors that beset an uncomprehending modernity, or can act as devices that acknowledge London as (in Latour's term) a polytemporal assemblage. In this set-up the past 'is not surpassed but revisited, repeated, surrounded, protected, recombined, reinterpreted, and reshuffled' (Latour 69 and 72)

The representation of London in these terms demonstrates how the Gothic is characterised, in part, by fracturing and fragmentation, as well as the multiple time-shifts which are present in Newman and Holland's work.

Reinforcing the importance of time and its relationship with plot, Holland describes the process that led to *The Vampyre: Being the True Pilgrimage of George Gordon, Sixth Lord Byron* (1995):

> What interests me in the supernatural," Holland said, "is its cultural specifics. What I don't like about a lot of vampire fiction, or a lot of horror fiction in general, I suppose, is the idea that you can just transpose the myths of one period onto another, without it being hopeless. We can't pretend that the past never happened, obviously, or a lot of writers would be out of work. Personally, I've always been interested in seeing what myths mean to specific periods. (Dodds 1999)

The 'cultural specifics' that Holland identifies correlate with the principles of Newman's practice as he reinterprets and refracts underlying myths, adding his own specific translation to the myths so that they take on a significantly different focus from their previous historical context and become relevant to the contemporary reconfigurations that Holland is undertaking.

The Vampyre uses a range of different methods to engage with and reconfigure *Dracula* (using other texts, such as John Polidori's *The Vampyre*), into a novel which integrates the source texts into an allusive narrative that conforms with Matt Hill's concept of 'counterfiction' and also uses metafictional techniques with the intention of signposting or signalling the author's awareness rather than allowing them to become the central force. This point is made by Linda Hutcheons when she suggests that: historiographical metafiction 'provides, within itself, a commentary on its own status as fiction and as language' (Hutcheon 1980: xii). Holland's work contains more elements of counterfiction than metafiction because the methods he deploys in order to highlight his sources and make use of them do not require such a brutal and self-evident break with the traditions of realism as an audience comes to expect from postmodernism.

In terms of intertextuality, *The Vampyre* makes embedded use of *Dracula* and *Frankenstein*, as a primary source for texts and characters. The two epigraphs at the beginning of *The Vampyre* indicate Holland's intentions and the foundational novels and poems which framework and inform his own writing. In a letter to his publisher Byron claims 'But I hate things all fiction ... there should always be some foundation of fact for the most airy fabric – and pure invention is but the talent of a liar.' (Holland x). This indicates the direction Holland is heading in – a referential narrative which plays with the extraneous conditions around the origins of *The Vampyre* (as ascribed to Polidori) and then moves into an interweaving of history with fiction by using the dispute between Lord Byron and his rival, John Polidori, as a plot device. Holland then moves into a retrospective narration by Lord Byron, which establishes that there are different levels of fictionality operating within the text.

Holland's text differs from *Anno Dracula* because it is located within more familiar or recognisable territory for readers. There is no underlying political premise and the narrative structures are ostensibly less complex meaning it functions as a more accessible fiction but still retains the speculative element

which links it with Newman. *The Vampyre* has a conventional beginning with the Lucy Ruthven requesting access to a crypt, St. Jude's, which is identified as being the same address as 13 Mayfair Street, owned by Lord Ruthven, to which only the solicitor can grant. The object of her search is a manuscript of Lord Byron's life which was rumoured to have been burnt upon the death of its subject. Her solicitor refuses her access to the keys until he realises she is related to the Ruthvens; her mother gained possession of the keys previously but then vanished in mysterious circumstances three days later.

As she enters the crypt, she opens a tomb and disturbs an unidentifiable creature. In the ensuing panic, Lucy is attacked by it and receives a single wound on her neck. In her haste to escape she encounters the 'bookseller' (who provided her with the papers that led her to the crypt) who attempts to take her to his master, Lord Ruthven:

> "Well, I know of *a* Lord Ruthven"
>
> 'Yes?' The man grinned encouragingly.
>
> He was the hero of a –'Yes?'
>
> Of a short story called 'The Vampyre'. But – that was just fiction.'
>
> Really? Fiction? Is that so? The man twisted his mouth into a grin of terrible bitterness. 'And who wrote it, this fiction?
>
> 'A man called Polidori.'
>
> Oh! The man grinned again, and mimicked the gestures of a formal bow. 'Such fame, such posthumous fame!; He pressed his face close to Rebecca's, the acid as thick as ever on his breath. 'And this Polidori,' he whispered, 'who was he?'
>
> 'The personal physician to …'
>
> 'Yes? Yes?'
>
> 'To Lord Byron.'
>
> The man nodded slowly. 'So he would have known what he was talking about don't you think?' (Holland 27)

This exchange is a subtle indication of the intertextual principles at work within Holland's text. That the work mentioned by Polidori was 'just fiction' does emphasise deliberate engagement with source texts. Setting traps for narrators (and readers) with comments about the status of fiction as a reliable medium for the transmission or relaying of information is a more gentle approach than the abrupt metafictional signposting of a break from realism.

There are overlaps between Newman and Holland's novels: the scenes where Dracula explains where he comes from and where Van Helsing explains that Dracula was 'in life' one of the finest minds of his generation, a scholar and a warrior who had studied alchemy and even attended 'the Scholomance, where the Devil takes every tenth scholar as his due' are used by both authors. Holland's Dracula-analogue, named *Vakhel*, expands on this and connects it to Beckford's

Vathek. Furthermore, *Vakhel's* fortress-castle owes a lot to the description of the Halls of Eblis from Vathek, a reference which is noticeably highlighted quite early in the text but his physical description constitutes a cross between Vathek and Dracula.

Whereas Newman is concerned with the political aspect of the 'monster' and 'hero' in popular imagination, Holland's own creatures depart radically from a number of the different historical-literary constructions which he became aware of during the writing period leading up to *The Vampyre*. Returning to his interview with *SF Online*, Holland suggests (commenting specifically about vampires):

> The whole point is that the vampire as we have inherited him today is inherently a literary creation, not a creature of myth or folklore at all. The Polidori model of the vampire – aristocratic, sexually attractive, consciously sadistic – really had very little to do with the peasant superstitions of Central Europe and the Balkans, and in fact, even today, the roots of that model in 19th century Romanticism are so strong that it's very hard to ignore them. Vampires ALWAYS need a peasantry to terrorize. That was Polidori's great insight. (Dodds 1999)

With regard to one of the underlying premises of this chapter, 'vampire' comes to function differently according to the author, period and text in question. The vampire that Holland comes to understand and write about is, notably, a 'literary creation' who has been reinterpreted according to specific cultural norms and requirements. Holland's own relationship to Stoker's work highlights that intertextuality and the reworking and translation of sources, is not just a phenomenon ascribed to postmodern texts. Indeed, it is arguable that the nature of a portmanteau form such as the Gothic allows for such reinterpretation, dialogue and renegotiation of canonical texts into the historical present, as Holland achieves in his work.

(ENDNOTES)

1 Senf, Carol A., *The Vampire in Nineteenth-Century Enlish Literature* (Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1988), p. 1.

2 Newman, Kim, *Anno Dracula* (London: Pocket Books, 1993), p. 14.

3 Newman, *Anno Dracula*, p. 221.

4 Newman, *Anno Dracula*, pp. 221—222.

5 Newman, *Anno Dracula*, p. 167.

6 Ibid.

7 Hills, Matt, 'Counterfictions in the Work of Kim Newman: Rewriting Gothic

SF as "Alternate-Story Stories"', *Science Fiction Studies, vol. 30* (2003), p. 439.

8 Newman, quoted in Hills, p. 445.

9 Newman, *Anno Dracula*, p. 214.

10 Neocleous, Mark, *The Monstrous and the Dead: Burke, Marx, fascism* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2005), pp. 73—74.

11 Frayling, Christopher, 'The House that Jack Built: Some Stereotypes of the Rapist in the History of Popular Culture' (pp. 174—215), from *Rape* ed. Sylvana Tomaselli and Roy Peter (Oxford: Blackwells, 1986), p. 198.

Reviews

H. G. Wells in Nature, 1893-1946: A Reception Reader

Edited by John S. Partington (Peter Lang, 2008, x + 514p, £55.70)
Reviewed by Patrick Parrinder

It may be there are only three possible views of science fiction, the classical, the romantic or Gothic, and the grossly cynical – though the last of these, which dismisses sf as commercial pap for the adolescent masses, clearly has no purchase with *Foundation* readers. In the classical view, sf is *science* fiction, an intellectual adventure or it is nothing. It is more than just a literature of ideas, since the ideas are built into the narrative framework using the resources of allegory and poetic symbolism. Committed to rational speculation and the scientific outlook, classical sf is forward-looking where romance fiction is necessarily backward-looking. It is the modern medium for probing the future and investigating our predicament and that of the universe.

To write good sf, on this view, you should have, if not a degree in physics, at least a lively interest in contemporary scientific debate and a sense of its imaginative significance and intellectual ferment. You will probably be a reader of *Nature* or the *Scientific American*. You may feel it your mission to break down the boundaries of professional specialisation and to communicate the excitement of new research to an excluded and often indifferent public. You are, first and foremost, an educator – even if your means of education is by telling stories.

All this may sound like a description of H. G. Wells (though it applies just as well to Asimov, Clarke, Lem, and many others); but in fact works like *The Time Machine*, *The Island of Doctor Moreau* and *The War of the Worlds* are too many-sided not to be amenable to romantic and Gothic interpretation. Wells himself, however, spilled over on the classical side, setting up as a public educator and leaving behind the ironies and ambiguities of his early sf. The classical view of these works finds its strongest support in what may be the one essential text in the vast secondary literature produced on this writer: the little volume (little, at least, by comparison with the work under review) of his *Early Writings in Science and Science Fiction* edited some thirty-five years ago by Robert M. Philmus

and David Y. Hughes. *Early Writings* provides direct insight into the Wellsian creative workshop – reprinting, for example, his early and abortive versions of *The Time Machine* – together with a selection of the scientific journalism that he was churning out for various publications in order to pay his bills. Until 1893, the recently qualified BSc (Lond) had been a biology teacher preparing students for university entrance; then his health broke down and he was reduced to the status of a freelance book reviewer and writer of stories. As we should expect of a former student of T. H. Huxley, his journalism shows a passionate engagement with developments in evolutionary biology; but, more than this, he rushes headlong into controversy in such fields as astronomy, anthropology, physics, psychical research, and, above all, scientific education. The journalistic life provides a crucial background to the brief, revolutionary works of fiction that poured from his pen during these crowded, frenetic years.

One of the many outlets for his articles was the British scientific house-journal *Nature*, a weekly founded in 1869 to which he remained an occasional contributor throughout his life. His fictional character William Clissold would describe *Nature* as "the best of all newspapers". Doubtless Wells was biased in its favour (and it in his) by the fact that Richard Gregory, his fellow-student and lifelong friend, became a staff writer and, later, the journal's long-serving editor. Not only did *Nature* take note of Wells's many public appearances, at the Royal Institution, the British Association, and the like, but it reviewed a large number of his books, including – most unusually – several works of science fiction beginning with *The Time Machine*. John S. Partington's authoritative collection offers a complete account of Wells's association with *Nature*, beginning with an 1894 piece on "Popularising Science" and ending fifty-two years later with the long and detailed obituary in which Gregory (who else?) described him as "the greatest international scientific educator of his times". The largest and most interesting part of this book, in fact, is not the section devoted to his own writings in *Nature*, the best of which have been reprinted before (and in some cases by Wells himself). It is, instead, the 240 pages of book reviews, including commentaries by such distinguished scientists as J. B. S. Haldane, Lancelot Hogben, E. Ray Lankester, and Hyman Levy.

In "Popularising Science", the young Wells suggested that scientific authors should study the principles of construction found in the Sherlock Holmes stories and Poe's "The Murders in the Rue Morgue". One should not expect, however, to learn about the technique of sf writing from any *Nature* contributor apart from Wells. As John Scott Haldane (the father of J. B. S.) put it in his notice of *Men Like Gods*, a reputable scientific journal was "not the place to discuss the literary merits of Mr Wells's new book". Reviewers concentrated, instead, on the author's success as a propagandist for science and on the interest his fiction might hold for scientific readers. Thus *The Time Machine* was "based so far as possible on scientific data, and while not taking it too seriously, it helps one to get a connected idea of the possible results of the ever-continuing processes of

evolution". Richard Gregory, reviewing *The War of the Worlds*, was once again anxious not to be seen to take it too seriously. "Only a writer familiar with the lines of biological development" could have conceived of Wells's Martians, yet outside the borders of fiction an extraterrestrial invasion was "hardly worth consideration". Nevertheless, as Gregory concluded with nice condescension, "scientific romances are not without a value in furthering scientific interests". When it came to a work of fiction whose intellectual content clearly did demand consideration, the reviewer's technique was simple, if brutally philistine: "Stripping off the romantic form", wrote "F. C. S. S." of *A Modern Utopia* in 1905, "his main argument may be condensed as follows".

There was no review of any Wells book in *Nature* between 1907 and 1916, so the journal failed to take notice of *The World Set Free* with its startling prediction of nuclear warfare. After the First World War it was Wells the public educator who most insistently demanded attention. His controversy with Hilaire Belloc over *The Outline of History* was covered at length, with Belloc's assault on the Darwinian theory being roundly demolished by *Nature*'s reviewer. There was commentary, too, by Wells and others on the 1925 trial of a Tennessee biology teacher for affirming the truth of biological evolution in the classroom. Given the current resurgence of creationism not only in the United States but in state-funded religious schooling in Britain, these debates from the 1920s deserve to be rediscovered by intellectual historians. Wells's emergence as the great public rationalist – as it were, the Richard Dawkins of his day, but a subtler, more farsighted version of Dawkins – meant that, in the increasingly politicised world of interwar science, almost any new work of his would receive notice. Indeed, the close attention paid to his later writings in *Nature* is in marked contrast to his almost total absence from conventional literary accounts of 1930s culture.

Some striking reflections on the late Wells appeared in a series of reviews by Hyman Levy, the Scottish mathematical physicist who became a leading figure in the National Union of Scientific Workers. (Levy appears alongside Haldane, Hogben, J. D. Bernal, and Joseph Needham in Gary Werskey's "collective biography" of 1930s radical scientists, *The Visible College*.) Writing on Wells's short stories in 1927, Levy observed that to those "tuned to the mentality of the scientist", a "new field of experience and expression is opened up"; but, apart from Wells, contemporary fiction seemed oblivious of this fact. Where Wells was unmatched was "at his favourite game of thought provoking"; "on the constructive side", however, he was much less satisfying, leaving the vital questions that he raised to other, more political minds to solve. Wells went on writing as prolifically as ever; but inevitably, to the Marxist-leaning scientists of the 1930s who owed so much to him, he now seemed to have clay feet. J. B. S. Haldane pondered whether the Martians who assaulted the Earth with cosmic rays in *Star Begotten* (1937) were really "Marxians" in disguise. From a different point of view, one of Wells's last potboilers, *The Conquest of Time* (1942), received a drubbing from the brilliant but unconventional theoretical physicist

Herbert Dingle. "It is distressing to think that a life of such great achievement and penetrating vision should culminate in such an anticlimax", Dingle wrote, but Wells at the age of 76 was not yet finished. The following year, he wrote a thesis which received a DSc from London University. Whatever one makes of this curious work (duly published in an abridged version in *Nature*), it would be hard to find more eloquent testimony to Wells's lifelong engagement with the scientific community and his need for its approval. If Wells was the greatest scientific educator of his times it might also be said that science, like sex, was his addiction.

Something needs to be said of the editing of this highly impressive volume. It has an extensive biographical supplement and full bibliography, but the publishers' failure to insist on an index is little short of a disgrace. The book is less useful to researchers, and much more difficult to consult productively, than it should have been. John S. Partington claims that his editing was limited by space considerations, but virtually every page contains annotations which serve no purpose whatever. Who exactly is it that needs to be told the meaning of words such as *astronomy*, *philosophy*, *telepathy*, *magic arts*, or *peasant*, to mention only a few examples? One would have to be foolish indeed to use this "Reception Reader" as a primer in basic scientific terminology, let alone basic English. And, with the editor distracted by the task of providing the most elementary definitions, the things that really need annotation are often passed over.

Reading a slashing review by Wells of P. Chalmers Mitchell's *Outline of Biology* (1894), we might have been told that Chalmers Mitchell, in turn, attacked *The Island of Doctor Moreau* in another journal eighteen months later: far from producing what I have referred to as classical sf, Wells had "spoiled a fine conception by greed of cheap horrors". The review is readily available in the Wells *Critical Heritage* volume, and the relationship between Wells and the future biographer of T. H. Huxley and Secretary of the Zoological Society of London – himself a notable public spokesman for science – would repay study. Similarly, John Partington fails to identify contributors to *Nature* whose pieces were signed only with their initials, even though their authorship must have been readily apparent to many of the original readers. For example, "F. C. S. S.", the reviewer of *A Modern Utopia* quoted above, is manifestly the Oxford philosophy professor F. C. S. Schiller. The choice of reviewer is particularly striking when we realise that Wells cites Schiller's *Humanism* on the last page of *A Modern Utopia*. Twenty years later, Schiller would publish *Tantalus or the Future of Man* (a highly Wellsian title) in the "Today and Tomorrow" series edited by C. K. Ogden. For all its editorial apparatus, this remarkable source-book for the intellectual history of early twentieth-century literature and science gives less help to its readers than one might have expected.

H. G. Wells: Interdisciplinary Essays

Edited by Steven McLean (Cambridge Scholars Publishing 2008, 184p, £29.99)
Reviewed by Andy Sawyer

While not all of these ten essays, which originated in an H. G. Wells Society conference, are on H. G. Wells the science fiction writer, they are all interesting and some are very interesting indeed.

The book is divided into three sections, "Early Romances", "From Romancer to Novelist" and "Wells and His Interloctors". Sylvia Pamboukian's "What the Traveller Saw: Evolution, Romance and Time-Travel" discusses *The Time Machine* (1895) in the context of other time travel narratives and late nineteenth-century discussions on evolution, and thus establishes some useful discussion about the novel. Pamboukian overlooks the central dynamic of William Morris's *News From Nowhere* (1890), arguing that it does not engage with the implications of evolution, unlike, say W. H. Hudson's *A Crystal Age* (1887) or Richard Jefferies' *After London* (1885). While it does not affect the general flow of her argument, it is worth pointing out that *News from Nowhere* is only a very provisional idyll. Morris (his "Guest" surname is only a transparent attempt to hide his identity from his questioners) *has* to wake up from his dream in order to will it into existence. Morris is denying blind chance in the evolution of human society, but the goal of a better society exists in the form of a dream which needs to *be* a dream in order to pull humanity towards it. However, Pamboukian also notes the often overlooked gap between the *Traveller*'s Weena and her actual nature, pointing out that the narrator's realisation that "she always seemed to me, I fancy, more human than she was," does not extend to his questioning his own assumption that "she" is the correct pronoun for a member of a species so androgynous in appearance. McLean's own essay, "Animals, Language and Degeneration in *The Island of Doctor Moreau*" offers speculation about the source of Moreau in the speculations of the naturalist Richard Garner that Capuchin monkeys have speech and words. Simon James considers a non-scientific romance, *The Wheels of Chance*, but there are useful things there in the way the book's protagonist Hoopdriver fantasises *in genre*, and the importance in the novel of cycling is as clear a celebration of the implications of a new technology as, elsewhere, the examples of a yet-to-be-achieved conquest of the air. The section ends with "Alien Gaze: Postcolonial Visions in *The War of the Worlds*" in which Keith Williams examines how the gaze of the alien Martians (reflecting the gaze outwards into space by terrestrial astronomers) also provides an imaginative space in which we can examine ourselves.

The middle section shows Wells eschewing his "romances" for attempts at conquering the novel of ideas, with Bernard Loing discussing "Love and Mr Lewisham" and John R. Hammond writing on "Wells and the Discussion Novel". The latter ends with a discussion of one of those almost-unread late Wells

novels, his last: *You Can't Be Too Careful* (1941). In this dark and sometimes didactic novel (which Hammond argues convincingly is both entertaining and insightful), Wells engages with that same idea of human evolution which both his science fiction and his mainstream "novels of ideas" attempt to explore. Patrick Parrinder's "Island of Fools: *Mr Blettsworthy on Rampole Island* and the Twentieth-century Human Predicament" again considers the Darwinian ideas, as well as the "island" imagery, which link this 1928 novel to *The Island of Doctor Moreau*.

Emily Alder's "Buildings of the New Age" opens a section which explores relationship between Wells and other literary or political figures. Alder here considers evolutionary ideas in Wells and William Hope Hodgson, an author who has too often been considered part of the horror/supernatural strand of the fantastic. Hodgson's *The Night Land* (1912) is considered in the context of the way Wells establishes contrast between the planned, protective city and the wilderness in *When the Sleeper Wakes* (1899) and "A Story of the Days to Come" (1897). In *The Night Land*, of course, the vast pyramid of "the Great Redoubt" is the final refuge of humanity against monstrosities and ab-humans in a future so Wellsianly far-distant that even the sun is extinguished. Alder notes the "utopian" aspect of the Redoubt with its controlled fields, "A safe garden in which the threat of the land outside is never quite forgotten", or as she earlier says, "a positive, safe variety of liberty" (125). While Hodgson's anxieties about uncontrolled nature are perhaps deeper than those of Wells, both remain ambivalent, clinging to the image of a warded-off "wilderness" and the possibility of combating the degenerative impulses inherent in their model of "evolution". Sylvia Hardy describes Well's fundamental debt to the psychologist William James, brother of his friend and sometimes antagonist the novelist Henry James. James's influence is prevalent throughout *A Modern Utopia* (1905). While Winston Churchill's appreciation for Wells's fiction, and the fact that they had a long if sometimes prickly relationship, is well known, Richard Toye's "H. G. Wells and Winston Churchill: a Reassessment" explores and emphasises this relationship, finding echoes of Wells's fiction in some of Churchill's speeches and arguing that Wells "had a clear and demonstrable influence on Churchill's thought before 1914" (157) even though by the time of World War Two their views on many issues (such as the Empire, and the policy to be followed after the War) were clearly at odds. Toye cites Paul Alkon's *Winston Churchill's Imagination* (2006) as evidence that Churchill was familiar with other science fiction writers than Wells, and it is interesting to consider how far Wells's ideas and images became both "the standard stuff of science fiction and futurology" (156) and part of mainstream political thinking (insofar, of course as Churchill was ever "mainstream". There are naïve desires in early science fiction (and science fiction fandom) that the world would be a better place if only our political leaders read science fiction. In Churchill, it certainly can be argued that his imagination owed much to that of Wells.

Interdisciplinary Essays is perhaps specialist, but anyone interested in Wells will find it of value. One slight – not even quibble, but comment about the title – while the subject-matter *is* "interdisciplinary" (ranging from the influence of Darwinian evolutionary theory in several essays to Toye's coverage of the influence of psychology and McLean's exploration of investigations into primate language) where the background of the contributors is clear they all are rooted in the "disciplines" of literary studies (although Sylvia Pamboukian, who writes on literature and medicine, has, interestingly, a background in pharmacy). What would such a collection be like if it had included biologists and psychologists writing on Wells from the viewpoint of *their* disciplines?

The City and the City

By China Miéville (Macmillan, 2009, 312p, £17.99)
Reviewed by David McWilliam

My first experience of China Miéville's fiction came in 2006, when I ordered *Perdido Street Station* (2000) relatively unaware of its significance to the literary fantastic. I was impressed by the novel's vitality within the first two chapters, as it simultaneously danced over the backs of the generic conventions of fantasy, whilst displaying an enormous affection for secondary world fiction that exuded from every baroque description and wildly imaginative feature of the sprawling city of New Crobuzon. Subsequently, I rapidly devoured both *The Scar* (2002) and *Iron Council* (2004); the former a wonderful seafaring quest narrative, focalised on disenfranchised characters who are forced to follow the path of heroic, yet also deranged, leaders, whilst the latter delved into the complexities of revolutionary politics, adding increasing depth to the world of Bas-Lag, which was shared by all three books. Aside from their incendiary effect on the sf, fantasy and horror fields, Miéville's Bas-Lag novels were utterly inspirational to me on a personal level, reopening the inventive promise of science fantasy as espoused by Michael Moorcock and the *New Worlds* crowd in the 1960s.

The City and the City is Miéville's first novel for adults since the publication of *Iron Council*, but is certainly not a return to the style of secondary world fiction that he has been most famously associated with. Gone are the paragraph-length descriptions, phantasmagorical monsters and the omniscient world building of the third person narrator. Instead, this slim volume is written in a taut, straightforward prose that invites comparisons with Ross MacDonald and Raymond Chandler rather than H. P. Lovecraft and Charles Dickens. Indeed, aside from being a well-written and supremely inventive novel, *The City and the City* bears none of the hallmarks that have hitherto been identified with Miéville's authorial voice. The novel begins with the first-person narrator, Inspector Tyador Borlú, investigating a murder in a run-down estate in the fictional Eastern European city of Beszel. What at first seems to be an internal crime swiftly becomes an international issue as the evidence leads Borlú and his assistant Corwi, to conclude that the victim had not been murdered in Beszel, but in the neighbouring city of Ul Qoma, and that the body had been dumped in Pocost Village to protect the identity of the killer. This leads to severe complications in organizing a coordinated search; the tensions between the two states mean that diplomatic relations are strained and convoluted. Up to this point, it may seem as though *The City and the City* ought to be considered a new addition to the mundane crime fiction tradition. However, as the Bas-Lag novels crossed between sf, fantasy and horror in order to create their unique generic blend, *The City and the City* draws upon the fantastic in constructing the complex relationship between the two cities, which are revealed to overlap one another, so that they are contained within the same overall geographic space.

(It should be noted at this point that the experience of reading *The City and the City* is largely one of exploration, as ideas and setting combine to create an unusual narrative effect. The rest of this review will reveal many plot points: you have been warned.)

Whereas Miéville offered the reader a tour of the bizarre environs of his Bas-Lag novels, including detailed exposition of the world's political systems, ecology and commerce, which are as integral to the power of their narratives as the plot elements themselves, Borlú's first person narration focuses on solving the crime, forcing the reader to piece together the unconventional setting whilst simultaneously following the twists and turns one expects in genre crime fiction. Borlú is a native citizen of Besźel, so the unique nature of his home is utterly familiar to him, and he assumes knowledge in the reader, resulting in an absence of guiding exposition. This has the effect of creating an intense sensation of culture shock, which occasionally runs the risk of jolting the reader out of the narrative, but also offers an unusually powerful example of Darko Suvin's theory of cognitive estrangement. Little can be taken for granted by the reader, and as the narrative progresses the intricate complexity of the interwoven fantastical setting and conspiracy behind the initial murder offers a truly compelling mystery.

The peculiar arrangement of the cities is initially introduced by references to crosshatched areas, wherein certain individuals must be "unseen". The spirit of Kafka swirls throughout the novel and is especially present in the labyrinthine division of the various streets and communities into two separate metropolises, creating a perversely chaotic sense of order. There are no physical barriers between Besźel and Ul Qoma, except at the official border between them, and yet the division is upheld rigorously by the citizens of both, who are distinguished from each other by their distinctive fashions and mannerisms. Borlú is fairly besieged by this phenomenon, as the position of his home forces him to practise unseeing every day:

> In the morning trains ran on a raised line metres from my window. They were not in my city. I did not of course, but I could have stared into the carriages – they were quite that close – and caught the eyes of foreign travellers. (p. 25)

Such self-discipline is instilled by the fear of falling foul of Breach, a powerful and mysterious organization that exists in the disputed territory of the two cities. Breach's task is to ensure that the citizens of Besźel and Ul Qoma, as well as any visiting outsiders, observe the borders between the two cities, maintaining the ethereal dividing lines that separate them as surely as mountain or sea. Though their jurisdiction concerns only a single transgression, their power to enforce this law is virtually limitless, as the supreme authority they wield allows them to command officials from either city.

The threat of Breach's retribution is entwined with their vigilance; ostensibly

omniscient, they encourage the two populations to regulate their behaviour, unseeing anything that they believe might belong exclusively to the other city in an attempt to avoid the wrath of this enigmatic power. Through this device, Miéville is able to employ a critique of contemporary British law and order, which relies heavily on ubiquitous CCTV in order to instil fear and obedience in its citizens. Miéville is invoking Michel Foucault's critique of the panoptic nature of modern power, as set out in *Discipline and Punish* (1975). Foucault explains how Jeremy Bentham's nineteenth-century design for a prison named the Panopticon, in which the inmates would be made to feel as though their every action was potentially watched, every misdemeanour subsequently punished, ensured that they would regulate their own behaviour:

> The major effect of the Panopticon: to induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power. So to arrange things that the surveillance is permanent in its effects, even if it is discontinuous in its action; that the perfection of power should tend to render its actual exercise unnecessary; that this architectural apparatus should be a machine for creating and sustaining a power relation independent of the person who exercises it; in short, that the inmates should be caught up in a power situation of which they are themselves the bearers.[1]

Foucault argues that this method has since been extrapolated from its carceral application to operate in society more widely, with the objective of maintaining the status quo vis-à-vis power within the overall population, making the punishment of offenders a means to an end rather than a goal. It is through the operation of such a mechanism of power that Breach does not have to observe every action in order to guarantee obedience.

In the most explicitly Kafkaesque section of the novel, Borlú receives a call from someone in Ul Qoma, who advises him to question the radicals, particularly the unificationists, who believe that the two cities belong together as one. The exchange is characterized by an aggressive lack of respect on the part of the caller, who practically orders Borlú into following the lead he has provided. Positioned at an early point in the narrative, the conversation is difficult to follow and increases the sense of disorientation through the transgression of social boundaries that have not yet been clearly defined. Reminiscent of the calls K. receives in the early stages of *The Castle* (1926), it effectively strengthens the sense of intrigue surrounding the case whilst simultaneously offering a moment of light relief in an otherwise sombre opening to the novel. After interviewing one of the victim's former associates, Borlú learns that she had been researching Orciny, the legendary third city that is said to rule them both, an interest that had led to threats from nationalists on both sides of the border.

When Borlú's investigation suggests that the crime involved an act of breach between the two cities, he applies to invoke Breach and pass the case over to them, as their superior resources will mean that the murderer is brought to justice swiftly

and will face a more serious punishment. His request is turned down because it appears that the body was smuggled across the official border between the two cities at Copula Hall, a vast structure that operates as a shared diplomatic space for officials from Beszél and Ul Qoma, which is also rather reminiscent of Perdido Street Station in terms of its function as a nexus of power and forum for communication between states. The death of a young woman does not matter to Breach as long as the boundaries it protects are upheld. Despite the cold, alien, bureaucratic logic behind Breach's decision not to become involved, the rigid adherence to its code of practice is essential in order to avoid a misuse of an allegedly awesome power.

Feeling outmanoeuvred by someone with strong political influence, Borlú is requested to assist the Ul Qoman police in their investigation, which is led by Senior Detective Qussim Dhatt. Borlú's lack of experience in Ul Qoma allows the reader to catch up with any of the inter-city intricacies that they might have previously missed. Dhatt's enquiries have focused on the dig the victim was working on, which had, it is rumoured, uncovered artefacts from before the schism that created the two cities. It soon becomes apparent that this archaeology student was not the only person interested in Orciny, and that her murderers are intent on killing others in whom she had confided. Borlú attempts to smuggle them across the border back to Beszél, but in doing so exposes a female student who had been in hiding to the sights of a sniper. Borlú's commitment to the case means that he follows the assassin across the border, eventually committing breach in order to prevent his escape.

At this point, the novel shifts once again, as Borlú is taken by Breach, ultimately offering to assist them after he has proven that the case does indeed fall within their jurisdiction. There is a strange, otherworldly majesty to this group that is given bathetic treatment when it transpires that they are an understaffed organization that maintains its position through reliance upon the overstated myth of their abilities. As Borlú hunts those responsible for the deaths he has been investigating alongside an "avatar" of Breach, the reader is shown the city from the organization's perspective, as he is able to pass between Beszél and Ul Qoma without reprisal, ensuring his invisibility as those who witness his transgressions swiftly "unsee" him in order to avoid possible recrimination. Easily the most accomplished section of the novel, Borlú's work for Breach delivers a cinematic confrontation with the conspirators and an unexpected conclusion that resolves the plot in a highly satisfying manner.

The City and the City shows a writer at the height of his powers venturing into new territory and mastering a completely different voice and tone to previous works in order to deliver a fascinating crime fiction/fantasy hybrid. It confirms Miéville's position as one of the premier fantasists of this decade.

(ENDNOTES)

1 Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* trans. by Alan Sheridan (London: Penguin Books, 1991) p. 201.

Impossibilia

By Douglas Smith (PS Publishing, 2008, 96pp, £10.00)
Reviewed by Sue Thomason

This is "PS Showcase #5", a limited edition of 100 jacketed hardcovers and 300 hardcovers containing three stories by Douglas Smith with an introduction by Chaz Brenchley. As Brenchley says, mainstream publishers of science fiction and fantasy tend to want large quantities of more-of-the-same. They want novels, or even better, series. They like their authors to identify a target audience and stick to writing what that target audience will buy. This is understandable: publishers who don't sell books go out of business. And buyers expect a certain degree of product consistency: imagine peeling a banana to discover it was actually catfood in a novel packaging...

Reading a short story collection can be a bit like dealing with bargain-basket tins that have lost their labels; you don't know what you're going to get until you open/sample each item. Readers of short story collections are therefore adventurous, tolerant, willing to try anything (at least in small doses), and able to reset their narrative parameters every few pages. We are explorers who crave novelty. We may also be easily bored and have short attention spans. Maybe short stories have waned in popularity as our lives outside fiction have become more varied and interesting. Rather than seeking novelty and stimulation, we want to return to the same comforting story-world again and again, getting our narrative continuity from fiction rather than life outside fiction. We don't have the time or energy to start from scratch every twenty pages with a new setting, new people, new relationships... not when we're doing that in "real life".

What made me want to read and review these stories was a phrase quoted from Brenchley's introduction: "these are ... stories that treat with hope, and will not in the end deny it." Stories with hope are stories I need. I don't require stories that are entirely safe and cosy, but I find unremitting bleak nasty depression even worse than unremitting Golden Age relentless can-do positivity. Science fiction is a literature of feelings, as well as a literature of ideas, and the feelings I particularly look to sf to stimulate are sensawonda and curiosity, the desire to learn new things, the desire to understand the world better and make more sense of it. Perhaps sf has drifted away from contemporary science as science becomes less able to explain the world coherently to non-specialists. And indeed, the three stories in this collection are a long way from science. There is a classic time-paradox story involving a paranormal ability to view the past and, if not human survival after death, at least the continuation of coherent human personalities without bodies to support them. There is a shape-changer story interweaving First Nations and Celtic elements in a manner reminiscent of Charles de Lint. And there is a story about luck as a reified, transferable quality. The time-paradox story comes closest to being sf because the plot is, on one

level, a logic puzzle, and the story resolves with a neat exercise in problem-solving. And all three stories do indeed admit hope, or at least refuse inaction and despair, although one story closes with the aftermath to a nasty piece of shoot-em-up business, and another hinges on a man arranging his own murder.

For me, a successful short story collection has the same sensory appeal as a selection box of chocolates; stories must be both "the same" and "different". This is difficult to achieve. *Impossibilia* starts with the disadvantage of containing only three chocolates. They have a strong stylistic similarity and a strong thematic similarity (a man, lonely through circumstance, challenges death and wins a woman's love). I found the first story very nearly brilliant and the other two pleasant but not outstanding. I'm left feeling that I would very cheerfully read more stories by the same author if they came my way, although I wouldn't go to great lengths to seek them out.

Worth publishing? Definitely. Worth writing? Definitely. Worth reading? Maybe. It's difficult: as a society we can't have it both ways – we can't both encourage anyone and everyone in creative self-expression *and* only take pleasure in experiencing the super-excellent work of a highly-paid professional minority... can we? National populations are healthier and happier in countries where the difference in wealth between richest and poorest is comparatively small. And maybe we would be an artistically happier and healthier society if we valued creative work differently, if we deliberately approached work aiming to minimise the gap between the best and the rest. This would mean looking for what works, rather than what's flawed. In fact, it would mean writing, publishing, and reading with hope. Change my opinion above to "worth reading: definitely", if that's the lesson I have learned from this book.

The Margarets

By Sheri S. Tepper (Gollancz, 2008, 508p, £12.99)
Reviewed by Ria Cheyne

Tepper is an author who needs no introduction, but her latest novel does not rank with her best. As the only child on Phobos Station, a colony on Mars, Margaret imagines multiple versions of herself, each with distinct traits: queen, spy, healer, shaman, telepath, linguist, and warrior. As Margaret grows up, six of these split off, the original Margaret walking one road, her alter ego taking the other, so that one Margaret becomes seven, each unaware of the existence of the others. Scattered amongst various colony planets, they live their individual lives until a threat to the human race demands that they be reunited.

Separation and unification, wholeness and multiplicity; these then are the themes of *The Margarets*. It is this very multiplicity, however, that is the problem with the novel: there are simply too many Margarets. Even with the list of planets and their inhabitants that prefaces the main text, it is nearly impossible to keep track of them all. Add to this a phalanx of subsidiary characters, numerous exotic alien species, and umpteen sets of twins, and *The Margarets* starts to feel less like a novel than an exercise in short-term memory. Inevitably, the various Margarets blur together. While this may be a conscious narrative choice on Tepper's part, reflecting their shared origin, the end result is that it is difficult to care about any of them.

This lack of involvement is heightened by Tepper's style. Her writing is graceful and evocative, but in this novel it is rarely visceral, meaning that despite the first-person narrative the reader often feels remote from characters and events. The amount of narrative ground to be covered means that years and significant life events are frequently omitted or skipped over: "As I well know from my eighteen years on Tercis", "On Cantardene, years had passed since I, that is, Miss Ongamar, had witnessed the sacrifice on the funeral hill". The book is at its most powerful when it speaks to the regret about past choices and the path not taken, as when one Margaret rues her decision to allow her partner to sacrifice his career and join her in servitude on a primitive world. Yet these moments are rare, and this particular Margaret's regret is rather facilely resolved at the novel's conclusion. Indeed, the whole question of whether any of the Margarets have free will, and to what extent their paths have been preordained by the superior aliens working behind the scenes, is never adequately answered.

At over five hundred pages, this is a substantial text, and the structure, with individual narrative strands developed and then brought together, is reminiscent of epic series like George R. R. Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire* or Tad Williams's *Otherland*. Works like these gain their power from the reader having spent a substantial amount of time with individual characters before the various narrative strands are satisfyingly drawn together. In Tepper's novel, though,

there are too many characters and not enough pages to develop them in. Either the book needed to be substantially longer, or it needed to be substantially shorter and more focused. As it is, it is page 200 before all the Margarets have been introduced, and their eventual reunification feels rushed, as though written to bring the novel in under a certain word count.

It is a measure of my lack of involvement with this novel that I was unable to care much about the rest of the action: whether the human race is destroyed or not, why the aliens want to destroy us, or the population problems that suggest that humans will manage, whatever happens, to destroy themselves (a reiteration of the ecofeminist concerns expressed in Tepper's other works). It is not that there aren't good things in *The Margarets* – Tepper blends sf and fantasy tropes adeptly, and the novel features one of the neatest sfnal explanations ever of the existence of cats – but there simply aren't enough of them to make up for the excessive length, odd pacing, and lack of character development. The strength of Tepper's past work means that any new novel by her will be approached with high expectations, but frankly, I'd recommend you re-read *Grass* instead.

Slow Sculpture – Volume XII: The Complete Stories of Theodore Sturgeon

Edited by Noël Sturgeon (North Atlantic Books, 2009, 299p, $35)
Reviewed by Vernon Speed

This is the penultimate volume in the epic series from North Atlantic Books who, over a fifteen-year period, have been publishing all of Sturgeon's short fiction. The final volume, *Why Dolphins Don't Bite*, is due out later this year. Volume XII contains stories written between 1970 and 1972, together with a previously unpublished story from 1964. Also included is his 1955 novella "The [Widget], the [Wadget], and Boff", held over from an earlier volume, its length nicely balancing the brevity of the other stories.

Sadly, illness has prevented Paul Williams, the editor of the previous volumes, from continuing with the project, and the editorship has passed to Sturgeon's daughter Noël, who is also trustee of his literary estate. Williams's illuminating and lucid story notes have been a highlight of the series, often as entertaining to read as the stories themselves. Noël Sturgeon acquits herself well in continuing where Williams left off, and manages to provide something for everyone: scholars will find vital background information here regarding Wina (Sturgeon's partner at the time), whilst lovers of trivia will rejoice in being given the precise ingredients of one of the author's favourite sandwiches. Connie Willis provides a Foreword which is basically a fan letter to Sturgeon, though as it is mostly about "The Man Who Lost the Sea" it would have perhaps been better included in Volume X where that story appears.

Several stories were new to me, and I approached these with a mixture of anticipation and slight apprehension, wondering if the old Sturgeon magic would still be there. Have they stood up to the passing of time, to changing critical and reading tastes? Have they mellowed with those of us who first came across Sturgeon as a momentous literary experience in our youth, or have we left him behind in a fond glow of nostalgia? Sturgeon's great strength is when he examines universal human issues, dressing them up in the fabulous clothes that sf provides. Above all, he believes in the good potential of human beings, whilst recognising our need for encouragement in the right direction. Throughout his stories, Sturgeon has always provided us with a variety of gurus, therapists, aliens and other authority figures who can give that vital nudge we require. Several of these figures appear in these pages, Miss Morin in "Crate" being the most obvious. They are, of course, thinly disguised versions of Sturgeon himself.

The Hugo and Nebula Award-winning title story is well known, many of the others less so, especially to readers outside the States, where Sturgeon's later collections have not been so readily available. Roughly half of the stories are not sf, as Sturgeon had by this time found two kindly editors outside the field who offered to buy anything he sent them. Throughout his career he had chafed

against the restrictions that the genre had put on him, so here we can see what he is capable of when given free rein. The results are rather mixed: I would not be the first to observe that perhaps Sturgeon needed those very restrictions to produce his best work. But all are engaging, all have that narrative drive which he learned early on, hooking the reader by the title, or the first line, or at the very latest by the end of the first paragraph, and not letting go until we have reached an often breathless conclusion.

So how do these stories from towards the end of Sturgeon's career measure up to what we know he is capable of? Generally they are short, written quickly, and with a couple of exceptions lack the depth of his mid-period masterpieces. Often there is only space to touch on one idea or character. In their brevity and tone the stories are sometimes reminiscent of his earliest output: Sturgeon himself agreed that his pre-1947 tales were mostly entertainments, and by my count six or seven of those included here fall into that category. He was not knocking entertainment but merely pointing out that, appropriately, after "Maturity" he had a new-found maturity in his writing, and Something Serious to say. But these stories seem sketchily worked out. Take "The Patterns of Dorne" which starts off promisingly with a thriller-type situation full of vivid sensory impressions (Sturgeon is surely one of the most *tactile* of writers). After the obligatory plot-twist, there follows the dawning realisation of the true situation, complete with the merest dab of love interest. But the central premise is too slight, and the transition too abrupt, to support an ending of such van-Vogtian import.

Of course abrupt endings are sometimes essential: in "It's You!" and "The Girl Who Knew What They Meant" they are pretty much the whole point of the stories. In the latter, Sturgeon gives us the psychopath-narrator, (something he had done before brilliantly in "When You're Smiling"), but there is a lack of real character conflict. Consequently everything depends on the shock ending which, once read, will never surprise us again. I am quite sure that Sturgeon knew exactly what he was doing, but it smacks too much of a writerly exercise, however accomplished; "When You're Smiling" and "Bright Segment" start from a similar premise but work better as stories because they have multiple moments of tension and resolution .

However it would be too simplistic to say that in this volume Sturgeon is merely regressing to an earlier style. In several of the stories he does indeed return to a favourite theme, but takes it a step further rather than merely repeating a formula. So in earlier stories "The Haunt" (1941) and "Fear is a Business" (1956) we find the idea of the hoax-that-becomes-real; the same device is used in "Occam's Scalpel" but with an added twist or two. By the end Sturgeon is playing with the characters and with the reader, making them do a double-take, and us a triple-take, between what is real and what is hoax. Logic produces one version of reality but in the throw-away last line Sturgeon has the last laugh, suggesting that this type of reasoning can lead to all sorts of

absurdity, flying saucerism included. Sturgeon's views are easy to discover, as he often puts wise maxims into the mouths of his characters – a great help to the critic, who can see the author commenting on his own work. Thus the alien in "Fear is a Business" observes that, "Sincerity and logic have this in common: neither need have anything to do with truth." And a character in another story in this volume ("Dazed") could be referring directly to "Occam's Scalpel" when he says: "Belief or nonbelief has no power over objective truth...if two people believe the same thing from the same evidence, it means that they believe the same thing, nothing more."

Another theme, that of attempted suicide, reappears in the story entitled simply "Suicide". But whereas in "A Saucer of Loneliness" and "The [Widget], the [Wadget], and Boff" the attempt was prevented by the intervention of another, here the character is completely alone and needs to find from his own inner resources the reasons and will to live.

Most striking of all his re-explorations of earlier themes is "Slow Sculpture" where a man meets and helps a sick woman, a situation which brings out some of Sturgeon's very best writing. We've come across it before in "Scars" (1949), and again in "A Saucer of Loneliness" (1953) and "Bright Segment" (1955), a threesome which could be summarised as "love frustrated, love connected, and love perverted". The woman was essentially a passive figure in those tales, receiving whatever good or bad the man chose to give her. Now in "Slow Sculpture" the female character is more proactive, seeking out the man at the start, then challenging his (and by implication Sturgeon's) credo of "ask the next question". At the end, she is fully his equal, offering him the possibility of change. I still find this story moving and slightly miraculous, and it would take much longer than a review to examine its many nuances. Sturgeon is here doing what he does best: staging an intense personal drama with just a couple of characters, in a limited setting. Typically, we feel he really cares about his characters, and so he makes us care about them too. The whole of Sturgeon's considerable artistry is condensed into a few pages, from the brief and vivid brushstrokes that paint the opening scene to the concluding emotionally charged dialogue. Start and end are quick-moving, but in the middle he allows a breathing space, a pause for reflection where the central image of the bonsai is brought before us with great sensitivity. And precisely because the story breaks off in the middle of a conversation, it is left to resonate powerfully in the mind.

Sturgeon touches on another of his favourite themes, mankind's reluctance to accept what is good for it, in "The Verity File" and "Slow Sculpture". There is more than a hint of bitterness in both, though nothing like the anguished plea for tolerance that he gave us in "If All Men Were Brothers, Would You Let One Marry Your Sister?" (1967) Yet Sturgeon, essentially an optimist, always offers us glimmers of hope – he believes we will somehow find a way. The sculpture by which the good guys work on the rest of humanity is indeed slow and often frustrated, but it is possible.

The issue of belief versus truth has already been mentioned, and it is most powerfully explored in "Crate". This is not the best story in the book – the characters are too much in the service of the allegory, and the ending is just too twee – but it is the most revealing of Sturgeon's philosophy. As in his final novel *Godbody*, he uses Biblical allusions to tell a humanist parable, though I cannot say much more without giving a spoiler. I am sure others, like me, will have seen the twist coming, but in this case (if you'll excuse a Sturgeonesque pun) there is enough substance in the story to allow for repeated readings. It will not be giving too much away to say that Sturgeon, as always, encourages us to look within ourselves to find the answers to our needs. This is also the theme of "The [Widget], the [Wadget], and Boff", a classic example of how Sturgeon uses sf tropes to his own ends. It consists of a number of short character portraits in the setting of a boarding house. The boarders are unwittingly subjected to a sort of loving inquisition and as a result have their lives transformed. The tale is charmingly told, as we would expect, though the psychological insights perhaps now seem slightly laboured. There is sly humour here too, the biggest joke being that the entire story is not so much an example of a *deus ex machina* as a literal *machinae ex dei*, one of the machines being the battery-powered [wadget] that needs recharging every month. Possibly there was a mainstream novel in here trying to get out, but at any event, Sturgeon chose to write most of the story as realism, with a fairy-tale ending, all packaged in a "joyous invasion" by godlike aliens. This stylistic mishmash either makes it a daring experiment, or simple expedience needed to get it published in *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*. One feels sure that he would have preferred to remove the sf trappings altogether and sell it to one of the "slick" magazines, which was his ongoing, and usually frustrated, ambition.

Overall, I found this volume to be something of a disappointment, not because I was expecting to find a neglected masterpiece but because, knowing what heights Sturgeon is capable of, anything less seems mediocre. That is one of the inevitable drawbacks of any series that aims to include a writer's complete works. But it is also a perennial problem with Sturgeon himself, an artist to whom the old maxim applies that "everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required." We know what tremendous talents he was blessed with: after all, this was the man who, early on, knocked Graham Greene into second place in a prestigious short story competition (with "Bianca's Hands"), the man whom James Blish famously described as "the finest conscious artist" in the sf field. Should we feel grateful or slightly perplexed over the relative scarcity of masterpieces in a career spanning over four decades? Perhaps it's best to regard him like Jane Austen, who "only" produced six great novels!

Sturgeon completists will want this book regardless. To others I would say that, though there are a few nuggets here, the greatest gold is to be mined in his extraordinary work of the 1950s, which can be found in volumes VII to X of this thoughtful and lovingly edited series.

The Savage Humanists

Edited by Fiona Kelleghan. (Robert J. Sawyer Books, 2008, 302p, $15.95 paperback)
Reviewed by Sandor Klapcsik

The humanitarian and humanist tendencies in sf date back for a long time, perhaps even to the founding of the genre: it is enough to think of feminist sf and the political subtext of the New Wave movement. Kelleghan's characteristics of Savage Humanism, such as the satirical style, drawing on literary and sf traditions, promoting human rights, ecological consciousness and social reforms, as well as revelling in scientific rationalism and atheism, also outline an extremely broad continuum.

Her category is not based on shared sf tropes or settings, and only slightly follows stylistic similarities. What helps her to define this category are personal connections: the Savage Humanists are a group of writers, friends and corresponding acquaintances, who share common political interests and aesthetic values. They are represented here by eight angry men and a woman, successful and famous writers with numerous awards behind them, who react against violent classics such as Orson Scott Card's *Ender's Game* and Tom Godwin's "The Cold Equations". Kelleghan's introduction implies that biographical and ideological similarities bring together the contributors: "Most of these authors reside on the Eastern Seaboard of the United States. They follow national politics and world news closely and vote for Democratic candidates. They care deeply about the suffering of humans... because they consider reason, human dignity, and progressive human achievements to be of greater value than any explanations that occult reckonings can provide" (13).

The personal connection which dominates over the literary ones would not necessarily be a problem. Nevertheless, in spite of my sympathies with Kelleghan's enterprise, and despite her convincing—albeit sometimes overly didactic—arguments in her extensive introduction, the editing of the book leaves me with slight scepticism for two reasons.

First, if an sf anthology introduces an existing movement or school, and popularizes authors who express contemporary ideological statements, it would be illustrative to feature their recent fiction. After all, Kelleghan does not want to limit her focus on an earlier stage of literary history: she stresses that the group is still active and significant. Yet most of the stories come from the 1990s, when the authors appeared on the sf field. Although these stories are not outdated, they were written before 9/11, which leaves room for contemplation: do the authors still argue for liberal political ideas, after the terrorist attack? Kelleghan's introduction reveals that they do, but the *selection* of stories hardly shows it. To demonstrate the active talent of these authors, and their current ideological and literary commitments, it would have been convincing to use their more recent texts: stories referring to George W. Bush, instead of George Bush Senior. And, of course, most readers prefer to receive unread stories in return of their money.

Second, Kelleghan's intro revives the distinction between cyberpunk and humanist authors, emphasizes the opposition between the two conventions, between those who revel in the information society and the civil activists. The questions arise: do we need to restart Michael Swanwick's "literary humanist" and cyberpunk opposition? Especially now, when it has become undisputable that the humanist approaches of James Patrick Kelly, John Kessel, Jonathan Lethem and Cory Doctorow can coincide with cyberpunk themes in full harmony, as it was demonstrated, for example, in *Rewired: The Post-Cyberpunk Anthology*? Furthermore, can anyone, in our postmodern age of simulacra, remain "capable of distinguishing what is presented by our current media from solid, verifiable truth" (23)?

Nevertheless, Kelleghan's introduction provides an exciting and certainly thorough study of the literary atmosphere of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, as well as detailed analyses of the contributors' works. The book also contains brief, mouth-watering descriptions of the short stories, inviting the reader to reflect upon texts that are worthy to be read.

Many of the stories only hover on the edge of the fantastic, in a way similar to contemporary subgenres such as the Slipstream, New Wave Fabulism, and liminal fantasy. No wonder, as some of the contributors are associated with those movements: Kelly and Kessel have edited *Feeling Very Strange: The Slipstream Anthology*, Kessel and James Morrow have contributed to *Conjunctions 39*, and Lethem has stories in both anthologies.

Morrow's "Veritas" is a perfect example of both the savage irony of the group and the influence, the narrative games and subversions, of the New Wave Fabulists. The story is based on the sf trope of a dystopian city-state, and is full of mythical, biblical, historical and political references. The totalitarian government eliminates in its citizens the ability to lie, and so to write fiction, with the help of electric shock treatment. The humour is tangible when the detective-spy protagonist-narrator and the femme fatale are flirting with each other, following the hardboiled tradition, but always sticking to the sobering truth. At least, that is what we initially believe, since the verity of the first person narration becomes dubious after the ending, which gives a twist and opens up possible readings, reinstating the possibility to lie, and write fiction, even fantasy.

As Kelleghan argues, "all of the Savage Humanists must be taken as didacts and entertainers in equal measure" (65). The didacticism is noticeable in Tim Sullivan's "Zeke", a story evoking the atmosphere of *The Twilight Zone* series and "The Women Men Don't See" by James Tiptree, Jr. The first-person narration features an albino ex-hippie on a car trip, who meets a visiting alien displayed as a sideshow freak in Florida. The encounter creates a personal turning-point in the narrator-protagonist's life, as he effortlessly can associate himself with the outcast space traveller. The political and moral message becomes even more tangible in Gregory Frost's "Madonna of the Maquiladora", as the storyline is set in the slums and sweatshops of a near-border town in Mexico. The expressive, second-person narrative is saturated by realistic, detailed descriptions, and the sf element is almost negligible.

Still, it is a most powerful story, just as much as Kim Stanley Robinson's "A History of the Twentieth Century, with Illustrations." I have to say that I hardly consider Robinson's masterly written story fantastic. True, the spring sun in London does not set when it should, leading to "a premature blue sunset" (271). What is more, the protagonist's pilgrimage for longer daylight to the Orkney Islands resembles a mythical fight against the darkness of nature. But the narration is dominated by a modernist, symbolically dense, and at the same time realistic, prose á la Mann, while the storyline discusses the darkness of humanity, instead of the darkness of an alien or fantastic force.

Connie Willis's "Cibola" is an extremely funny piece, and possibly the least didactic tale of the anthology. It features the great-great-granddaughter of the native-American pathfinder, El Turco, who promised golden cities to the Spanish explorer Francisco Vasquez de Coronado. Until the (slightly disappointing) ending, the character, taking after her ancestor, either lies through her teeth, or is simply a terrible scout, which provides a humorous tension in the text.

Kelleghan points out in her introduction that the contributors bear a "fondness for depicting spectacular disasters" (12). Both in Kessel's "Invaders" and Robert J. Sawyer's "Flashes", the worldwide financial and moral catastrophe is due to alien contact. The former features metafictional and alternate history traits, while the latter, drawing on the sf trope of information being beamed from space, as seen in Stanislaw Lem's *His Master's Voice*, Carl Sagan's *Contact*, and numerous other novels, depicts the human incapability of coping with extracts from the *Encyclopedia Galactica*. The random but precise scientific data lead to existential crises among scientists and investors, yet, luckily enough, English literature professors remain intact from the consequences of information overload until the final destruction. Thus, at least for a short while, humanities majors face a brighter future than the rest of the society!

James Patrick Kelly's Hugo Award winning story, "Think Like a Dinosaur", describes the horrific consequences of human flesh becoming a scientific surplus as a result of space travel. The psychologically dense story draws on "The Cold Equations", in the context of Christopher Priest's *The Prestige*, portraying the problematics of identity and those of the double. The anthology also includes Jonathan Lethem's "Walking the Moons", a story that I have read before in Karie Jacobson's *Simulations: 15 Tales of Virtual Reality*, a short, satirical piece that warns about the foolishness of virtual reality pipedreams.

Kelleghan's book contains excellent stories. Her arguments for a school of writers essentially hold up. Some readers who follow recent sf closely might be disappointed with the age of the stories, especially if they have read the texts before in previous anthologies or collections. Others may be troubled by the recurring didacticism of the book. Nevertheless, the anthology contains enjoyable, skilfully written, memorable tales, which provide significant caveats for the Western world. We needed a bold, politically straightforward, versatile, even though slightly odd, anthology like this.

Keeper of Dreams

By Orson Scott Card (Tor, 2008, 656p, $27.95)
Reviewed by Ben Jeapes

There is one glaring difference between *Keeper of Dreams* and Card's earlier 1990 collection, *Maps in a Mirror*. These aren't stories by a man hoping to be published; they are stories by a man who is pretty certain he will be. None of them have opening paragraphs written by a man who badly needed to catch an editor's attention; Card knows these will be read. They were mostly written for guest anthologies, or conventions, or are offcuts from existing novels or planned openers for new ones; and though they are all well written and come to satisfying conclusions, there are none that really stand out. I can still remember stories from *Maps in a Mirror* eighteen years later, even if I need to look up the actual titles. I doubt I will remember many of these in eighteen years time. There are no bad stories among them, but there are a few that twenty years ago would have been more concise.

Quite simply, Card isn't a Young Turk short story writer any more. He is frank in his introduction. He started writing short sf to make a name for himself in the field. Having made a name for himself, but wanting to earn a living too, he began to write novels instead, though he keeps his hand in with the short form when he can. Thus *Maps in a Mirror* contained 46 stories published over twelve years, 1977-1989; *Keeper of Dreams* has 22 published in the last eighteen. *Maps in a Mirror* defined Card as a writer. *Keeper of Dreams* is a light protective covering.

Another effect of Card having made it is that his notorious taste for violence and grue in earlier stories is completely absent. He's got our attention already. There is nothing here really likely to rattle anyone's cages – certainly no equivalent of the first collection's excellent "Lost Boys" (published in *The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction*, October 1989, which made letters pages glow red hot with protest and drew epithets of which "Mormon baby killer" was the kindest), or "Kingsmeat", or "Holy". Shame. But one thing Card hasn't done is forgotten where he came from – he knows and remembers exactly what it's like to be a new writer, casting desperately about for hints and the first big break. Like *Maps in a Mirror*, the stories here are interspersed with little essays from Card that give extra value to the story you have just read and, yes, should help out aspiring writers a little too.

There may have been readers of the *Maps in a Mirror* stories who didn't actually know who the author was. There will be few readers now who don't know that Card is a Mormon, for a start; that he is a happily married family man; and that he is what many would call a political and religious conservative (even though he is in fact a proud American who loathes unfettered capitalism; a Democrat who despises Clinton, doesn't believe in human-led global warming

and supports the Iraq war). Anyway, it's safe to say that none of these stories will surprise you.

What hasn't changed one jot over eighteen years is the high regard and value that Orson Scott Card has for the value and dignity of human beings; for the worth of love and family; and his fascination with the practical problems that will be faced by anyone living in the real world who is determined to live their life in a moral way. This may derive from his belief in a God who so loved the world that he gave his only son etc., or it may just be who Card is. Or both.

"Feed the Baby of Love" and "Inventing Lovers on the Phone" are perhaps the stories where Card's personal values shine through the strongest. The former can only really be considered genre because it's a sequel to Ray Bradbury's *Dandelion Wine* – it comes from an anthology in which authors were invited to expand on any point from anywhere in the Bradbury oeuvre. If you follow Card's online column "Uncle Orson Reviews Everything" (http://www.hatrack.com/osc/reviews/everything/) then you will soon gather that the Card family are inveterate board game players, and "Feed the Baby of Love" shows both Card the game player and Card the moral family man in exquisite detail. Even if you disagree with Card's morality for life, you're going to have to think damn hard to come up with your counter argument. Meanwhile "Inventing Lovers on the Phone" says all that could need to be said about the contempt in which any rapist should be held, not least by his victims.

Of historical interest is "Geriatric Ward" (I would need a genuine geneticist to tell me if its science makes sense; I wasn't entirely convinced), which was written for *The Last Dangerous Visions* and appears here for the first time anywhere – apparently without incurring the wrath of Harlan Ellison. Does this mean that TLDV is now officially over?

Card was a playwright first of all, before he was any other kind of writer. A playwright has to dictate the audience's emotions through dialogue alone, and thus there tends to be a lot of it. In the *Keeper of Dreams* stories, Card can afford to indulge himself by going back to his roots. He has no taciturn characters – no one who mutters a line and just shuts up. Hearts are worn exclusively on sleeves; everyone has to express themselves fluidly and fluently until every "i" is dotted and every "t" crossed. Then and only then is the story judged complete. It means Card almost invariably uses exactly the right words to carry the story along but there is always a slightly studied effect to anything that anyone says. You become aware that this character is talking like that not because that is who they are but because that is the voice Card, a slightly spoddy middle class American white guy, has given them. The effect is especially strong in the stories "Waterbaby" and "Keeper of Lost Dreams", both offcuts from his novel *Magic Street* which is set in a black neighbourhood of Los Angeles. Yes, Card takes on the brothers.

Other novel offcuts are "Atlantis", "Grinning Man" and "The *Yazoo Queen*". "Atlantis" expands on a plot point from *Pastwatch: The Redemption of Christopher Columbus* and presents a novel origin theory on the separate myths of Atlantis,

Noah and Gilgamesh. Well, it convinced me. It's a story that reads perfectly well on its own – but, if you are aware that Card believes in a god who has been intervening in human affairs since prehistory, there's an extra layer there for you.

Meanwhile "Grinning Man" and "The *Yazoo Queen*" are both from the Tales of Alvin Maker series, adding nothing new but deepening the background of the novels. Alvin and Arthur Stuart continue to meander through an alternative nineteenth century America and meet famous people: Davy Crockett in the first; Jim Bowie, Stephen Austin and Abraham Lincoln in the second. "The *Yazoo Queen*" is effectively the first chapter of *The Crystal City*, though for contractual reasons it couldn't actually appear in that novel. It does make the novel a little easier to understand.

The closing stories of *Maps in a Mirror* were to me the letdown – Card's equivalent of "What I did in the holidays", there for the completists and Card researchers only. I was expecting the same here and was pleased to be wrong. The last section of *Keeper of Dreams* is just labelled "Mormon" and the stories here were written by Card the grown up, the family man, the holder of responsibility. They were written by a Mormon for Mormons, but he has included them for the insight they give the rest of us into day to day Mormon life. Mormonism is a world with unspoken rules and conventions every bit as intricate as Sf fandom and that is why these last stories don't feel remotely out of place in a genre publication.

Only one is remotely genre, "God Plays Fair Once Too Often", a kind of sequel to the Biblical Book of Job. "Neighbors" is a disposable little squib about gossip. But "Christmas at Helaman's House" excoriates those materially prosperous Christians who regard their wealth as a blessing from God, while people starve in the streets; and "Worthy to be One of Us" is Card's take on Mormons – and indeed anyone – to whom ancestry is more important than who you actually are. And to Mormons, ancestry means a great deal. Yet Card is talking from a position of great strength. He loves to talk about his family in his column but I don't think I have ever heard him mention – until now – that he is a great nephew of LeGrand Richards and great grandson of George F. Richards. It's a bit like an early Christian failing to mention that they are two generations away from St Paul. Why hasn't he said anything? Because he knows how unimportant it actually is.

You may respect Card as a writer but have issues with Card the man; but, coming at the end of this collection, these stories mean you close the book and find you are starting to like him too.

Red Planets: Marxism and Science Fiction

Edited by Mark Bould and China Miéville (Pluto, 2009, 293 pp., £19.99)
Reviewed by David Seed

This new collection assembles eleven essays which all address the relation between sf novels and films to a wider socio-economic context. As Mark Bould pithily puts it in his introduction, an sf world offers us a "snapshot of the structures of capital." In other words, the general focus in these pieces falls on world-building, how sf narratives are embodied and how that embodiment is ideologically structured. The title of the collection punningly links Marxism with Mars and more generally the recurring title of films from 1994 (on exploitive mining) and 2000 (on the search for a colony as a refuge from the dying Earth), apart from other novels. Given its political focus, the essays here take their bearings repeatedly from two leading Marxist critics: Darko Suvin and Fredric Jameson.

The volume is divided into three sections, the first called "Things To Come." In the opening essay Matthew Beaumont proposes a replacement for Darko Suvin's famous concept of the "novum" with the notion of "anamorphosis." Although the former could in theory be a perspective, the most commonly cited examples reify the concept as a strange object within a relatively familiar context which then transforms how we view that context. "Anamorphosis" by contrast suggests a strange or distorting perspective (literally a "re-shaping") . Next, William J. Burling asks how the arts – specifically music – are presented in LeGuin's *The Dispossessed* and Robinson's *Blue Mars*, arguing that in the first music is presented as a social product, but one perceived by the authorities as "dysfunctional." *Blue Mars* avoids this prejudice by describing the emergence of music from the raw materials on that planet. Carl Freedman turns our attention to film in analyzing Alex Proyas' *Dark City*, which he sees as the best example of a dialectic between sf and film noir. John Rieder then stays with cinema to mount a similar argument that Wim Wender's *Until the End of the World* most successfully questions the ideology of technological destiny which underpins earlier films like *2001*.

The second section of *Red Planets*, "When Worlds Collide," considers encounters between the human and the non-human, firstly with some shrewd criticism of the Singularity by Steven Shaviro. The Singularity was a term coined and popularized in 1993 by the mathematician and sf writer Vernor Vinge to designate an information explosion which would radically transform the nature of human life. It was further developed by Raymond Kurzweil in his 2005 study *The Singularity Is Near*, which Shaviro describes as hard sf and tending towards a millenarian end point where distinctions between the human and technology disappear. He cites Charles Stross's novel *Accelerando* (2005) as a perceptive criticism of the Singularity because its world "never escapes the horizon of

capital and its flows." Sherryl Vint continues her ground-breaking research into human speciesism by discussing Cordwainer Smith's Instrumentality stories as questioning the exploitive relation of humans to animals and finally Phillip Wegner presents Ken MacLeod's *Full Revolution* quartet as a sequence resisting naive utopianism by evoking permanent revolution.

In the third more retrospective section, "Back to the Future," Iris Luppa surveys contemporary criticism of Weimar film, noting that the critics and film-makers alike shared a perception that society was on the brink of change. Rob Latham presents a section from his work in progress on the New Wave to examine those writers' ambivalent perceptions of the city, citing Thomas M. Disch's *334* as an apparent attack on urban planning complicated by aesthetic revulsion from the modern city. Darren Jorgensen returns to the heady days of 1968 to re-examine Althusser's critique of historicity, taking Fredric Jameson to task for compromising with capitalist aesthetics and in the final essay Andrew Milner uses Raymond Williams, whose essays on sf he is currently editing, to argue for a proximity between sf and historical fiction rather than the more predictable utopias.

An afterword to a collection might offer a coda or brief summing-up, but China Miéville's "Cognition as Ideology" does far more than this. Having discussed the notion of a cognition effect common to Suvin and Jameson, he neatly shifts the terms of reference to words, proposing that a cognition effect is "*something done with language by someone to someone*" (his emphasis). By this simple move he shifts sf criticism to rhetoric, strategies of persuasion that often involve falsehood. Here he picks up that old chestnut "science in sf" and argues that from Wells onwards writers have been constantly engaging in games of make-believe which include so-called science that the writer knows to be false. Miéville's essay levels well-directed sarcasm against sf's supposed rationalist agenda, arguing that it is not about science but rather "capitalist modernity's ideologically projected self-justification"; or, as he more succinctly puts it, capitalism's "bullshit about itself." The clarity and sweep of this essay makes an excellent conclusion to *Red Planets*. Miéville's broader agenda is to break down the barrier between sf and fantasy, which he could only attempt briefly here. Hopefully he will develop this line of argument elsewhere.

Makers

by Cory Doctorow (HarperVoyager, 2009, 416pp, £14.99)
Reviewed by Clare Parody

In a recent article for *Tin House* magazine, Cory Doctorow set out the terms of his understanding of the nature of sf's dialogue with the present and the future. The piece stands as one of many corrections of the misconception that sf is or should be a predictive literature, but goes still further; Doctorow denies sf its extrapolative function ("some writers", he advises, "will tell you they're extrapolating a future based on rigor and science, but they're just wrong" [1]), and even that it is future-oriented at all. He argues instead that sf is a form of "radical presentism", a literature focused on present realities and present anxieties, that simply uses futurism metaphorically and allegorically as a device to expose and explore them. "Orwell", as he puts it, "didn't worry about a future dominated by the view-screens from *1984*, he worried about a *present* in which technology was changing the balance of power, creating opportunities for the state to enforce its power over individuals at ever-more-granular levels."[2]

So far, so familiar (if distinctively forthright) an iteration of sf's debates of definition. Yet it sits in notable tension with Doctorow's latest sf novel, *Makers*. The US edition of *Makers* bears the tagline "A Novel of the Whirlwind Changes to Come", and if it doesn't stand explicitly as a prediction, it is, at least, an undeniably forward-looking book, an exploration of the shape of the next few decades of the twenty-first century. Of course, necessarily in this it is a diagnosis of the present, an expression of the patterns and potential Doctorow sees around him, but to limit its futurism thus to allegory or metaphor feels misleading.

At the core of *Makers* may be the kind of dialogue between speculative future and present reality that Doctorow describes, a vision of a post-scarcity economy that reflects on the hyper-materialism and surfeit of manufacturing industries characterising contemporary developed economies. *Driving* the novel, however, is fascination with how the economic and industrial shifts it posits might actually play out. *Makers*' commentary on modern manufacturing is developed into a kaleidoscopic refraction of a theme, an exploration of how a socioeconomic sensibility can permeate and reconfigure patterns of living, working, and interacting at every level and in every corner of society. The backdrop of the novel is for the most part shanty towns and temporary, itinerant settlements, dwellings, businesses and communities put together by their inhabitants, and that are in a constant state of flux, remodelling, and expansion; structuring the narrative is the building, configuration and reconfiguration of industries, entrepreneurial networks, business models and partnerships. Whether through participation in a subculture, or through the medical alteration of their metabolism, *Makers*'s characters make and remake themselves, from their identity to their physiology; many of them are journalists and writers, meanwhile, who are positioned as

makers of experience, culture, and social movement, as causing new forms of work or lifestyle to take off by "mak[ing it] all seem so fucking *glorious*." (70) *Makers* is endlessly inventive in its rethinking of the need to which future manufacturing will cater, jumping from "roommate-ware", to weight loss without calorie reduction, to an increasingly homeless population, to nostalgia, to the pleasure of making itself (one of the novel's enduring motifs is the mechanical computer lovingly and laboriously constructed with ring-pulls, Barbie heads and brown M&Ms, for no reason or purpose other than the joy of it). Its technologies of manufacture are multiple, various, and intelligently reflexive, including a "self-modifying jungle gym" (100) that responds to patterns of use, and a 3-D printer that can not only manufacture and manipulate any prototype fed to it, but can even "print out all of the parts necessary to build a 3-D printer." (96) *Makers* is a novel of the implications of the implementation of change, of the new forms of relationship, new social and personal challenges, new ways of thinking that unravel from it.

In this, perhaps, Doctorow's fiction is a not-too-distant cousin of his non-fiction. A prolific and incisive blogger and journalist, Doctorow's business is comment on and chronicling of the present climate, in particular, of copyright law, intellectual property, and post-scarcity economics; however, as a social commentator Doctorow is not merely a critic or diagnostician, but an advocate and agitator for change. He has addressed Microsoft in person to encourage them to give up on Digital Rights Management; his columns on filesharing laws are imperative-laced calls to arms. Wherever possible, he distributes his writing as a free download under Creative Commons licensing, "selling" his books through a donation system whereby download users may choose to pay for a hard copy to be sent to libraries or collections in shelters, schools, prisons, and so on.

In many respects, *Makers* invites and rewards reading in the light of Doctorow's non-fiction work. The novel begins at a press conference, in which a new corporate conglomeration is emerging from the ashes of two giants, Kodak and Duracell. Its stall is set out from the off by the figurehead of the initiative, Landon Kettlewell: this is the story of a new kind of market and industry infrastructure, in which "money [doesn't] come from a single, monolithic product line", or "a project that we pull together on", but from "*network[s]* of like-minded, cooperating autonomous teams, all of which are empowered to do whatever they want, provided that it returns something to our coffers." (11) Over the shoulder of Suzanne Church, a Silicon Valley journalist assigned to cover "Kodacell"'s start-up, *Makers* then takes us to the workshop of one such "autonomous team", Lester Banks and Perry Gibbons (and for a while, their newly assigned business manager Tjan), two gifted engineers with a talent and passion for repurposing obsolete, junked technology; from here, the novel unfolds, through a chronicle of the rise and fall of "New Work", the decentralised, artisanal economy that Kodacell kickstarts, into a thriller-plot with Disney as the antagonist and copyright law the battleground, with one eye always to a

biotech industry fuelled by an escalating obesity epidemic. *Makers* is propelled and preoccupied by copying, recycling, redistribution and recombination, by a world of surplus, in which manufacturing industries and economies are trying to get to grips with a market driven by radically different notions of need; in short, it wears its thematic affinities with Doctorow's non-fiction preoccupations on its sleeve.

Moreover, *Makers* has the blog and the column in the bones of its style and structure. To a degree, this is literally so; *Makers* is scattered with stretches of metafiction, emails and blog entries from both Suzanne and Freddy, the "rat-toothed jumped up gossip columnist from one of the U.K. tech-rags" (1) with a vendetta against Suzanne. These passages rewrite the novel as journalism, making explicit its social commentary and economic philosophy. More than this, however, the basic design principle of *Makers* is the interview. Its narrative architecture, its setting and its cast repeatedly put characters in positions where they are asked to explain and expound upon their beliefs, their opinions, and the rationale behind their actions: press conferences, of course, and other forms of contact with the media, but also job interviews, boardroom meetings, and drunken, grandstanding conversations between enthusiasts and acolytes. So Doctorow makes mouthpieces of his characters somewhat, and mouthpieces, at that, united by an insight, enthusiasm, and wry sense of humour a relative of Doctorow's journalistic style, rather than individuated as character voices. The result is a novel that in many respects seems to be performing similar work to Doctorow's journalism, and occupies the same position in dialogue with the present and the future, scattered with capsule manifestos for change.

This is not a criticism (although it does mean that for all its interest in lives and people, *Makers* may disappoint readers looking for a character piece), and nor is it the extent of what Doctorow's novel has to offer. For *Makers* is ultimately a novel, not a blog entry or an op-ed; nor is it even a utopian one, with all the genre's didactic and prescriptive thrust, however transparent its ideological passions and allegiances may be. Doctorow has chosen to engage with the complex futurism of the sf novel, and it does a lot of work for him. Much of *Makers*' wit, intelligence and thematic interest lies in its exploitation of the ironies of obsolescence sf as a mode makes possible, the narrative positioning of present-day commonplaces as hopelessly outdated, or conversely, the currently outlandish as passé and banal. There is real humour and delight to be found in *Makers*' informing you, for example, that in this United States of the twenty-teens, the subcultures of the noughties' ironic and subversive appropriation of Disney icons and merchandise has become sanctioned and legitimised by the corporation, which has revitalised itself by turning Fantasyland at Disneyworld into a Goth-lite hangout. More importantly, perhaps the most powerful articulation of the novel's comment and diagnosis of a present heading towards a post-scarcity economy comes from the way its sf futurism turns contemporary culture into junk, relegates it to the scrapheap of past-ness. Junkyards, obsolete technology,

and other, less literal forms of discarding and forgetting run throughout *Makers*, undercutting the novel's irrepressible generation and productivity, and while *Makers* enthusiastically envisions industries and economies oriented towards recycling and repurposing, the picture it coterminously paints of a present of surplus, excess, and disposability is sobering. This darker side of *Makers*' future vision crystallises in Perry's ambivalent fingering of the jewellery sold on *Makers*' Florida boardwalk, strings of "odd, bony beads" (130) made from ectopic foetuses, and "delicate leather" (131) that turns out to be foetal skin, the desire both to discard that which is unwanted and repurpose waste taken to a morbid extreme.

Makers is equally interested, meanwhile, in the products of manufacturing as in processes, and it revisits from angle after angle the question of the role that not only technology, but products, brands, objects generally play in the shaping of human identity and experience. Tjan observes wryly, explaining to Suzanne his relationship with his young kids in Russia, "Who knew that long-distance divorce was the killer app for videoconferencing?" (46); it occurs time and again to Suzanne that the mere presence of her notebook or video recording device, of an eye of the increasingly pervasive and influential media, changes people's behaviour and determines how a situation will play out. The second half of the narrative revolves around a half-ride, half-museum that Lester and Perry create as an archive and a reminder of the invention and craftsmanship of New Work; it becomes hugely successful because the objects within it have so much resonance for so many people, embodying and evoking all the contexts and environments and moments in which they were used. The ride runs on user-generated content, meanwhile, both literally, in that customers are free to contribute artefacts, and through a system that allows people to indicate which exhibits they find particularly appealing or out of place as they travel on the ride; much of this part of *Makers*' narrative then explores the idea that the ride becomes a story and a history through this process, that narratives of social trends, cultural sensibilities, zeitgeists and households and relationships, are emerging from the collective consciousness when it encounters this record of its creation and consumption.

What the sf novel as a form gives Doctorow is a chance to produce some of these stories himself. Sf is not only a literature of human encounters with technology, but a genre that can reflexively experiment with the fictional forms and narrative patterns required to tell the stories of the new experiences these encounters produce. So *Makers* is a novel in which journalists are the narrative lynchpins, Disney can be an antagonist and copyright law the battleground, and the plot is structured and progressed by blogging; its narrative is a global network, with nodes of multiple characters and multiple points-of-view in multiple cities, countries, and continents, all connected and constantly reconfiguring. It is a novel that recognises that the theme park and the ride may be the resonant, emblematic, evocative settings of the future, embodying as they do the extent to

which Western culture is trending towards nostalgia, mediated and simulacral experience, sensation and stimulation and hermeneutically-sealed escapism. It should be noted, however, that Doctorow is either occasionally unsuccessful or only half-heartedly committed as regards this aspect of *Makers*, particularly with respect to character. Despite a couple of notes of complexity towards the end, "Rat-Toothed Freddy" reads as a familiar and even reactionary caricature; the obstacles that Lester and Suzanne's relationship negotiates, namely, Suzanne's inability to muster up sexual interest in Lester until he has undergone extreme weight-loss treatment, seem intended as an example of the novel interpersonal dynamics produced by the developments in biotech *Makers* posits, but wouldn't look out of place in a modern realist fiction. Perry's relationship with smart, practical, "pneumatic Midwestern girl" (155) Hilda, meanwhile, begins as an interesting exploration of new kinds of sexual relationship made necessary by increasingly fast-paced and diasporic ways of living (despite a lurking touch of fantasy about it); it develops, however, into a desperately and rather disappointingly conventional monogamous love story.

Ultimately, however, *Makers* is aptly and satisfyingly hybrid in its form and operations; like Lester and Perry in their workshop, it takes forms and genres from fiction and non-fiction and recombines them into a text that serves Doctorow's particular purpose. This is one reflexive level among many on which *Makers* thus stands not only as critique, comment, and metaphor in its futurism, but as both a demonstration and a gesture towards change. Even the book as a(n im)material object performs this function, released, like all Doctorow's work, under Creative Commons licensing, available both for purchase and download; in its sale, its purchase and its consumption, *Makers* operates as an indirect comment on the flaws of current copyright and intellectual property law, a vision of a more palatable setup, and a bridge between the two.

(ENDNOTES)

1 Cory Doctorow, "Radical Presentism", *Tin House Magazine*, 41, 9th October 2009 <http://tinhousebooks.com/blog/?p=410> [accessed 26/11/09]

2 Ibid

Cyberabad Days

By Ian McDonald (Gollancz, 2009, 320 pp., £16.95 hbk/£12.99 trade paperback
Reviewed by Iain Emsley

Ian McDonald's *Cyberabad Days* is a collection of short stories which is set in the world of *River of Gods*. It continues his exploration of the developing world, how it is changing with technology and the social changes this is bringing. To a certain extent, he has always written challenging fiction from the edge of the British Sf community. These stories echo different sub-genres, critiquing them in the same fashion as the rethinking of genre that happened with New Weird and New Space Opera.

In "The Djinn's Wife", McDonald retells a Sufi myth of a woman in Delhi marrying a Djinn, a union that can only end in disaster. Rather than being a mystical creature, the Djinn is an AI close to self awareness. Whilst negotiating water rights with the neighbouring states, it is also preparing for war and the police start proceedings against it to close it down. Under all this though is a very human story with the breakdown in trust in the marriage begging the question: could the union of human and machine ever work? McDonald updates the bare bones of the story with a technological aspect. The casting of self-aware AI as mythical creature does echo the 1980s paranoia about artificial intelligence but he updates the entity with a very human capriciousness. McDonald is aware of changing the original story for the modern audience but he places the story firmly into the narrative tradition from which it comes, aware of the Orientalist debates on re-using other traditions.

McDonald returns to the relationship between politics and love in "An Eligible Boy" Padmini is meant to marry Salim Azad, son of a rival family, despite her wishes. There is a certain fairy tale ending when she kills him without realising that she is capable of doing so. After refusing his advances, Padmini gives in after some long soul-searching and marries Salim after falling in love with him. Her father had warned her that she was a weapon but never explained that her kiss is deadly to the Azad family. The effect on this on Padmini is of no consequence to her father so long as the rival dynasty is destroyed. Once again, the individual is sacrificed to a supposed greater good in an updating of *Romeo and Juliet* where the community divisions are insidiously carried on through the children.

McDonald is equally sanguine about the effects of conflict on the individual, seeing no winners but only losers and divided communities. In "Sanjeev and the RobotWallah", Sanjeev joins the RobotWallahs, controlling the remotely controlled weapons. When the war ends, he uses his skills to set up a small private security firm and then help his father's business. His friend steals one of the robots but fails to adjust to the peace again and is eventually reduced to selling drugs to tourists. McDonald questions the way that some individuals see conflict as possibly never ending and losing themselves in the war whilst others

can readjust to a changed world. He extends the post-conflict arena of military Sf where the combatants need to find their own place in the world where little glory can be found.

In "Kyle Meets the River", friends from different communities are divided after a scuffle in a football game which inspires racist calls. Kyle's father is involved in rebuilding Bharat where the rebuilders are housed in secure compounds, keeping the nation divided. When his friend, Salim, is involved in a racist fueled fight, Kyle learns about the difficulties of cross-community friendships. The two use a lighthoek to talk so technology allows communication across prejudices and divides. It is also a palliative as Jasbir discovers in "An Eligible Boy", getting his teeth done and using television soaps to make conversation. For him, technology is something to make him impressive and eventually confesses that there is little substance to him. Whilst seeing various network and telephonic technologies as bringing a community together, McDonald questions how the access to knowledge is used to puff oneself as opposed to gaining knowledge of any real substance.

McDonald may not have been feted as part of the recent re-thinkings about genre from New Weird and New Space Opera but his work draws and develops many of the themes of these happenings. *Cyberabad Days* reflects certain sub-genres – cyberpunk, Hard Sf, and military Sf – and rethinks them in terms of the human cost. *Cyberabad Days* is a very human collection, focussing on the things that create and destroy communities. One gets a sense that McDonald feels that it is a constant process with harmony as something that is, perhaps, unattainable. The best that these characters can do is too accept their humanity and use technology to better those links. McDonald continues to write fiction that respects but challenges the genre and our assumptions what it can do but reminds us that it is about humanity.

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Claire Brialey
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Paul McAuley is the author of eighteen novels, many of which have been nominated for the Campbell, BSFA and Clarke Awards, including the Arthur C. Clarke Award winning Fairyland. His most recent books such as The Quiet War and Gardens of the Sun.

Claire Brialey is co-editor of the Nova award-winning and Hugo-nominated Banana Wings, has been a Clarke judge, and contributed critical articles to Vector and other fanzines.

Mark Bould is the co-editor of Science Fiction Film and Television and author of The Cinema of John Sayles: Lone Star and Film Noir: From Berlin to Sin City. He has co-edited, The Routledge Companion to Science Fiction, Fifty Key Figures in Science Fiction and Red Planets:Marxists and Science Fiction among other projects, including several issues of Science Fiction Studies.

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