

Foundation

The International Review of Science Fiction



Special section on Michael Moorcock
and the New Wave

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The International Review of Science Fiction

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Editorial

Paul March-Russell

As every Trekkie knows, on 8th September 1966, *Star Trek* aired for the first time on NBC. Three days earlier though, in Portmeirion, the cameras started to roll on a follow-up to the popular spy series, *Danger Man*. *The Prisoner*, however, would be no mere sequel and its defiance of genre categories would perfectly complement the anti-authoritarian mood when it finally aired a year later.

Between them, *Star Trek* and *The Prisoner* offer two contrasting visions of the late 1960s. The former, influenced by an American liberal democratic tradition, emerged at the height of the Civil Rights Movement and just before Lyndon B. Johnson's model of 'the Great Society' was broken on the wheel of Vietnam. The latter, informed by a sceptical tradition within British philosophy that includes John Locke and David Hume, dovetailed with modish concerns to be found elsewhere in the neo-avant-garde: consumerism, pop culture, sex, death and eroticism, madness and personal liberty.

These contrasts aside, what is most striking is their near-proximity to one another, and how quickly the optimistic vision of *Star Trek* was lapped by *The Prisoner's* pessimism. The sense of cultural acceleration is captured in the Victoria and Albert Museum's current exhibition on the period 1966–70, *So You Want a Revolution?* Like its previous celebration of the work of David Bowie (reviewed in *Foundation* 116), the V&A seeks to overwhelm the spectator with a barrage of music, imagery and displays, the disorientation of which is designed to resemble the effect of those overloaded times . . .

At least for those living in or around Ladbroke Grove, which is of course where Michael Moorcock was, whilst he was editing *New Worlds* from 1964 to 1970. The same kinds of visual and psychological dislocation to be found in *The Prisoner*, or at the V&A, can also be observed in the pages of *New Worlds*, especially after the magazine moved to its A4 format in 1967. By contrast, whereas *Star Trek* has grown into a global franchise after initially being cancelled three years into its five-year mission, *New Worlds* (like *The Prisoner*) has only ever been a cult phenomenon. The relative insignificance of the British New Wave has provoked several sf critics to diminish its importance in recent years, to promote the work of its American counterparts such as Samuel R. Delany and Joanna Russ as being of far greater influence on the genre, and to criticise the undue emphasis given to it by an academia fetishistically inclined towards literary experiment.

Such a criticism seems to me to be misplaced. As the near-proximity in terms of date between *Star Trek* and *The Prisoner* reveals, there is no one monolithic

view of the late 1960s. And to compare one with the other is not to compare like with like. Instead, we have to see the development of the New Wave as part of the growing diversification of sf during the post-war years, as history, politics, ideology and demography affected the social character of economic production. (Although, with the exception of writers such as Hilary Bailey and Pamela Zoline, *New Worlds* did little to promote the cause of feminist sf.) Cult phenomenon it may be but, like *The Prisoner*, the New Wave had long-term effects upon writers such as Iain M. Banks, China Miéville and Alan Moore who are popular with academic and general readers alike. So, to dismiss consideration of the New Wave as out of court would seem to me to be a critical misjudgement.

Jacob Huntley and Mark P. Williams have assembled, then, three articles that examine the legacy of the New Wave as well as a previously unpublished interview with Moorcock from 2008. Literary experiment crops up elsewhere in the journal, not least in Peter Higgins' appreciation of Gene Wolfe (whose latest book is also reviewed). I am delighted that Gwyneth Jones has given us permission to print the text of a 2014 lecture, a sequel to her essay, 'Aliens in the Fourth Dimension'. In what might appear to be a somewhat male-dominated issue, Jones supplies a badly-needed corrective to questions of alienness, female exploitation and the abuse of migrants.

Lastly, whereas the V&A could be accused of seeking cultural kudos through a nostalgia trip, it is wholly appropriate for *Foundation* to revisit the New Wave since, in many respects, the journal was one of its by-products. John Brunner, a key *New Worlds* author, was interviewed in the very first issue whilst the journal was later staffed by ex-New Wavers such as Christopher Priest and Ian Watson. Speaking of whom . . .

Ian Watson would like to point out that his collaboration with Roberto Quaglia, *The Beloved of My Beloved* (2009), was written in English and not translated as claimed in *Foundation* 124. However, in the same year, Quaglia's sf novel, *Pane, Burro e Paradossina*, was translated into English and published by Immanion Press as *Paradoxine: The Adventures of James Vagabond*.

Guest Editorial: New Worlds-New Waves

Jacob Huntley (University of East Anglia) and Mark P. Williams (Johannes Gutenberg Universität, Mainz)

As Nick Hubble notes in his article, the New Wave as an identifiable *style* seems at odds with the concurrent celebration of the individual approach of so many of its participants. It is a strange and contradictory aspect of the New Wave, a similar tension of collective individualism to that which an exasperated Johnny Rotten saw within punk ('Be a punk, join the army'). But this is not the only point of contradiction. In his book, *Eduardo Paolozzi at New Worlds* (2013), David Brittain identifies what 'While the mission of the magazine was essentially anti-populist, Moorcock felt compelled to compete for a general (male) audience. This was because he held the conviction that the title should stay true to its origins in popular literature – even though it was endorsed by the Arts Council as a cultural organisation'.

Squaring the circle of making esoteric, avant-garde sf popular with the masses might well appeal to any editor or publisher with an eye on the bottom line, especially one given to dialectical implosions within his own writing, but that central tension reveals much. The New Wave carries disharmonious undercurrents. Moorcock says that those associated with the New Wave were looking to sf as a way out from the cul-de-sac in which modernism had found itself. Modernism finds itself there, in no small part, due to the increasingly elaborate experiments with trying to render everyday experience and quotidian consciousness. Maybe every innovation that walks the line between a collective drive for shared difference and a need to assert distinctive individuality in the face of the changing possibilities of the world requires us to be caught up in both contraries.

So the New Wave recognizes the paradox of populist anti-populism, and *New Worlds* presents the familiar in an unfamiliar way and vice versa. Visual and textual cut-ups might see some more conservative readers falling away, yet extracts from J.G. Ballard's *The Atrocity Exhibition* (1970) incorporating images of cars and naked women could assuage the rebarbative effects of the prose experiments for that 'general (male) audience'. At the same time, it is a judicious – even cautious, conservative – use of what Walter Benjamin calls the 'radical political tool' of collage techniques, which also anticipates the more violent cut-ups and jump-cuts that are now commonplace across contemporary media.

Pursuing a metaphor is often a useful way of thinking through the process of identifying an otherwise abstract object of discussion and critical attention, to dig out the reason why the metaphor seems to *work*. So let's try: *Perhaps it is only in the wake of the wave or from a great distance from it that we can view*

its peaks and troughs, and discern it from the rest of that tide in the moment of its existence. In thinking of the metaphorical uses of waves, two modernist writers spring to mind: Virginia Woolf and James Joyce. These names and the ambitions of writing they conjure seem to underpin, or lie somewhere in close proximity to, much of what will follow: to make the process of writing and reading do something distinctly, uniquely of its moment. This drive is echoed where Brian Baker compares Brian Aldiss with Joyce, or in the several modernist phantoms that haunt Jonathan Barlow's comparison of the New Wave Jerry Cornelius with the Neo-Weird Lord Horror. Hubble's discussion of Christopher Priest as someone placed indeterminately (not) within and/or (not) without the New Wave proper is a fruitful way of conceiving this specific moment in the history of sf while also being instructive for thinking about literature and the arts in general.

There are other stress fractures radiating from that central tension as well. If the Arts Council endorsement seems at odds with anti-Establishment, individualistic impulses (especially in an era where state responsibility for art and culture has been abnegated), the issues surrounding gender, raised through that assumed audience, can also produce an unintended alienation effect. For today's undergraduates, the experimental writing of the 1960s does not glow with the white heat of technology; older, white men do not immediately carry a cachet of edgy, insurgent radicalism. The *Ballardian's* Angry Old Men may be taken at face value by people nearer to Jimmy Porter's age. What can seem radical and insurgent from one perspective can still retain a lot of the conservatism and habits of thought of its time as well. Sometimes the degree of dissonance can be utterly alienating.

The New Wave plays with, and pokes fun at, the culture from which it emerges. But the irony is often covert, the material not so much in tension with itself as cocking a snook at contemporary social mores. Ballard is wickedly, deliciously funny. And never more so than when he is deadpanning for all it is worth. In short, when is the New Wave pointing up the absurdities or iniquities of the time and when is it simply outdated? Pamela Zoline's 'The Heat Death of the Universe' (1967), which cross-cuts the traditional, domestic maternal role of housewife and mother with universal disorder, might not immediately resonate with students who deem Marvel's Black Widow a feminist character.

If we identify the New Wave as an undercurrent of the (New) Weird it might simultaneously be too odd and not weird enough, dependent on one's familiarity with contemporary trends in genre fiction. In discussing Anglo-American sf with students it is noticeable how quickly the easy frame of robots, spaceships and time travel asserts itself. Someone in the room will look deeply puzzled when it is suggested to them that these elements are just the scenery or set-dressing, and not the determining conditions of a science fiction narrative – but generally, someone else will, *simultaneously*, be nodding firmly in agreement. Making that debate between common impressions of the constitution of forms *visible* and

discussable seems to be central to understanding what the importance of the New Wave is or was. (Interestingly there is frequently one ((or more)) person in the room who will simply state there is no need for even thinking in terms of genres, only in terms of books – and maybe that is something the New Wave was about as well.)

The relationship between the New Wave and the New Weird remains to be excavated in greater detail. Barlow's article gives us one of the more rarified but no less significant points of contact in exploring the relationship between Moorcock's Jerry Cornelius and David Britton's Lord Horror through a shared aesthetics of transgression. Between the New Wave and the New Weird come the three 'punks', cyberpunk, splatterpunk and steampunk, and their relationship to the preceding and subsequent movements cannot be overlooked. To these can be added the networks of circulation formed by independent bookshops selling American imports, and spaces where the 'pulp' sat alongside 'cult' texts; the New Wave was also an attempt to cultivate that kind of environment on the page.

Perhaps that idea of tension needs to be borne in mind throughout – and the tension extends to include New Weird and those other, related modes. We should always be alert to the ontological levels in such works, where intertextuality as much as dramatic irony can often be a constitutive feature. The odd copy of *New Worlds* that turns up in an independent bookshop or car boot sale has cult value (what the film director John Waters celebrates as 'trash'). And if it's lurking on a shelf in Waterstones have all the ideas within been co-opted? When the narrators are at their gravest, the subject matter at its most serious, the discourse at its most impersonal and scientific, that is when the reader should try to catch the metaleptic wink. Or be caught out for anticipating one that is not really there. Hoodwinked by the multiverse.

‘All-purpose human being’: An Interview with Michael Moorcock

Mark P. Williams (Johannes Gutenberg Universität-Mainz)

Writing this preface in August 2016 I realized I had accidentally made a time capsule. The following interview was conducted via email in 2008 in preparation for the conference ‘New World Entropy’ on the work of Michael Moorcock at Liverpool John Moores University. It stands on the cusp of significant changes in recent history that seem retrospectively difficult to conceive as a sequence of events; in Moorcock’s email to me he said briefly he was ‘curious to see if I still agree with myself’ (23/08/16).

Inspired by the Cornelius Quartet, the interview was structured into four sections of questions with some space allowed for development, dialogue and digression. Partly for this reason, partly because it struck me as such a distinctive phrase, I have borrowed the term ‘all-purpose human being’ from the end of *The Final Programme* as a title.

If my clumps of questions seem occasionally clumsy, Moorcock’s replies I think save them and find the best threads of what I was trying to tie together. Throughout our exchange Moorcock was patient with my questions and generous with his responses. The interview spends some time exploring his use and conception of the multiverse as a distinctive set of linked techniques, and on the value of the New Wave experiments, whether we consider them as constituting a collective moment, a shared set of aesthetic impulses, a period or milieu, or a tendency.

Immediately following the Moorcock conference there were many personal life changes, including house-moves, completing my PhD, and then moving to Aotearoa New Zealand to live and work. Things always seemed to come between me and this text to review it and get it published. As a result, it became something I carried with me as a captured moment from the recent past. Between then and now came further changes of perspective: my wife and I lived close to the major cultural events of our adopted country learning about its histories and cultural distinctness, such as the significance of the country’s Pākehā, Māori, and Pasifika heritage in public discourse and everyday life. The unfolding aftermath of the Christchurch earthquake on the South Island, which happened shortly before our arrival made us aware of living in a capital city with regular minor earth tremors.

Then an estranging vision of Britain: we saw the apocalyptic media edits of the 2011 riots and the spectacle of London 2012 from the opposite hemisphere of the earth.

Returning to the UK in 2013, I co-organized a conference at the University of East Anglia on the New Wave in order to return to this distinctive moment

(or period, milieu or tendency), and its creative and critical legacies. A job opportunity arose in Germany and so the time capsule moved with me.

Then another estranging vision from Britain: the EU Referendum and the Brexit vote, witnessed from the opposite side of some imaginary line.

So, I return now to my time capsule, this discussion with Moorcock about the multiverse, the New Wave and the importance of seeing the same things from many different angles in fiction. In the face of our continued, shared uncertainties and upheavals in Britain and Europe, it seems to me now that Moorcock's responses to the currents of his own times have considerable significance for our present, so that the interview offers a wide-ranging consideration of literary and cultural responses to changing times.

ONE

Mark P. Williams: As you have stated in various places, structure has an important relationship with ethics and morality in your work and the multiverse is clearly underpinned by this way of thinking.

Michael Moorcock: I am uncomfortable with linear logic and 'certainties'. I admire flexible thinkers and dislike or fear people who have fixed ideas, which fail to allow for the context of an action. I suppose all writers have a few themes to which they constantly return. I like a book to reflect as many riffs on favourite themes as possible – betrayal, loss, abandonment – they all go back to early childhood, my father's leaving my mother, my tendency to be almost uncritically loyal to friends, institutions and so on to a point, probably, of stupidity (in the eyes of my intimates) sometimes – thus the supernatural romances in particular have a common theme of the hero realizing 'his' side is flawed, wrong, even evil, and changing to the opposing side which has more benign qualities. I think this is no more than a reflection of my own very thoroughly buried resentments at being abandoned (if you like) by my father and of my mother proving to be something of a congenital liar, so that I had to question from a very early age what was 'true' and what was a lie, while I knew enough to understand the relativism of those ideas. I'm still uncomfortable with lies (whether my own or others') and certainties . . .

I suppose I try to create structures which reflect a certain kind of relativism, so that a theme can be examined from as many angles as possible. I used to say that 'my' multiverse was like a multifaceted gem through which you could shine a light and get it reflected from virtually innumerable angles. The Cornelius books were the first books in which I tried to present as many angles as possible, offering a multiplicity of moral angles.

I am not a liberal relativist in the way I think and live my life. I have quite strong anti-relativist views in my politics and morality, but I prefer to remain a philosophical Kropotkinist anarchist in my actions, since this allows me the greatest amount of flexibility (in voting, for instance – though most anarchists do

not believe in voting) or determining an important course of action. It helps me clarify how I should act pretty rapidly.

I don't have many general rules – I believe that context is all-important, which is why I like to put the same character in as many contexts as possible. I've developed techniques which allow me to do that. These contexts can be realistic or fantastic.

Jerry exists in our common reality as well as in a specific fantasy. I felt by the time I'd reached *Blood* (perhaps my most misunderstood and most ignored sequence) I could write a book which shifted as naturally from reality to fantasy as my own imagination. Most of my career, certainly since the late 1960s, has been spent trying to develop techniques which would let a book reflect all the various facets of my mind and culture. Morally, I most admire people who are highly conscious, self-aware and prepared to act according to ethics gained from experience. A structure which is a model of those qualities is what I'm always hoping to produce. Once that structure (as in *Mother London*, say) is created, I can then run any number of themes on it. The more that structure reflects a complex reality, the more it appears random – in fact superficially unstructured. That's why reviewers who don't spot the structure use terms like 'rambling', 'chaotic' or 'confused' and explains why some readers, who expect a conventional plot, either give up reading my more ambitious work or treat it as 'unstructured', which it certainly isn't. Although my experiments haven't always been successful with some readers, they are, if anything, too rigorously structured. The formulae I developed for the fantasy adventures are, if anything, too narrow.

MPW: What do you consider to be the most important ways in which your own literary multiverse has evolved over the years?

MM: Being able to move easily between reality and fantasy and produce books which do that. This is most readily seen, I think, in books like *The War Amongst the Angels*. The multiverse and chaos theory have provided me with logic systems enabling me to write increasingly on a multiplicity of levels, to match what's going on in my own head. I once said that Mandelbrot gave me a map of my own consciousness. As I had Dee sing in the music we did for *Gloriana* 'In my skull's a multiplicity of spheres . . .' I've used these, I suppose, mostly to put the same character in different environments and see how those environments (mental, social and so on) alter the decisions of the character. I have found a form which, in short, is flexible and all-encompassing enough to carry the complexity of my ideas but which also provides a way of presenting as many narratives as possible. I've always looked for forms which can carry the maximum number of narratives. Cornelius was the first form but I think *Blood*, etc. allow more subtlety.

I don't think my view of Elric has changed much, but I work like a weaver, constantly returning to certain points, so Elric changes, I suppose, as much as

the rest of the tapestry changes. The images and personalities remain the same but deepen in the weaving. Does that make sense?

MPW: Moving into the more realist part of your multiverse, now that you have finished the 'Between the Wars' novels, for example, do you feel that they have exorcised something?

MM: Hardly exorcised, though I felt bound to write the Pyat books – an act of conscience probably more than an exorcism. It was something I felt duty bound to write. The focus for me was the Holocaust. Survival guilt was involved. Since times changed while I was working on it (Kosovo, Iraq) my unrealistic, shamanistic hope to avert a recurrence has been disappointed. It's probably a common problem amongst visionary writers. There might have been an exorcism had it not been for all the terrible events which occurred while writing the last two volumes.

MPW: Would you mind expanding on them a bit further in regard to the Pyat novels and the *Blood/War Amongst the Angels* books? It always strikes me that your writing constantly tests myths (including people's idealized visions of themselves) against an array of alternate viewpoints but also against a sort of 'historical' narrative.

MM: I've probably had the habit of testing myths since I began to realize that my mother, though a good one, was a congenital liar! So from an early age I've tended to test for 'truth' as a matter of habit. It's the same impulse, of course, which made film-makers make movies seeing an event vent from several perspectives. I'm putting characters into as many different contexts as possible since one of the few things I'm absolutely certain about is that context defines actions (I also believe that statements frequently represent action) as well as 'the truth'. I came to understand early on that a writer essentially has a few characters and a few themes to which they constantly return. Therefore, I saw no point in recreating the same character under different names or, if I did, to make that character (and therefore the reader) conscious of that. In the Cornelius books I assumed (probably mistakenly!) that the modern reader was conscious of the 'conclusions' or chief themes of modernism and the books are best read in that context. The same is true of the Second Ether books. I didn't intend them to be cryptic. They're designed, however, to be read and I hope enjoyed on quite a few levels.

So in that sense I suppose I am having a conversation with other writers, though I'm not really conscious of addressing other writers. I tend to hope the books appeal to writers on different levels and that's *my* context, i.e. I hope the books are entertaining as genre fiction and as idiosyncratic literary fiction. Of course, the sword and sorcery and early sf books are generally genre fiction before they are anything else and aren't especially ambitious beyond sometimes having a general argument which reflects what I hope are more sophisticated books. Much of this was inspired by the directions in which popular music was

going in the 1960s and '70s, although I'm not sure music went as far as I'd hoped (which is why I came to listen increasingly to modern composers like Messiaen or Glass – and gave up musical experiment after Pavli and myself found engineers didn't know what we were doing and rather resisted us). Ballard, myself, Paolozzi, Langdon Jones, [Barrington] Bayley and others who came to be associated with *New Worlds* all rather thought modernism had become a cul-de-sac and were looking for ways out not through genre fiction in general but through sf in particular. Richard Hamilton hated what people like myself were doing because he thought that essentially we were recreating what he was reacting against. This had something to do with what Michael Kustow (then director of the ICA) called at the Brighton conference on sf (Brighton Arts Festival 67) 'the anxious ownership syndrome' – we all owned or made sf our own in different ways and ultimately parted, generally reasonably amicably, to go our individual ways. I remained closer to the genre through writing fantasy books, but my Cornelius books and others never addressed the genre reader, as such, and continue to be liked outside the sf genre readership far more than in.

This still confuses some critics who associate us with the American movement to 'improve' the quality of sf. Although I started out arguing for this in early fanzines, by the early sixties, having read William Burroughs, I changed my ambition. The Second Ether material itself (Billy Bob Begg, etc.) is really referencing Burroughs who became an important inspiration not mentioned, surprisingly, in Ballard's recent memoir (or if I missed it, not much referenced). Burroughs was the only Beat to inspire us.

MPW: I found *Blood* left a strong impression that I couldn't quite situate until I'd read the other two books but now seems to be a kind of summation or reappraisal of several of your earlier books.

MM: I think that's fair.

MPW: That trilogy also seemed, like your metatemporal detective stories, to be responding quite intimately to some of your fellow writers. Reading them felt partly like I had been granted permission to sit and listen to an ongoing conversation about all manner of cultural ideas; it felt wildly fantastical but also very personal.

MM: More to do with literary enthusiasms from Sexton Blake to Balzac. Though it might substitute for that sort of conversation, since I know very few writers, these days and almost never discuss work with them. These writers include, for instance, Michael Chabon and Walter Mosley, who have a similar interest in 'uniting' genre and literary fiction. Alan Moore is another. I would say the stories we write are all part of that 'conversation' – we are all inclined to demonstrate rather than discuss and this has been true since the *NW* days.

TWO

MPW: You have a clear personal enjoyment of absurdist surrealism – as shown in your contributions to the *Lambshead Guide* and your interest in Maurice Richardson's *Exploits of Engelbrecht* – what is it about this which most appeals to you? How does it work for your own ideas?

MM: Several of us on *NW* liked the idea of the unconscious manifested – all of us, of course, were part of the generation which went to the surrealist exhibition at the Whitechapel and later to the pop art exhibition there. I think it's fair to say that it was in the air. A commercial magazine most of us had liked was *Lilliput*, which ran the Engelbrecht stories, some sf and a lot of absurdist stuff, alongside photos by Bill Brandt and others, critiques of various art movements, even a few resurrections.

[Gerald] Kersh was a regular contributor, along with Richardson, Patrick Hamilton and others. We got quite a few of our cultural 'leads' from there. It was a magazine founded and contributed to by European émigrés fleeing Hitler. *Picture Post* was part of the same group, concentrating more on social subjects and using many of the best investigative journalists of the day, including James Cameron and Kenneth Allsop both of whom, I seem to remember, resigned when their reporting on Korea was curtailed. They later became the mainstays of the best TV journalism. Anyway, all this stuff was in the air when we were impressionable youths! Our taste for the absurd was formed by *Lilliput*, various European dramatists. And we shared a taste for French existentialists and the drama and plays associated with them – Nouvelle Vague included. We might have been disappointed by the focus on a certain middle class consciousness, as we saw it, in much of this work. In the end, some of it seemed as much of a dead end as we felt modernism had become. We were interested in manifest unconsciousness, if you like, as much as focusing on phenomena we considered new and worth examining from unconventional angles. The nuclear bomb, as an example, interested us more in terms of its psychic and social effect than whether or not we should try to 'ban' it. Perhaps this understanding of our potential annihilation drew us towards absurdism, I'm not sure. I first came in touch with many of these Continental writers and artists during trips to Paris from the age of 15 on when the bohemian world talked of them a lot of the time. Again, absurdism was attractive because it captured the mood of the time. Ultimately, of course, it would become popular via Goons, Beatles, Richard Lester and other film-makers, Python and so on but originally we got it via Dadaism, Pataphysiques and so on. *The Evergreen Review* pointed us to what there was in America, though it was more interesting for, for instance, publishing Millett's *Sexual Politics* etc. in the mid-60s. It was to publish Ballard's 'Assassination of Kennedy' after it had appeared in *New Worlds*. Fair to say that much of what enthused us was 'in the air' at the time.

MPW: You allude to a fondness for French literature and culture, Paris in

particular, but it is something you discuss relatively rarely in respect to your own work. Could you elaborate a little more on the specific aspects of French life or literature which have had a significant impact upon you?

MM: I think I've probably discussed that above. I was a huge fan of Camus in particular. I went to see his *Caligula* in most performances of its short run at The Phoenix, for instance. I'm also a huge fan of Balzac who developed his novels much as I did, via continuing characters. This didn't influence my work as such, i.e. I didn't think 'Balzac! Zola! I can do that but I can also add the fantastic to the mix'.

I did, however, begin to look for a way of representing my 'symbolic' taste and my more prosaic tastes as they existed together in my own imagination, making the unfamiliar 'ordinary' to my characters while giving the ordinary an unfamiliar context. I think I did this most successfully in the Cornelius and Blood cycle.

MPW: For a considerable number of years you have championed writing of the kind that Iain Sinclair refers to as the 'reforgotten' voices of literature. Do you see these writers, such as Gerald Kersh or Jack Trevor Story, in terms of a unified tradition, something which your own writing could be situated within?

MM: To some extent, yes. Much of the impulse is to have these writers seen in context. Their humour, too, was fairly surreal, even though they wrote in a realist tradition, mostly. I think we think these writers deserve an audience. Happily, firms like Faber are bringing some of these back as POD. Rex Warner's absurdist fiction, for instance, like *The Wild Goose Chase*.

MPW: On a number of occasions you have said that literary modernism fell short of the needs of the generation of writers you count yourself among; you name Henry Green as an exception to this: what is it about his writing in particular?

MM: I like Green because his focus was rarely on himself. One quarrel with modernism was that it had become too dedicated to examining the individual's psyche rather than the world around him. I like Green's fascination with working people and work (he remained at his own firm most of his life). We felt that most modernism had turned its back on the great literary themes of, say, the nineteenth century.

THREE

MPW: You have described *The Golden Barge* as a relatively simple allegory – something which Savoy take issue with. Could you say more about your current thinking on the allegorical function of fantasy in relation to its other aspects?

MM: Allegory is the most obvious way of using the fantasy form to deliver a substantial subtext but allegory tends to generalize and in my view gives the work that universal, unspecific quality which allows the reader to avoid whatever point the writer had. The reason I went from Elric to Cornelius was because I was frustrated by the limitations of Elric stories, where I could only allude to contemporary issues, not confront them full on. Some writers (Norman Spinrad

in *The Iron Dream*) have managed to relate the form to contemporary concerns, but it tends to produce a somewhat clumsy narrative. I've included jokes buried in most of my sword and sorcery stories (in the form of puns on names and so on) but the stories can't do much more, in my opinion.

MPW: How do you view the relationship between what might be termed – with obvious reservations – ‘fringe’ or ‘generic’ writing and more ‘mainstream’ fictions now compared with the 1960s? Given that you've worked in comic book media for both your own (*Moorcock's Multiverse*) and the alternate universes of others (Alan Moore's *Tom Strong*, Book 6), how do you currently feel about popular (and populist) media in terms of their creative potential? You name both Alan Moore and David Britton as writers who work to push together/defy the boundaries of graphic and written media, where else do you see contemporary literatures going in terms of experimentation? How much of it is a return to modes that the *New Worlds* writers employed?

MM: I'm attracted to the margins because often there you find forms which have yet to become rigid with genre tropes. At some point those tropes become narrative in their own right and lend themselves to comedy but not much else. ‘Experiment’ is only a response to the new; the way twentieth-century modernism borrowed from movie techniques from Griffith to Kurosawa. When a narrative contains its own expectations, it's no longer useful as a medium for getting a specific story across.

But it is easily taught and passed on, which is why the politics of education demands that a form be copied and re-used, because it *can* be taught by then. All the elements are recognized, the tropes are understood, any sub-texts are easily understood and passed on. Conventional courses on literature and creative writing are inclined to pass on all these techniques as necessary means of recognizing quality and wisdom, rather as Chinese or Japanese theatre (or Western traditional ballet) passes on traditional methods of narrative. The reader who is comforted by tradition (in the modern ‘literary’ novel or in a detective novel or certain kinds of other generic forms) values the forms in ways which actually irritate another reader, since little new is being ‘said’, because the medium really does become the message.

In order to offer a new message, you have to create or borrow new methods which will, you hope, get anything new you have to say across. I feel a fellowship with Moore and Britton, just as I did with Burroughs, say, because they are constantly turning their media to suit their message. What Moore objects to in the filming of his stories is that the film-makers tend to turn his stories into much more conventional narratives, destroying the very point of his work. The same thing happened to me in *The Final Programme*, where the director relentlessly tried to turn the story into something familiar which he could then handle. Why Britton stays away from interviews is because he finds he spends too much time telling the interviewer that he's got the story wrong. Both story-tellers are

looking for ways into the heart of darkness, to understand the central concerns of their times by in some ways 'becoming' or at least taking on attributes of the evil which concerns them. They are telling a story quite as complex and personal as any talented predecessor and just as concerned with their personal and social history but they are using techniques which they have made their own or techniques which they have created to do a specific job. I think we recognize what we're all up to but generally don't borrow one another's tricks. We do, however, tend to focus on the same subject matter.

People are constantly going back to earlier methods (you saw a fair bit of this in the 1960s and '70s – cf. *The Sotweed Factor* – certain incorporations of nineteenth-century and Edwardian work in Pynchon) and moving forward to create fresh methods as they experiment to find forms which will carry the substance of what they have to say or explore. Writers like Chabon are more likely to find the forms they like pretty much readymade (see *Yiddish Policeman's Union*) and re-invigorate them through outstanding prose. My guess is that this fresh use of the allegorical and its application to current concerns is one way fiction will go, increasingly. But also it will assume, as I'm inclined to assume, an increased 'knowingness' on the part of a reader willing to give themselves up to the likes of Cornelius or the Second Ether. There's an ongoing process – like weaving – where the writer goes back and forth, re-using early techniques and creating (sometimes recreating) fresh ones, constantly examining the past and anticipating the future. There's a great deal of this going on, much of it still in the margins but increasingly working its way into the mainstream. As experiment 'hardens' into recognizable technique (therefore carrying its own narratives) writers look elsewhere for methods which don't carry recognized narratives. As they looked to movies in the twentieth century, my guess is that they now look to comics. I suspect that American writers are generally way ahead of English writers in general in the way in which they've incorporated genre but Burroughs for some reason seems to have more followers in Europe where perhaps you see a riskier sort of experiment going on. This riskiness tends to be lacking in current Americans, for some reason. I can't think of any reasonably prominent American taking risks like Britton or Moore. Some writers are finding useful techniques in what we came up with in *NW*. Ballard's 'condensed novels', for instance, and Cornelius, who was always as much a technique as a character. My Second Ether stuff owes a fair bit to Burroughs, of course.

FOUR

MPW: Philosophers do make occasional cameos in your writing, several fly into *Michael Moorcock's Multiverse*, for example. How much has philosophy directly and consciously affected your writing over the years? You have mentioned Kropotkin in particular. Do you feel that your writing and your views have become more pragmatic or more nuanced by specific experiences?

MM: Yes, specific experience has made my writing more pragmatic and possibly more nuanced. All the philosophers in that comic are existentialists! Existentialism has always attracted me, perhaps because it was so much in the air while I was growing up. I was an enthusiastic reader of Sartre and Camus, along with many others of my generation. Where I have philosophers as characters, like Lobkowitz for instance, they are usually employed as a kind of chorus. Frequently the likes of Mrs Cornelius act as chorus if the story is getting a bit too abstract. I used real philosophers in Moonbeams and Roses because it was possible to introduce them (as crew of a WW2 bomber) as characters, but usually that isn't possible and you need someone else like Mrs C to act as your chorus. The 'chorus' probably shows any deepening of my understanding and experience. However, I have to say that it's seemed to me to be mostly the other way round in that I tend to seek out philosophers or political writers who can better state my own conclusions. Thus Kropotkin underpins rather than inspires most of my political/moral attitudes. This sounds a bit egomaniacal but I don't think it is. No doubt Kropotkin's ideas, along with, say, Camus', have inspired much of what I've written, especially, of course, the work we've talked about, but usually somewhat unconsciously.

MPW: To return to the idea of mythology and mythologizing: some of your most interesting characters mythologize themselves before our eyes (I'm thinking particularly of Denny Dover). What about the mythologizing of your own writing and career in Iain Sinclair's work, the myth of Michael Moorcock? Your contributions to *London, City of Disappearances* in particular seem to push the edges of Sinclair's text into still more fantastical realms than even he normally ventures into.

MM: I have always been interested in mythology. As a child, of course, it was the romance which interested me but gradually I became interested in how the mythology reflected the ideas of the people and so on. *Behold the Man* has often been read as some sort of attack on religion, whereas I was interested in how a demagogue is created out of the needs of the people. I picked Jesus because he'd clearly been a successful example. This sense that gods are created by people runs through my fantasy fiction pretty consistently and that's why I've described those stories as romances about romance. I think Chabon does this well, too, and I detect this impulse in several of the best sf writers. Sinclair's methods involve a fair bit of knowing myth-making, much of it in fun, and I have responded in the same spirit by including him as 'Taffy' Sinclair in a number of stories. I enjoyed adding to London mythology also in this same spirit. Will Self hated it, for some reason, and even had a row with Iain about it. He seemed baffled by the impulse as much as anything! Sinclair and I have been upset by the commodification of London's mysteries, secrets and history.

I think some of the impulse is to replace what feels as if it's been yanked up by the roots, like so much rosebay willow herb, the predominant 'flower' of my

childhood. Also known as fireweed, it originally grew on the slopes of Vesuvius, was brought to Oxford by botanists, started to grow alongside railway lines and by the time the Blitz was over was on every bomb site. For me, the plant is emblematic.

A mythological reference (Ulysses, say) is also a narrative reference. We no doubt learned much of this from poetry and it might be fair to say that all fiction seeks to achieve the condition of poetry. Being as interested as we were in offering as many narratives as possible within the same piece of fiction, we saw, for instance what could be done with a brand name and some of this we learned from sf where Alfred Bester was using brands as the names of the old powerful families of his future. In doing this, he was also making reference to the power of big business and so on. *Tiger! Tiger!* was originally in *Galaxy*. The kind of sf Ballard and I read was mostly characteristic of *Galaxy* magazine which was contributed to mostly by NY lefties for whom the sf story offered the chance of writing polemic fiction during the time, for instance, of the McCarthyite witch hunts (you can detect the shadow of these in much sf produced at that time).

MPW: Yourself and J.G. Ballard are playfully described as 'Angry Old Men' at the *Ballardian* website, do you find that your anger – or rather your sense of engagement with the world, your polemicism – remains a strong part of what defines your writing? I have read some of your political columns online and your views remain clear and strong, and attentive to the problems of contemporary power relations -- you titled your 1984 tract *The Retreat from Liberty*, what positions do you now see Britain, America and Europe moving towards? (And who, if anybody, would you compare to Miss Brunner now?)

MM: Almost impossible to predict the future, though I'm inclined to hope neoconservatives will find themselves increasingly marginalized. I'm afraid of Obama's arrogance, which rather reminds me of [Jimmy] Carter's, and Europe seems to be drifting somewhat to the right. The EU's president, according to trends, could well be a supermodel, perhaps having an English royal as a consort. Miss Brunner existed before Mrs T and I'm a bit worried of conjuring another monster. I probably need a Sarkozy/Berlusconi figure as part of the troupe. Punch instead of Judy?

I think I've always been a polemicist. I appear to have been in opposition to received opinion at school, where I was forever arguing with teachers, who seemed to like me, nonetheless, and in my early fanzines (I was doing 'Book Collectors News' aimed at collectors of Sexton Blake and *The Magnet*, etc. at the same time as 'Burroughsania' and both became 'controversial' by what seemed to be a fairly natural process). Similarly, I still get irritated by lazy research and presumptions, whether it's about Edwardian realist fiction or William Burroughs or whatever. So that seems to have been 'built in'. I don't necessarily enjoy argument for its own sake, but I appear to have had an ongoing argument with convention for years. I have to take pains, sometimes, not to fill a column, say

in the *Financial Times*, with polemic. Instead I try to write about things which concern me in an incidental way and hope the reader sees the point. I'm a keen supporter of the NHS as an institution, for instance, and tend to write a fair bit about the US health situation in order to show how a private system fails to deliver to the average person. I wrote *Retreat from Liberty* in a bit of a hurry, at the request of the publisher, who was trying to get a 'national conversation' started. I'm not especially good at argument and generally prefer to disguise any polemic in fiction.

But, of course, I am a political animal just as Ballard has become one more and more in response to contemporary events. I have recently abandoned several stories because they lack enough point. They were merely firework displays showing off my skills and what's more they were in modes I had created for specific purposes and which had been taken up and turned into genre tropes by others. What for instance is the point of writing a new Bastable story? The first three books were on specific themes, including the notion of benign imperialism, and while I could easily write and even enjoy a 'cool airship' story in the same manner, and in a manner which now has a whole sub-genre in 'steampunk', there seemed little purpose. All my writing life it seems that my methods have been imitated and somewhat simplified and corrupted in most cases (not all) and effectively 'robbed' me of those methods for the future. All I've been able to do is adapt old methods or create new ones to say what I'm trying to say. This is evident recently in the Elric trilogy which began with *The Dreamthief's Daughter*.

Where Cornelius and the Second Ether are concerned, of course, I've offered these techniques to other writers, setting up a kind of dialogue or conversation which simply isn't possible to pursue in other forms, such as the more generic epic fantasy story or even the 'steampunk' or 'cyberpunk' story which are already modifications of previous genres and therefore already 'corrupted' as far as coherence is concerned, carrying as they do a huge cargo of decidedly unwanted narratives and attitudes, as all straight genre fiction does, whether that genre is literary or otherwise. Cornelius, even though he has been described as sf is not sf. He has as many elements of 'noir' urban mysteries as he does, say, of polemic sf and it's easy to see why he was taken up by the first cyberpunks, but few used him as the technique he is (as well as an emblematic character). Currently, sf readers have been upset by writers like Atwood resisting the description of their work as sf and I believe I understand how this occurs where literary genre writers believe they have created images and themes which are original to them where in fact, like most other ideas, they have absorbed them from, as it were, the cultural air – ideas which are no more original than any others they've absorbed. A writer like Ballard, however, who is more conscious of the process, who has already rejected the tropes and conventions of literary fiction as well as sf, is more reliable in that he distinguishes between his sf,

which incorporated some of the genre's conventions, and his idiosyncratic fiction, which creates its own lexicon. There's a discussion worth having about, say, P.D. James, who unconsciously uses nothing but genre conventions, and writers like Ballard who are thoroughly conscious of all genre conventions and thus are able to create something genuinely outside genre, like, for instance, the great Modernists (who, ironically, typically created a genre). Sorry if I wandered off topic a bit.

MPW: I find your writing produces complex and fascinating networks which are an absolute gift to fan and academic audiences but, also, you have always actively encouraged others to follow suit; if there was a single statement that could express to others something of what it is that has kept you going so consistently what would it be?

MM: The old *New Worlds* battle-cry used to be 'run it up the flagpole and see who shoots at it'. This was always my answer to people who asked about my policy. Experiment is just that – and sometimes you have a good result with an experiment, sometimes a bad one. The ultimate test is time (and the audience, of course). I think so far Burroughs was successful, Ballard was and, judging by the length of time Cornelius has been in print, mine has been so far. As Ballard points out in his memoir (*Miracles of Life*) writers like B.S. Johnson, who was producing highly publicized experiments in the 1960s, don't seem to have made it! I'm not surprised since it seemed to me that Johnson and others were merely shuffling the old elements around a bit and were still firmly under the influence of existing genres. You need to have a bit more nerve, I think, than most of the post-war British experimenters. Or maybe, as with the likes of Pynchon and Chabon, you need to be a superior stylist? Or, as with the typical ambitious US novel, you need to tackle larger subjects than those of the typical UK novel! I'm not sure. Anyway – run it up the flagpole and see who shoots at it. That's how you keep going, I think, and manage to remain in a state of permanent revolution!

All best, Mike.

The European Circuit: *Report on Probability A* and *Barefoot in the Head*

Brian Baker (Lancaster University)

Of the major figures associated with the British New Wave and *New Worlds* in particular, Brian W. Aldiss has received the least attention in terms of literary criticism, much less than J.G. Ballard and Michael Moorcock. In Colin Greenland's *The Entropy Exhibition* (1983), Aldiss is given one of the chapters devoted to a single author (the others are Ballard and Moorcock), though Greenland begins with a rather diagnostic manoeuvre; he quotes a letter from Aldiss to Judith Merrill from 1966 in which Aldiss complains: 'I feel I am no part of the New Wave; I was here before 'em, and by God I mean to be here after they've gone (still writing bloody science fiction)!' (Greenland 1983: 69). As Greenland notes, however, Aldiss's relation to the New Wave was rather more ambiguous than that. Of novels such as *Report on Probability A* (1968) and *Barefoot in the Head* (1969), both serialized in *New Worlds* before book publication, Greenland writes that they were 'two polar masterpieces of the new sf' (70). Perhaps just as importantly, 'Aldiss, who had begun by being extremely sceptical of *New Worlds*'s policies, now worked energetically on the magazine's behalf. [. . .] Aldiss contacted various well-known writers and critics and asked them to approach, with him, the Arts Council. He hoped that a grant would save both magazines' (Moorcock 1983: 19). This hope bore fruit, and what Greenland calls 'the 1966 rescue operation for *NW*' (70) was a success, the magazine receiving £150 per issue towards the costs of production, which was not enough to cover costs but which did allow the magazine to find another publisher.

So in the same year that Aldiss offered a strong disavowal of the New Wave – or at least, of his identification with them – he worked hard to preserve the magazine most associated with their work. This ambivalence, one should note, is not modulated by Aldiss' relation to science fiction per se: he has no hesitation in avowing that he will be still writing 'bloody science fiction'. This is particularly noteworthy considering the avant-garde forms of both *Report on Probability A* and *Barefoot in the Head*. Writing on Aldiss' *Non-Stop* (US: *Starship*) (1958), Fredric Jameson suggests that this earlier novel

stands rather in the mainstream of literary experimentation [as] may be demonstrated by a comparison with the structure of the French *nouveau roman*, and particularly with the stylistic and compositional devices of Alain Robbe-Grillet, whose work Aldiss has himself ranged in the SF category, speaking of *L'année dernière à Marienbad*, where the gilded hotel with its endless corridors – *énormes, somptueux*,

baroques, lugubres – stands more vividly as a symbol of isolation from the contents of life than any spaceship, simply by virtue of being more dreadfully accessible to our imaginations. (Jameson 1973: 64)

Jameson's reading of this earlier novel, which does not show the explicit marks of literary experimentation in the same way as Aldiss's New Wave-era stories and novels, places it in a continuum with fiction whose formal apparatus produces the effect that the 'expressive capacity of words and names that is called into question and subverted, [. . .] not within but from without, by imperceptible but momentous shifts in the context of the description' (Jameson 1973: 64). What Jameson goes on to state is a commonality between modernist literature and science fiction in enjoying 'a privileged relationship with such effects' (64).

According to Jameson, when the mimetic function of realist literature is abandoned, as in science fiction, 'the fundamental formal problem posed by plot construction will be that of finding some new principle of unity'. Where some kind of myth is not used,

there remains available to SF another organizational procedure which I will call *collage*: the bringing into precarious co-existence of elements drawn from very different sources and contexts, elements which derive from the most part from older literary models and which amount to broken fragments of the outworn older genres or of the newer productions of the media (e.g. comic strips). (65)

This can serve as a very accurate description of much of the fiction published in *New Worlds* in general, but the use of 'older literary models', particularly literary modernism (and its connections to sf that Jameson suggests) will inform my approach in this article. Although I will concentrate on *Report on Probability A*, which draws explicitly on the *nouveau roman* and *Barefoot in the Head*, which alludes to James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* (1939), Jameson's article is particularly useful in suggesting that this 'experimentation' and formal emphasis long precedes the New Wave in Aldiss' work. Where, in *Non-Stop*, Aldiss encourages reading strategies that foreground genre expectation and narrative structure, Jameson implies a kind of continuum with the later work. In *Non-Stop*, this is the formal incapacity of the narrative to complete itself, which is raised to an imagistic and thematic principle in Complain's journey through the corridors of the generational starship. In *Report on Probability A* and *Barefoot in the Head*, generic and textual discontinuities are produced by recourse to experimental literary techniques drawn from European Modernism.

In the light of his own thematic emphases, Greenland suggests that *Probability A*'s controlled and recursive scenarios tend towards a textual 'heat death' and

stasis, while *Barefoot*'s efflorescent and exuberant inventiveness threatens to explode the generic parameters of the fiction entirely. One can certainly fit them into a formal and thematic binary: one is about watching, immobility, lack of agency; the other about kaleidoscopic (hallucinatory) vision, speed, and a kind of perverse dynamism. There are strong continuities, also, which I will explore in the course of this article.

The connection between New Wave writers and modernist experimentation is explored by many critics. James Gunn notes that

Experiments in style became commonplace. [. . .] The experiments may not have been particularly new – John Brunner looked to John Dos Passos's *U.S.A.* (first volume 1930) for the style of *Stand on Zanzibar* (1968), Brian W. Aldiss to Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* (1939) for the style of *Barefoot in the Head* (1969), and J.G. Ballard to more contemporary anti-novelists, typified by Alain Robbe-Grillet, for his 'condensed novels' – but they were new to science fiction. (Gunn 2003: xix).

Although Ballard openly admired Alain Resnais' *Last Year in Marienbad* (1960), scripted by Robbe-Grillet, Michael R. Collings makes an even more direct connection between Aldiss and Robbe-Grillet, perhaps the most well-known of the French New Novelists of the 1950s and 1960s. Collings writes that *Report on Probability A* 'was completed in manuscript by 1962 [. . .] but rejected when Aldiss approached his publishers', and only after serialization in *New Worlds* (in 1967) was it finally accepted (Collings 1986: 32). Collings cites Richard Mathews' 1977 book *Aldiss Unbound* in positing the influence of Robbe-Grillet and Michel Butor in describing 'Aldiss' avowed intention to discard many literary convention and to concentrate on a "lean, hard-surfaced" style' (32). Gunn is rather suspicious of this 'newness', tending to view it as a stylistic innovation which although 'at their best they were effective in saying what could not be said in any other way; at their worst they were distancing, distracting, and obscure' (Gunn 2003: xix). Collings' focus upon the development of style tends to downplay the radical emphasis on formal experiment in both *Probability A* and *Barefoot in the Head*: that as Gunn suggests, they could not have been told in any other way, asserting a profound connection between form and content rather than simply a stylistic playfulness.

Report on Probability A corresponds to the kind of fiction proposed by Robbe-Grillet in *For a New Novel* (1963), though if Collings is correct about the date of the manuscript's initial drafting in 1962, it would have been written before the articles collected therein were published together. Robbe-Grillet states that

Instead of a universe of 'signification' (psychological, social, functional), we must try, then, to construct a world both more solid

and more immediate. Let it be first of all by their *presence* that objects and gestures establish themselves. [. . .] In the future universe of the novel, gestures and objects will be *there* before being *something*; and they will still be there afterwards, hard, unalterable, eternally present, mocking their own 'meaning', that meaning which vainly tries to reduce them to the role of precarious tool, of a temporary and shameful fabric woven exclusively – and deliberately – by the superior human truth expressed in it. (Robbe-Grillet 1989: 21)

For Robbe-Grillet, the 'style' of the New Novel – description of surfaces, things, without metaphor, involving a reduction in the proliferating chains of signification – has a purpose, an informing philosophy. 'To describe things [. . .] is deliberately to place oneself outside them, confronting them. It is no longer a matter of appropriating them to oneself, of projecting anything on to them' (Robbe-Grillet 1989: 70). The method of the New Novel is then to re-arrange the relation between subject and object, between 'human' and world, to refuse anthropomorphism or the possession of the material through language. 'To describe this surface is merely to constitute this externality and this independence [. . .] [making] no claim to defining any special essence of it' (Robbe-Grillet 1989: 71–2) he asserts, proposing an ethical rupture in literary mimesis. The world is described but remains *as it is*, prior to and external to human experience. Several times in *Report on Probability A* (as it does in Ballard's *The Atrocity Exhibition* (1970) and in Moorcock's Cornelius novels) this takes the form of the list:

Also in the room was a cupboard of unpainted wood, in which G kept several small toilet articles; a copy of Hugh Walpole's 'The Cathedral'; some neatly folded bandages; a crumpled handkerchief belonging to Mr Mary's wife; a bowl with a rose pattern in which lay rusting curtain hooks; a penknife, and a pair of spectacles that belonged to an uncle of G's; a candlestick; some candles; string; several strangely shaped stones found in the garden; a white china cat with the name of a seaside town printed on its stomach; some mending things; a round 1 oz. tobacco tin and holes punched in its lid, in which G had once intended to keep a lizard; and some groceries. (Aldiss 1969b: 14)

The effect, however, is different to Ballard's work. Where, in *The Atrocity Exhibition*, the objects become icons or symbols, signifying a particular pathological psychology, in *Report on Probability A* they correspond much more to Robbe-Grillet's precepts as *things in themselves*. Even here, though, the text cannot resist falling into signification. Certain objects, such as S's telescope or C's periscope made from tin cans, certainly embed themselves into discursive

or thematic structures which are not simply directly representational: both the telescope and the periscope extend the motif of watching, of multiple and recursive voyeurism or surveillance, which striates the novel.

This is particularly identified in the second (middle) section of the novel, 'S The Watchful', with what is described as the 'circle of vision'. This is a direct description, in some senses, of the delimited visual range afforded by the telescope:

As S inspected the milk bottle through the telescope, a slight wash of colour and light spread over the bottle and over the step, so that the bottle took on a gleam along its sloping shoulders. At the same time, a dead leaf whisked through the circle of vision, over the step, and was gone into the darkness that always surrounded the circle of vision'. (Aldiss 1969b: 59)

Over the next few pages, and then throughout the middle section of the novel, the 'circle of vision' is insistently repeated, but tends to become dislocated from S, the 'watcher' who uses the telescope. Thus, 'the circle of vision moved away from the house' (60); 'the circle of vision inspected the long windows of the dining-room' (61). Agency is then afforded to the mobile 'circle of vision' itself. This is intensely cinematic, as though an irised camera is presenting the scene to the viewer/reader; the occluding of S places the reader in the position of watcher. The text thereby implicates the reader into the circuit of watching and being watched in the narrative. However, as the text progresses, from narrative focalizer G (for Gardener), to S (for Secretary), to C (for Chauffeur), male subjects ensconced in outbuildings of the house and garden owned by Mr and Mrs Mary, it becomes clear that this primary diegetic level is itself being watched by others in different spaces, universes or planes of existence. These are presented in the narrative in inserted italicized prose sections. These *en abyme* narrative levels indicate that the text operates as worlds within worlds. Implicated in this structure is the *extra-textual* world of the 'real', that of the reader, suggesting that we too are subject to unseen surveillance. This reference to postmodernist techniques suggests that Aldiss' fiction, like that of Ballard and Moorcock in the late 1960s, operates in a zone of intersection between (late) Modernism and nascent Postmodernism. Moorcock's list of those writers celebrated in *New Worlds* – 'Burroughs [. . .] surrealists, romantics, imagists, allegorists [. . .] Borges, Hesse, Peake, Calvino, Kafka, Wyndham Lewis, Vian' (Moorcock 1983: 14) – precisely articulates this zone, although his dismissive judgement of contemporary American postmodernists is telling: 'Pynchon and Barth [. . .] were clumsily, by means of long-winded parody, trying to achieve results already achieved in *New Worlds*' (15). While not directly adopting a modernist tactic of shock and confrontation, the formal experimentation of the New Wave

in the 1960s can be read as the emergence of a parallel postmodernism, despite Moorcock's insistence on the distance (as well as similarity) between the two, in which experimental literary techniques expose and explode genre sf.

The first of these italicized interpolations features one Domolodossa, who is reading the 'report': the primary narrative diegesis, which becomes an inset object in a secondary world. In discussion with another operative, Midlakemela, it is revealed that the primary world of Mr and Mrs Mary, G, S and C is the 'Probability A', a different 'continuum' from their own. Midlakemela argues that *'Probability A [. . .] is closely related to our continuum, which I like to think of as Certainty X. Nevertheless, even superficially, Probability A reveals certain basic values that differ widely from our own. It is our first duty to examine those values'* (Aldiss 1969b: 16, italics in original). Further on in the narrative, however, it is revealed that Domolodossa and Midlakema are themselves subject to surveillance by the Distinguishers in another continuum, and in turn they are being watched by Joe Growleth, Charlock and Corless, who perceive Domolodossa's continuum to be a *'sub-atomic world [. . .] startlingly like our own!'* (111). The text then presents the relations of world to world as one of scale, with time moving at different rates in each world. By the end of the novel, worlds and watchers are inset in an abysmal image:

Of course, Domolodossa was unaware that he was being scrutinized by the Distinguishers on their rainy hillside. They, in their turn, were being watched by the grave men in New York. They, in their turn, were being watched by two young men and a boy who stood in an empty warehouse staring at the manifestation in puzzlement.

'What is it, Daddy?' asked the boy.

'We've discovered a time machine or something,' the father said. He leaned farther forward: it was just possible to make out Domoladossa reading his report, for the New York screen showed the hillside manifestation revealing him at his desk. (Aldiss 1969b: 125, italics in original)

The worlds intersect almost as a set of gears, turning at different speeds. The passing of time, which is narrated as a set of co-present narrative continuums, is paradoxical, for the formal apparatus of the novel does not allow for the direct presentation of these differential speeds: there is no 'slow motion' or 'speeded up' motion possible within the framework of the novel (unlike cinema, for instance). Time passes 'normally' in each of the scale worlds, and the reader experiences them as operating in the same narrative time; the reader is therefore both a watcher *outside* the world and *projected into it* to experience time in the same way as G, C, S, Domolodossa or Joe Growleth in their different continuums.

The formal recursiveness, material descriptions, lack of narrative event and

deliberate repetition suggest a readerly experience which stages the kind of alienation inhabited by the watchers, and indeed Collings' reading of *Probability A* emphasizes the potential for readerly frustration: 'Aldiss seems intent on forcing his readers to draw conclusions even though they have "no key to scale"' (Collings 1986: 33). The novel ends, as Collings notes, with another recurring image or reference in the novel, Holman Hunt's painting *The Hireling Shepherd*, which is described several times during the course of the narrative. Collings continues: 'Aldiss concludes the novel by moving into the painting itself, concentrating on this frozen moment. The novel ends in stasis, in a world of unexplained phenomena and unseen futures' (33). The figuration of the painting is then a symbol of the text's global ambiguities, its openness to interpretation. What Collings does not emphasize here is the erotic nature of the scene, its ambiguous sexual content. The painting is also a symbol of the relation to the watching men and Mrs Mary, the object of their gazes, the 'circle of vision'. In a telling passage, Domolodossa I reading the report, becomes '*almost breathless with the thought of the happiness of the alien woman, a happiness that the impartiality of the report seemed to heighten. He considered the passage he had just read extremely erotic*' (Aldiss 1969b: 46-7, italics in original). *Report on Probability A*, like *Last Year in Marienbad*, is suffused with a displaced and frustrated eroticism, a desire contained within and half-repressed by the formal structures of the novel. If the final stasis is not quite a sexual interruption, it perhaps marks the point at which literary representation, in relation to the seductive nature of material reality, reaches its limits. The text cannot touch, cannot find completion: it can only 'watch'.

Where *Report on Probability A* stages containment of desire within language, *Barefoot in the Head* presents its world through a language riotously disrupted from within by an excess of signification that Robbe-Grillet sought to limit. If *Probability A* is about and embodies containment, *Barefoot* is about and embodies eruption. Both, however, are concerned with perception and description, related to the 'circle of vision' that denotes the subjective gaze. *Barefoot in the Head*'s linguistic eruptions seem much more indebted to the Modernism of James Joyce, and in particular *Finnegans Wake*: its punning, shifting, neologistic shifts across registers and allusions to other texts. However, a precept from Robbe-Grillet's essay 'New Novel, New Man', collected in *For A New Novel*, suggests that *Barefoot* can equally be seen as an energetic and explosive extension of the central concerns of the *nouveau roman*:

Not only is it a *man* who, in my novels for instance, describes everything, but it is the least neutral, the least impartial of men: *always* engaged, on the contrary, in an emotional adventure of the most obsessive kind, to the point of often distorting his vision and producing imaginings close to delirium. (Robbe-Grillet 1989: 138).

Collings suggests that Aldiss' 'concern with how language may be interpreted [. . .] creates the novel, far more than the plot. There is indeed less of a single plot than a series of possibilities dependent upon how one interprets words used to define them' (Collings 1986: 36). This abundance of possibilities again directly implicates the reader into the text, which becomes a textual system requiring decoding and unravelling by the reader. The first chapter, 'Just Passing Through', concerns one Colin Charteris (who appropriated his surname from the author of the series of thrillers featuring 'the Saint', Leslie Charteris) as he arrives in the city of Metz in the Alsace, having driven 'twenty-two hundred kilometres from Catanzaro down on the Ionian Sea [. . .] in thirty hours, sustaining on the way no more than a metre-long scar along the front off-side wing' (Aldiss 1969a: 13). The novel begins:

The city was open to the nomad.

Colin Charteris climbed out of his Banshee into the northern square, to stand for a moment stretching. Sinews and bones flexed and dainty. The machine beside him creaked and snapped like a landed fish, metal cooling after its long haul across the turn-pikes of Europe. Behind them the old cathedral, motionless though not recumbent. (13)

The novel starts, then, with an almost surreal visual dislocation produced by the unusual simile – the car 'creaking and snapping like a landed fish' – and the figure of the cathedral motionless but upright: how could it be 'recumbent'? As narrative focalizer for the discourse, Charteris' perceptions seem somewhat odd, compounded further on the same page when the sun is described as fading 'pale and low over St-Étienne into the fly-specks of even turn' (13). How does the reader interpret this unusual discursive manoeuvre? Are the fly-specks on the windshield of Charteris's Banshee, the sun fading as the car makes an 'even turn' past it on the autoroute? Another clue comes shortly afterwards, when images from the journey (the past as 'yesterday's bread') seem to come to Charteris' consciousness:

Outside Milano, one of the great freak-out areas of all time where the triple autostrada made of the Lombardy plain a geometrical diagram, his red car had flashed inches from a multiple crash. They were all multiple crashes these days. (13)

The literal and entirely appropriate collision between the discourse of drug hipdom – 'the great freak out areas of all time' – and the geometry of the autostradas reveal a kind of kaleidoscopic consciousness, one in which the image of the crash 'continued to multiply itself over and over in his mind, confusing sense, confusing past with future' (14). In fact, the novel reveals that Charteris is mildly

affected at this stage of the narrative by the aerosol hallucinogens deposited into the atmosphere of western Europe by Kuwait during the 'Acid Head War', a catastrophic event which leaves Europe as a kind of riotous carnival: 'Life was so short, and so full of desolating boredom and the flip voluptuousness of speed-death' (21). The autostradas and motorways, as well as offering the 'victims' a stage upon which to 'fornicate with death', is also one in which they can connect with life through the proximity of the automobile accident.

When he arrives in Britain, Charteris, speeding down a country lane, is still more affected by the hallucinogens, whereupon we have this extraordinary passage:

Round the next corner FOR YOUR THROAT'S SAKE SMOKE a van red-eyed – a truck no *trokut!* – in the middle of the guy running out waving bloody leather – Charteris braked spilling hot words as the chasing thought came of impact and splat some clot mashed out curving against a wall of shattered brick so bright all flowering: a flowering cactus a christmas cactus rioting in an anatomical out-of-season. (Aldiss 1969a: 56)

This kaleidoscopic scene, a compressed and violently telescoped collision of images and sensations, uses various grammatical devices to produce its effects: the signage in capitals, intrusions of direct thought expressed by the dashes, the long unpunctuated clause as Charteris braces for impact, the disjunctive image of the flowering cactus as emblem of the human body hit by the speeding car. Compare this scene in a later novel, Ballard's *Crash* (1973), which is of course equally invested in the symbolic freight of the automobile crash:

Taking my eyes off the road, I clasped Vaughan's hand in my own, trying to close my eyes to the fountain of light that poured through the windshield of the car from the vehicles approaching us.

An armada of angelic creatures, each surrounded by an immense corona of light, was landing on the motorway either side of us. (Ballard 1995: 199)

The language is controlled, its rhythms restrained and smooth. Aldiss' description is violent, eruptive, dislocating. The narrator's syntax is unaffected by the hallucinogen he has taken; Charteris' hold on language threatens to break apart.

The novel's capacity to shift between the material 'real' and its perception in passages such as this is thematized early in the text:

He saw the world [. . .] purely as a fabrication of time, no matter

involved. Matter was an hallucinatory experience: merely a slow motion perceptual experience of certain time/ emotion nodes passing through the brain. No, that the brain seized on in turn as it moved round of the perceptual web it had spun, would spin, from childhood on. Metz, that he apparently perceived so clearly through all his senses, was there only because all his senses had reached a certain dynamic synchronicity in their obscure journey about the biochemical web. Tomorrow, responding to inner circadian rhythms, they would achieve another relationship, and he would appear to 'move on' to England. Matter was an abstraction of the time syndrome. (Aldiss 1969a: 22)

Just as Charteris 'passes through' the landscape of Europe via its web of autostradas and motorways, his perceptions of the world 'pass through' the neural network in his brain, biochemical or electrical impulses, but understanding of this leaves Charteris with an attenuated sense of the material 'real' itself: 'Only the perceptual web itself was "real"' (23). His sense of himself as a self-identical subject is also disrupted: 'the autostrada was a projection of temporal confluences within him, perhaps a riverine duologue of his entire life. France? Earth? Where was he? What was he?' (22-3). While 'inner' and 'outer' are consistently disrupted throughout *Barefoot in the Head* through this interrogation of the 'perceptual web' (as crucial a phrase as 'circle of vision' had been to *Report on Probability A*), individual subjectivity also comes under scrutiny. If Charteris moves *along the riverrun* in his perceptual Banshee, then self becomes flow, a proliferation of selves across the time-axis akin to Marcel Duchamp's famous image of the *Nude Descending a Staircase* (1912).

Barefoot in the Head, for the most part, was originally published in *New Worlds* and its sister magazine *Impulse* (formerly *Science Fantasy* and sometime *SF Impulse*), before Faber published the novel in hardback in 1969. The chapters were not published in magazine form sequentially. The first to be published was 'Just Passing Through', in *Impulse* in February 1967, which became the first chapter of *Barefoot*; the next, 'Multi-Value Motorway', in *New Worlds* 174 (August 1967), is chapter 4. Then followed 'Still Trajectories' (*NW* 175, September 1967), chapter 5; 'Auto-Ancestral Fracture' (*NW* 178, Dec 1967/ Jan 1968), chapter 6; and 'The Serpent Kundalini' (*NW* 179, February 1968), which is the second chapter of *Barefoot*. Two chapters, 'Drake-Man Route' and 'Ouspenski's Ashtakhan' were not published serially. What also marks a considerable difference from the *New Worlds* versions and the book of *Barefoot in the Head* are the poems that Aldiss appends between chapters. Some poems inhabit more traditional poetic forms in terms of line length and layout. The final stanza of 'Time Never Goes By', the first of three poems between 'The Serpent Kundalini' and 'Drake-Man Route', runs:

It's still the same old story
Characters change events rearrange
Plot seems to wear real thin
Coffins call for running men
Hated or adored
Everything goes by the board
But Time Never Goes By

NOVA SCOTIA TREADMILL ORCHESTRA (Aldiss 1969a: 52)

The strong echoes of 'As Time Goes By', the song best known for its rendition in the film *Casablanca* (1942), indicate this poem's playful allusiveness but the inversion of its sense of time passing, and the running out of narrative dynamic – 'Plot seems to wear real thin' – seems a self-reflexive reference to the kind of temporal stasis or recurrence that forms a major structural principle for the *nouveau roman*. Robbe-Grillet writes of *Last Year in Marienbad*:

The universe in which the entire film occurs is, characteristically, that of a perpetual present which makes all recourse to memory impossible. This is a world without a past, a world which is self-sufficient at every moment and which obliterates itself as it proceeds. [. . .] There can be no reality outside the images we see, the words we hear. (Robbe-Grillet 1989: 152)

He then goes on to explicitly state what I have suggested about the importance of the reader in Aldiss' fiction to decode or instantiate the novel, with regard to the spectator of the film: 'the only important "character" is the spectator; *in his mind* unfolds the whole story, which is precisely *imagined* by him' (153, italics in original).

Other short poems offer a much more experimental approach to form, using typography and the space of the page, such as 'Topography of an Unrealised Affair':

C
H E L L O
E O O
A V L
S T R E S S

(Aldiss 1969a: 80)

Such diagrammatic texts return us to the 'triple autostrada [which] made of the Lombardy plain a geometrical diagram' (13), again indicating the collision of a geometric or spatial sensibility (or conception of the text, in which 'time never

goes by') with the riverine flow presented by the Joycean overflow of language and allusion. Later in the novel, the hallucinatory language spoken by the characters in the text becomes indistinguishable from the narrative discourse itself:

Yet Marta has her own unopened chambers of possibility the locked door calling to my quay my coast Bohemian coast my reefs that decimate steamships. On the piston of this later Drake lost in spume rankest alternature.

[. . .]

'Oh entropise human detestiny!' Angeline was washed and white like concentrate campallour, still calculating against the aftermaths of warcalculus, still be the chemicals not too treblinkered. 'I don't want to know if you slacked because I know if you slacked you slackered Marta tonight last night every night and I just damned won't stand it, so you just damned fuzzy-settle for her or me! None of your either-whoring here!' (Aldiss 1969a: 153)

This scene of domestic conflict is indicative of the textual fabric later in the novel, with its puns ('either-whoring'), neologisms ('warcalculus') and allusions ('treblinkered'). It also returns the novel to one of Aldiss' key interests in this period, 'fuzzy logic', a mode of thought that explicitly abandons binaristic thinking. In the words of Bart Kosko: 'All facts were matters of degree. The facts were always *fuzzy* or vague or inexact to some degree. Only math was black and white and it was just an artificial system of rules and symbols' (Kosko 1994: xv). Or, as Charteris explains in *Barefoot in the Head*: 'Think in fuzzy sets. There is no either-or black-white dichotomy any more. Only a spectrum of partiallys. [. . .] We have to think new. Find more directions make them. It's easy in this partially country' (Aldiss 1969a: 86).

The narrative of *Barefoot* finds direction through motifs of automobility. It begins with Charteris arriving in Metz after a 2200-kilometre drive north from Italy. Thereafter, he journeys to Britain and organizes a messianic, carnivalesque 'autocade' back across Europe, with himself at its head as a psychotropic 'saint' spreading the gospel of the 'think new'. Charteris thereby becomes one of the recurrent messianic figures found in New Wave science fiction, from Moorcock's 'rock and roll messiah' Jerry Cornelius, to the often self-deluding or malignant messianic figures found in Ballard's fiction. Charteris encourages his disciples to follow him towards some kind of apotheosis, although Angeline expresses both her fear and scepticism about the journey and its end:

I too have my presentiments to express and he could have been stark to the fanaticides of marching menschen a word of leadership the old

ambitions gleam its better a ruined mind than old agonisms [. . .] 'Colin you take that escalating way into the capital with clouds of cheering fantiks and they'll *crucify* you. [. . .] Don't jeer at me who's in the family way by you you'll go the way of all saviours and they'll crucify you. They always need another crucifixion. There's never enough for them!' (Aldiss 1969a: 242)

Ultimately Charteris, a very different kind of Saint to the one imagined by his namesake, is not crucified, but his revelation – 'All possibilities and alternatives exist but ultimately/ Ultimately you want it both ways' (264) – suggests a kind of defeat, an inability to hold on to the 'multi' as an open possibility and, if not a collapse back into binarism, into a kind of bad faith: 'you want it both ways'. The very ending of the text reveals the place where he delivers this revelation has been turned into a place of pilgrimage or, less positively, into a tourist site: 'later still tourists came metalboxed driving down from the north to stare and forget whatever was on their minds' (264). Messianism in *Barefoot in the Head*, like the psychedelic revolution of the late 1960s, cannot achieve its ends because the psychotropic dislocations that are its condition also secure the impossibility of its success. The Acid Heads will inevitably 'forget whatever was on their minds'.

In *Psychedelia and Other Colours* (2015), Rob Chapman suggests that 1960s British psychedelia had a very different flavour to that produced in the United States. He suggests deeper roots than simply a transnational cultural shift in pop music, fashion, artistic production, or even consumption of particular drugs. The 1951 Festival of Britain, Chapman argues, involved both a rediscovery of Victorian artisanal and industrial design and decoration, and a celebration of modernity: 'Futuristic architectural constructions like the Skylon and the Dome of Discovery and displays of the very latest radar and television technology happily rubbed alongside the quaint and the commonplace' (Chapman 2015: 469). Drawing upon this post-war development, he argues, English psychedelia looks backwards and forwards at the same time, back to the vernacular, 'fairgrounds, amusement arcades, tattoo parlours, waxworks, taxidermists, high-street shops and seaside piers' (470), and forwards to a 'dream vision of an Americanised consumerist future' decorated in the colours of 'polyurethane paints, dyes, soluble acrylics and primary-coloured plastics' (475). The particular energies of the 1960s, Chapman suggests, are the result of productive tensions between divergent vectors: 'one movement or one way of thinking has never completely swept away another [. . .] A certain displacement might have occurred periodically but what generally happened is that a multiplicity of cultural tendencies learned to coexist and coalesce' (478). This productive tension, between past and future or Empire and America, is much more closely associated with Moorcock's Cornelius texts or his Nomads trilogy than Aldiss' late 1960s work, despite *Barefoot's* imaginative presentation of a psychedelic

sensibility. The formal experimentation of both *Report on Probability A* and *Barefoot in the Head* instead aligns Aldiss closely with variants of European Modernism and traditions of experimental writing, attempts to 'think new' about the social and cultural fabric of post-war Britain and Europe. It may be most fruitful to think of both texts as themselves constituting a kind of fuzzy set of *formal* responses to post-war Europe and its cultural shifts, one which, as Jameson suggested on writing about *Non-Stop*, has deep roots in Aldiss' work.

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New Wave Sword and Sorcery: Jerry Cornelius and Lord Horror

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Michael Moorcock's Jerry Cornelius and David Britton's Lord Horror share common roots in Moorcock's sword and sorcery anti-hero Elric of Melniboné. The first Jerry Cornelius novel *The Final Programme*, written in 1965, was adapted from a series of Elric stories published four years earlier in *Science Fantasy* and collected in *The Stealer of Souls* (1963). This is made clear in the collected *Cornelius Quartet* (1993) which demonstrates its cannibalization in an appendix:

'What's the hour?' The black-bearded man wrenched off his gilded helmet and flung it from him, careless of where it fell. 'We need Elric – we know it, and he knows it. That's the truth.'

'Such confidence, gentlemen, is warming to the heart.'

The Stealer of Souls, 1963

'Without Jerry Cornelius we'll never get it. We need him. That's the truth.'

'I'm pleased to hear it.' Jerry's voice was sardonic as he entered the room rather theatrically and closed the door behind him.

The Final Programme, 1968 (Moorcock 1993: 854)

David Britton is similarly open in acknowledging the influence of Elric on Lord Horror. His novels are replete with references to Moorcock's albino and his vampiric, sentient sword Stormbringer, after which the first Elric novel is named. This book appears prominently at the top and centre of a map of influences on Lord Horror, which first appeared in the third issue of the comic *Hard Core Horror* and is reproduced on the website of Savoy Books.

The map also indicates Britton's combination of modernist techniques with pulp sword and sorcery and avant-garde prose. This combination was pioneered by Moorcock in *New Worlds*, which introduced the likes of the cut-up technique of William Burroughs and Brion Gysin to genre fiction. These traits are strongly identifiable with Jerry Cornelius in particular, as well as Lord Horror. While there are many points of departure between the two characters, Jerry and Lord Horror's common heritage in Elric can be taken as a starting point to explore how these techniques develop in different directions. This can be traced through the unstable presentation of Jerry across those stories – and particularly in *A Cure for Cancer*, serialized in *New Worlds* in 1969 and later published separately in 1971. Jerry's characterization is intensely fragmented in this book, as is its landscape, reflecting both the interiority of the character

and his dislocation in time and space. Bruno Latour, in *We Have Never Been Modern* (1991), argues that this atemporality is why it is difficult to categorize almost any given event or cultural artefact as 'outmoded, up to date, futuristic, atemporal, non-existent, or permanent. It is this whirlpool in the temporal flow that the postmoderns have sensed so early and with so much sensitivity' (Latour 1993: 74). Postmodernism is characterized as symptomatic of this trend, rather than offering any active solutions. *A Cure for Cancer* uses these techniques of fragmentation to satirize complacent attitudes toward contemporary atrocities such as the war in Vietnam. A sequence involving a military helicopter attack on Derry and Toms' Roof Garden demonstrates this satire with a dislocation of imagery congruent with Latour's mixing-up of times.

The limitation of critical approaches in a reading of Jerry Cornelius is amplified in the 2001 Lord Horror novel, *Baptized in the Blood of Millions*, and the comic series *Lord Horror: Reverbstorm*, which ran for seven issues from 1994 to 2000, and was collected with a prologue and concluding eighth part in 2013. Britton adopts a similarly fragmented and unstable approach to characterization with Lord Horror as Moorcock does with Jerry, so as to unsettle the absolutist beliefs upon which Lord Horror's fascism rests. These New Wave ambiguities therefore allow Lord Horror to become – at the conceptual level – a contentious, irreverent and absurdist take on Nazism. The banning of Britton's 1989 novel *Lord Horror* in 1991 and his subsequent imprisonment are testament to the apprehensive reception his work engenders with these techniques. Britton's novels directly implicate the reader within fascism by allowing its violent fantasies to retain their energy, power and appeal. Benjamin Noys has argued that this effect is achieved in *Reverbstorm* by a destabilization and inversion of Susan Sontag's thesis that post-war culture falsely believes itself to have rehabilitated its fascist longings. Instead of a false sense of consolation, Lord Horror offers 'an ambiguity that never reaches closure, an undecidable effect that refuses us the comfort of detachment' (Noys 2006: n.p.). The mixing-up of times furthers this subversion by enabling an atemporal connection central to Britton's work – that fascism and rock 'n' roll are inextricably entwined. The pulp roots shared by Jerry and Lord Horror are indicative of how New Wave characters could emerge from sword and sorcery, and how they could be unmoored from historical time to create unique affects.

Jerry Cornelius was a mascot for *New Worlds*. He acted as an assemblage of some of the techniques that characterized the 1960s New Wave in the form of a single character. *A Cure for Cancer* is comprised of prose equivalents to Richard Hamilton's collages or Burroughs and Gysin's cut-up techniques. The already disjointed narrative is broken up by headlined paragraphs, interspersed with extracts from contemporary newspapers and lifestyle magazines, as well as vivid pop imagery in Mal Dean's distinctive illustrations. The novel's unconventional structure extends to plot and characterization – and much of

the experimental and transformative nature of the text is revealed through its protagonist.

Dean's illustration of Jerry on the cover of *New Worlds* 191 demonstrates this transformative nature. Promoting the final part of *A Cure for Cancer*, it shows Jerry as a cadaverous giant, straddling an apocalyptic landscape and dressed in modern fashion with flares and guitar. He has become a photographic negative of his previous appearance in *The Final Programme*, with black skin, white hair, and an establishment job for an organization that offers a transmogrification service to help people preserve their real identities. Although Jerry's role prompts a spread of anarchic individualism, it also has a conservative streak. The concept of a stable identity is unlikely to be possible in a time of such social upheaval, which is portrayed here as affecting the very fabric of reality itself. However, such a notion undoubtedly offers the clients of the transmogrification service some comfort in uncertain times. Moorcock's 'Lead In' for *New Worlds* 191 defines the creation of Jerry as 'an attempt to find a viable myth figure for the last half of the 20th century', with this status meaning 'he can crop up in any guise and any sex, if necessary' (Moorcock 1969: 2). This desire to create a myth figure from contemporary resources makes the decision to explicitly draw on Elric relevant. Both Elric and Jerry are clear avatars for the author, as Moorcock himself attested:

Elric was me (the me of 1960–61, anyway) and the mingled qualities of the betrayer and betrayed, the bewilderment about life in general, the search for some solution to it all, the expression of this bewilderment in terms of violence, cynicism and the need for revenge, were all characteristics of mine. [...] The story was packed with personal symbols. (Moorcock 1977: 125)

Moorcock endeavoured to avoid adhering to simple binaries by having single characters embody these oppositions in conflict. Hence Elric is both victim and perpetrator, particularly with regard to his sword Stormbringer, which absorbs the dying souls of its victims to give its bearer strength. Elric's control over the sword is erratic, as it is sentient, unpredictable and only occasionally controllable, taking the lives of his friends and lovers on its own whims and against his wishes. Order and Chaos are in opposition throughout all of Moorcock's heroic fantasy, with various champions for one element or the other growing beyond their initial loyalties and fighting to retain the cosmic balance.

In *A Cure for Cancer*, Jerry is initially tasked with helping his organisation with its own project: 'Was it fair, Cornelius asked himself, relaxing for a moment, to scheme the destruction of so much of this life, happiness and colour? It was a shame that his mission in life conflicted with it' (Moorcock 1993: 166). Jerry's ruminations reveal his lethargic and indifferent attitude towards the rest of the

world. He gets on with the task at hand because he is faithful to his company but is hindered by the US army and his opponent Bishop Beesley. Both are attempting to restore some semblance of order, counteracting the spread of anarchism and individuality perpetuated by Jerry. He eventually decides to leave the world to its fate as it is swallowed up by chaos, only attempting to save his sister Catherine, with whom he has an incestuous relationship.

Although this narrative thread of the book can be broken down into a comparatively linear progression, Jerry possesses gadgets that can allow him to hop between realities – and he is quickly accepting of the new state of affairs wherever he finds himself. Music is key here; with one trip being preceded by a sudden explosion of rock: ‘A strobe began to flash and the room filled with sound. It was Jimi Hendrix’s *Voodoo Child* distorted because of the volume, but they couldn’t be expected to know that, particularly since they were reeling about’ (Moorcock 1993: 194). This version of the multiverse is described in psychedelic terms: ‘Around them the air was jewelled and faceted, glistening and alive with myriad colours, flashing, scintillating, swirling and beautiful [...] The multiverse. All layers of existence seen at once’ (195). Later, Jerry is confronted by a manifold vision of himself as he dashes through the Shift: ‘Scenes took a long time and a long time to go [...] Jerry saw himself sixteen times – black, white, male, female, and he was dead’ (339).

The fragmentation of character appears to dramatize what Fredric Jameson would describe as the schizophrenic perception of the twentieth century, in which the escalation of media and information technology broke the historic logic of our conception of past and future time. Jameson explains that schizophrenic perception is disordered and lacks temporal continuity, meaning the subject is ‘condemned to live a perpetual present with which the various moments of his or her Past have little connection and for which there is no conceivable future on the horizon’ (Jameson 1983: 119). Schizophrenic perception is comprised of disconnected signifiers that do not necessarily form a coherent linear sequence – and any sense of identity is fragmented accordingly. Jameson claims that the ‘fragmentation of time into a series of perpetual presents’ (125) is a key feature of postmodernist art, but that this simply reinforces the logic of the consumer society. He leaves the question open as to whether or not there could be a way to resist this logic.

Rock ‘n’ roll in *A Cure for Cancer* is a reflection of the chaos of twentieth-century life; it not only represents but also prompts the disordered experience of schizophrenic perception. The raw power and psychedelic experimentation of 1960s rock communicates the vivid intensity of the lived experience. This fragmentation brings the terror of Western atrocities in remote regions back home and the extent of this technique is demonstrated in the Rooftop Gardens sequence.

In his survey of the New Wave, Colin Greenland reads *A Cure for Cancer*

as an end-of-the-'60s novel, as it is 'less frivolous and youthful [than *The Final Programme*]; the decadence is more pronounced, the disasters more grim' (Greenland 1983: 144). Absurdist, dark humour characterizes the farce and comedy that drive the narrative. For instance, armed assailants in a huge, 40-foot-long helicopter attempt to assassinate Jerry and wipe out the middle class women waiting to dine at the Sun Pavilion Restaurant at Derry and Toms' Roof Gardens in Kensington. Jerry eliminates the attackers and leaps into the chopper, piloting it safely away from the assembled ladies. Despite saving their lives, the ladies are indignant toward Jerry, shouting at him to go back where he came from, mistaking his photonegative appearance for dark skin.

The comic narrative is punctuated by unpleasant imagery and news headlines of atrocities, but even isolated instances of comedy are powered by a black streak. The display of excessive force represented by the helicopter over its completely helpless would-be victims is a relocation of the Vietnam War's horrors to middle England. The intertextual landscape is more fragmented than conventional satire, as the helicopter is identified as the Westland Whirlwind. This model was used by the British forces predominantly in the 1950s and was already outmoded by the time *A Cure for Cancer* was serialized in 1969. References to pre-World War II music hall light entertainment acts are angry subversions of the usual propaganda rallying call to fight for Queen and Country. Instead of fighting to make the world safe for future generations, the ladies are being told to endure wartime hardships for the benefit of light entertainment acts of the past. This inversion of propaganda exposes its underlying meaning – a plea to an imagined ideal of national identity, for the purpose of perpetuating imperial interests. The ladies in the Rooftop Garden grumble about George Formby, but are placated and wait in line as requested. As Moorcock told Greenland in 1992: 'The victims go on following the rules and hoping everything will be all right, because that's what they've been told, when in fact the aggressors, the people in power, have changed the rules' (Greenland 1992: 90).

Jerry, an agent of Chaos, is temporarily stepping in for Order on the Rooftop Gardens, and his actions with the randomizer that increase entropic disorder reveal he is never fully aligned with one or the other. In *A Cure for Cancer* entropy is represented by Jerry's randomizer, which is a science fiction gadget that also serves a metatextual function of randomizing the text itself. This is what prompts the transitions between increasingly short, staccato sequences across various realities as the narrative progresses to its conclusion. Roger Luckhurst has identified two ways in which Moorcock's treatment of entropy is particularly distinctive. First, Jerry is partly a positive entropic force, as he is an embodiment of 'anarchistic, counter-cultural rebellion, seeking liberation from the dead hand of History and crippling social conformity' (Luckhurst 2005: 155). Second, the dispersal of character across multiple realities in the Cornelius works is a valorization of entropy in terms of literary form. Collaged fragments

are an implicit denouncement of aesthetic and moral conservatism toward and within the arts. This experimentalism results in Order and Chaos being held in formal tension, as well as dramatic tension in the narrative.

Luckhurst identifies Jerry as an 'auto-critique, a savage reflection on the squandering of possibilities in the 1960s and the failure of the New Wave' (Luckhurst 2005: 157). Jerry's Romantic idealism is given up in favour of a morally compromised personal quest. The novel concludes with Jerry increasing the power of his entropy machine to maximum, sacrificing the fate of the universe to save his sister. Hendrix's 'Third Stone from the Sun' is synched in to charge the machine, the multiverse collapses to the tune of The Beatles' 'A Day in the Life' and a smaller pocket of existence is reborn, backed by Hendrix again with 'Are You Experienced?' Jerry and Catherine make love and Jerry is left speculating that maybe love could conquer all. The ending is superficially a conventional and optimistic one, with the promise of a birth symbolizing hope for the future: 'And then there was the baby to consider. He could feel it stirring already. He would have to relax, to rest' (Moorcock 1993: 366). This is subverted with the death of Catherine and the sacrifice of ideals that made this limited victory possible, which renders the conclusion of *A Cure for Cancer* a representation of the failure of 1960s idealism.

Jerry is an agent of chaos and anarchism whose initial idealism is gradually reduced in scope until it fails altogether. He regularly transcends morality and physics, but he only ever achieves an ephemeral parody of messianic status. This separates the Cornelius novels from escapism, as the potentially infinite possibilities of the multiverse are used to confront the reader with their status within an aggressive Western power. Jerry's only chance of happiness is a classically decadent one in an incestuous relationship with his sister, which also involves the destruction of much of the rest of reality. While no moral judgement is conveyed, Moorcock emphasizes Jerry's ineffectiveness and passivity. If Jerry is a symbol of his age, then he is a symbol that demonstrates how the idealism of the 1960s counter-culture already contained within itself the seeds for its own decay. Further elements of this technique can be traced in Lord Horror.

Lord Horror is a composite character that draws on sword-and-sorcery heroes such as Elric. He is also based on – among others – his author David Britton, fallen rock star P.J. Proby and Nazi broadcaster William Joyce, who was executed as a traitor after WWII. Joyce – popularly known as Lord Haw-Haw among British listeners of his wartime propaganda broadcasts – is the heart of the series, as he is a reminder of fascism's repressed existence within post-war society. As Jean-François Lyotard puts it, Nazism wasn't defeated and thoroughly overcome, but 'beaten down like a mad dog, by a police action' (Lyotard 1988: 106). This allows Lord Horror to stand, paradoxically, for both the freedom of counter-cultural rebellion and the authoritarianism of Nazism. Noys acknowledges that this representation of Lord Horror toys with glamorizing the

character's 'anti-Semitic views and [...] extreme acts of anti-Semitic violence' (Noys 2016: 231). This is part of a deliberately disturbing formal strategy of contamination which builds on concepts related to the mixing-up of times.

As a composite character, it would be reductive to understand Lord Horror as a literal representation of a Nazi. He may be better seen as an emblem for the Holocaust itself. Horror appears to acknowledge as much, although he is dismissive of being seen as anything other than human. In the novel *Baptised in the Blood of Millions*, written as an autobiography, he says:

Critics hint that I am in league with Old Nick; that I am a follower of the Left Hand Path. This is simplistic stuff, mined for the gullible. I have heard similar who-haw (haw) expressed about Hitler and his ontological dreams for the Third Reich. (Britton 2001: 166)

He insists he has paid a high price for this status – alluding to his Cornelius-esque nature that sees him able to appear across various realities almost at will. However, Horror also insists on his own humanity, which is part of a wider implication of the reader in his politics.

Holocaust criticism offers some tools to analyze this approach. In a 2013 article on perpetrator perspectives in Holocaust fiction, Jenni Adams identifies contagion as an unspoken anxiety in any text that deals with Nazism. This is the fear that readers may be disarmed by the text and made susceptible to infection by fascist ideals. The fact of Nazism's repression undoubtedly compounds this anxiety, but Adams goes further, suggesting that this contagion underlies the uneasy reception received by 'imaginative encounters with perpetrator perspectives' (Adams 2013: 26). Lord Horror baits this fear of contagion; the protagonist is even more hyper-charged with rock 'n' roll cool than Jerry Cornelius. In a 2010 interview, Britton explained:

Rock 'n' roll's spirit is hopefully always with us. It's the bottom-line inspiration for Lord Horror, Meng & Ecker, La Squab and everything I've written. The rhythm of psychomorphic Horror is set to a rock 'n' roll beat. Rock 'n' roll and Auschwitz spell Lord Horror. To me, there's inevitability in their blending. The bittersweet euphoria of rock 'n' roll with the most perverted campaign of terror in the history of the world. One breeds heightened life, the other depletes the human spirit. Positive and negative in the extreme. (Sellars 2010: n.p.)

Lord Horror retains his power and attraction as a fantasy hero, with counter-cultural vitality adding further to his appeal, but the attraction is polluted by also being granted to Nazism. This prompted John Coulthart, artist and co-creator of *Lord Horror: Reverbstorm*, to describe Lord Horror as 'a psychopathology of

heroic fantasy' (Coulthart 2012: n.p.). He noted that the usual violence of the genre is taken to extremes and applied to an anti-Semite, suggesting elsewhere that this is not too much of a stretch given that '[Edgar Rice] Burroughs' books and Karl May's Westerns fuelled Hitler's power fantasies' (Coulthart 1998: n.p.).

If Jerry's status as a symbol of his age means that Horror can also be taken as a symbolic emblem of the Holocaust, then his interactions with victims of the Holocaust will differ from more conventional representations of Nazi perpetrators. In the first chapter of *Baptised in the Blood of Millions*, Horror introduces himself to Sir Oswald Mosley and attends a gathering of real-life British fascists at a meeting in Manchester. Nineteenth-century Lancashire writer Benjamin Brierley tears into the meeting with a strange creature on a leash. Horror takes this to be a shaved dog, 'its pale skin streaked with almost incandescent blood' (Britton 2001: 30). Horror realizes he is mistaken. While the creature is canine, it also has 'the appearance of a towering albino mutant, yet somehow benign and helpless', with 'soulful, mothers' eyes' and 'a blood rift six inches deep in its neck' (31). Brierley declares: 'This 'ere Jew is 'arbouring a Jew' and carves it open with a bone-handled razor (31). From the wound a Jewish dwarf emerges, which moves like a figure from Georges Seurat's *A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte* (1884–6) and is revealed to be the Horla, a reference to the strange creature from the 1887 Guy de Maupassant short story of the same name. Both this intertextual reference and Horror's violent encounter with the creature can be seen as a synecdoche for Horror's broader interaction with victims of the Holocaust. The Horla inverts the conventional representation of a victim of the Nazis, as it is not helpless or vulnerable. It is prideful, arrogant, monstrous and abject. Upon surveying the crowd, it observes: "So, I am among rakehall fellows!" Like flutter leaves, blood shook off the Horla. "Then, winebibbers and huggermuggers, the past has almost slipped out of reality" (34). In deriding its fascist audience as drunkards and concealers of the truth, the Horla protests that their stereotypical representation as villains has the effect of caricaturing the Holocaust itself.

The intertextual reference to the Horla raises questions as to the nature of the creature and how it is read. The Maupassant story has become something of a minor touchstone for the Weird. In 1927, H.P. Lovecraft described the story as being more the 'morbid outpourings of a realistic mind in a pathological state than the healthy imaginative products of a vision naturally disposed toward phantasy and sensitive to the normal illusions of the unseen' (Lovecraft 2009: n.p.). While Maupassant's Horla is invisible, it surveys and influences the minds of others. It appears to die, but ambiguity is cast over this, which finally sends the nameless narrator insane. The protagonist speculates that the Horla may have died when it was meant to, that it had reached the limit of its existence, and that maybe he has to kill himself to be rid of its influence. In terms of the intertextuality between Maupassant and *Baptised in the Blood of Millions*, the

same passage could be seen as indicative of Horror's failure to consider the Horla's comments about influencing the minds of others.

This challenges the prevailing view of the Holocaust as being ineffable, which is commonplace in reflection on the Holocaust by thinkers from Adorno to Lyotard and Habermas. In *Mourning Becomes the Law* (1996), Gillian Rose identifies this tendency as Holocaust piety: 'According to this view, "Auschwitz" or "the Holocaust" are emblems for the breakdown in divine and/or human history. The uniqueness of this break delegitimizes names and narratives as such, and hence all aesthetic or apprehensive representation' (Rose 1996: 43). Therefore, if the Holocaust is accepted as both a year zero moment and a break from history, all attempts at representation are invalidated. Rose does not suggest, though, that representation ought to be superseded but reinforced: 'Only the persistence of always fallible and contestable representation opens the possibility for our acknowledgement of mutual implication in the fascism of our cultural rites and rituals' (Rose 1996: 41). Indeed, Rose calls for a hypothetical film that would actively engage with this issue by following the life of a member of the SS with pathos, 'so that we empathize with him, identify with his hopes and fears, disappointments and rage, so that when it comes to killing, we put our hands on the trigger with him, wanting him to get what he wants' (50). She adds that this is already characteristic of texts where the reader feels more secure about the boundary between fantasy and reality, such as a violent fantasy novel. By seeing the Horla purely through Horror's eyes, and with Horror acting as the reader's sole prism for this violent phantasmagoria, the reader is presented with such a contestable representation.

The depth of Britton's literary technique does not stop there. Holocaust terror is entwined with rock 'n' roll in *Baptised in the Blood of Millions*, with catchy hooks and dance moves animating the violence: 'As a bloody rift opened it from breastbone down to the base of its stomach, its chest heaved forward, and the creature did the shimmy-shake' (Britton 2001: 36). Each of these methods – bringing rock 'n' roll into the prose, the Weird fiction intertexts, and the appropriation of intensely racist language, literalized as abject imagery – serve to deepen the hugely discomforting reading experience, which in turn revives the horror of the Holocaust. The additional context offered by the composite character of Horror, and the implication of the reader prompted by these techniques, leads to deep immersion in a troubling mindset – arguably, within the death drive itself. At the climax of *Reverbstorm*, Lord Horror is left to exist in a psychic space that is simultaneously finite and infinite, having transcended his corporeal form to contaminate and potentially become infused with the noösphere. When this immersion in Horror's mind is physically externalized, the effect is highly disturbing.

The fractured landscapes of the Lord Horror novels extend the relentless implication of its points of reference with Nazism, just as Horror himself does. As

the Cornelius novels shut down the potential for escapism within their otherwise infinite multiverse of possibilities, Lord Horror does not permit the reader to think that they may be somehow beyond fascism. Even bucolic details such as 1920s British confectionary are grafted onto the landscape and comprehensively entwined with the fascist mindset in the form of 'toffee-coated Jews'. In *Baptised in the Blood of Millions*, these unfortunates are fired on England as missiles from Germany – a fantasy version of a V2 rocket – and seen through an aesthetic filter: 'The Jew flamed, and was upon us. The office was bathed in Technicolor, that bright lurid stuff that so enhanced *Gone With the Wind*' (Britton 2001: 21). Later, the artist Stanley Spencer is seen lingering amid another aerial attack, implicitly framing the event in the style of one of his transpositions of Biblical scenes to his Thameside home.

By being both an aesthetic backdrop constantly hanging over the novel and a string of victims, the fiery Jews are indicative of the work's approach to the Holocaust. The event and its participants are inexorably united through this symbolism. Furthermore, the characters are so loaded with meaning and allusion that they can be removed from one context and dropped into another, taking the implicit threat of Holocaust terror with them. These sequences not only dramatize how Horror is able to act as a symbol of the Holocaust as much as a representation of a perpetrator but also how the contagion of Nazism persists within post-Holocaust culture.

Horror's noxious ideals are shown to have the potential to contaminate all human thought. Throughout Britton's works, Horror's body repeatedly collapses, allowing him to transcend his physical form and diffuse into the collective consciousness. Coulthart's illustration of Lord Horror as a charnel house in *Reverbstorm* literalizes Horror's presence in the landscape by mapping his anti-Semitic philosophy onto it and identifying him directly with industrial fascism. As his flames are being stoked by silhouetted figures, details from the work of Pablo Picasso are expelled as by-products. In the final chapter of *Reverbstorm*, the imagery becomes much more chaotic. The first panel reads: 'The threat to my life had taken up residence under my skin; sifting deep and greedily inside me. Usurping the Will-To-Live process by indiscriminately pushing the veins, bones and blood of my interior through my own unwilling flesh' (Britton and Coulthart 2013: 270–1). Illustrations and montages that have already appeared return and are swirled around in Ouroboros-like, self-cannibalizing cyclical motifs. Horror is reduced to a Bauhausesque shadowplay mannequin, buffeted by these forces. The only linearity is the waveform of a recording of William Joyce's voice intoning 'Germany calling, Germany calling' over and over.

Noys notes that in *Reverbstorm*, the borders between terrestrial and psychic landscapes become indeterminate. This transgression of 'internal psychic space and external world' is fully inhabited by Coulthart's images (Noys 2016: 238). The implication is that Horror is free to promote his twin philosophies of

anti-Semitism and rock 'n' roll for all eternity. *Baptised in the Blood of Millions* sees Horror offered his broadcasting post by Mosley, which he accepts with enthusiasm: 'radio would be my forte, fitting me like the traditional glove, the ideal medium for disseminating my particular sermon of National Socialism [...] Radio would enable me to directly touch the soul of the nation' (Britton 2001: 40). Horror's own concern is overtly with Jewish contamination – yet here his voice is framed as the tool that is doing the contaminating, with the novel closing: 'They sheathed my voice like prophylactics' (244). Noys indicates that this logic of contamination is key to Britton's aesthetic: it 'release[s] us into a textual and visual space in which we are confronted with "free-floating" elements of anti-Semitism, Nazism, and racism' (Noys 2016: 244). The logic of contamination therefore infects the reader with a sensation of the horror of the Holocaust, and simultaneously grants Nazism excitement and appeal.

The Cornelius books show how the potential for entropic decline is present in idealistic impulses and efforts to impose order on chaotic reality. Lord Horror's application of this to Nazism is not so straightforward a rebuttal. Noys suggests its persistent enacting of anti-Semitism and racism 'trouble any notion of heterogeneity as a guarantee of a "hybrid" politics' (Noys 2016: 245). Signature postmodern techniques are present in both works, particularly the mixing-up of times. Although this is consistent with Latour's view of modernity, there are significant limitations in applying theoretical approaches to Jerry Cornelius and Lord Horror. As Noys points out, such frameworks cannot offer an account of the specificity of the pulp roots and political contamination of the works, to say nothing of their psychedelic and rock 'n' roll aesthetics.

Moorcock has repeatedly complained that many readers seemed to identify with and admire Jerry, rather than pitying him as a pathetic creature. M. John Harrison has argued that the limitation of irony as a literary tool was a flaw within the New Wave project. Instead, the repetition of genre iconography cannot signify anything beyond itself, only speaking of 'swords and torture and how you can become King by eating the brains of your predecessor (which not only dooms you to repeat the same barbarism, but is also only what sword-and-sorcery has been advocating since Robert Howard)' (Harrison 2005: 145). This would certainly seem to account for the un-ironic enjoyment of Jerry-as-hero, despite the extensive distancing from this possibility in *A Cure for Cancer*. However, Britton's approach takes a different tack, inflating and hyper-signifying his fantastic images. By honing-in on Nazi iconography, the effect is one with necessarily greater capacity to disturb the imagination.

Both Jerry and Horror can be seen as symbols because of their development from sword and sorcery heroes, offering genre excitement rooted in a Romantic tradition. They are also an expression of the human experience within the destabilizing of linear temporality that characterizes much of modern life. This blending poses a challenge that is difficult to account for in theoretical terms

and has considerable potential to disrupt our understanding of the possibilities of fiction.

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Christopher Priest and the Persistence of the New Wave

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Any attempt to date the New Wave is always going to be imprecise because it depends on the context within which it is being discussed. One approach would be to link it to Michael Moorcock's editorship of the monthly version of *New Worlds* from 1964 to 1970 and the sense of a shared concept of the Multiverse that surrounded it (as exemplified by Moorcock's encouragement of other members of the New Wave to write stories using his character Jerry Cornelius). The quarterly successor to the magazine, which ran from 1971 to 1976, might also be regarded as integrally connected to the New Wave. Other approaches might seek to define the New Wave in relation to literary history. In terms of the development of British sf, it comes between the disaster fiction of John Wyndham and John Christopher, which dominated the 1950s, and the New Space Opera by writers such as Iain M. Banks, Colin Greenland and Ken MacLeod that emerged in the 1980s; and can be linked to both. For example, J.G. Ballard's first novel, *The Wind from Nowhere* (1961), was an example – albeit extreme – of that type of disaster fiction which his fellow *New Worlds* writer, Brian Aldiss, would characterise as 'cosy catastrophes' in which 'the hero should have a pretty good time (a girl, free suites at the Savoy, automobiles for the taking) while everyone else is dying off' (Aldiss and Wingrove 2001: 280). Banks and MacLeod read and discussed the quarterly *New Worlds* while at school together in the early 1970s, and Greenland published the first study of the New Wave, *The Entropy Exhibition* (1983), which was based on his PhD thesis.

Alternatively, the New Wave can be seen as a response to the obvious shortcomings of post-war British social realism that became manifest in the late 1950s and early 1960s by when it had become clear, as Angus Wilson observed, that it was generally less 'real' than the modernist works of Joyce and Woolf that it was aiming to replace (Wilson 1983: 133). In this context, the turn to a form of sf which was prepared to renegotiate the aesthetic terms of the post-war settlement by 'the liberation of fancy, the liberation of imagination, the liberation from the real world around us' (Wilson 1983: 243) represented a major response to an ongoing crisis of representation that could be traced back to before the First World War. As Paul March-Russell argues, contra Roger Luckhurst, the uneven cultural moment of the New Wave traces 'not the many deaths of sf but modernism' (March-Russell 2015: 10) and the process by which the male gaze of the latter gives way to 'the [hitherto] absent female perspective' (152) which would increasingly come to characterise the former from the 1970s onwards. This evolutionary jump is recapitulated in Christopher

Priest's most recent novel, *The Adjacent* (2013), which closes with its male protagonist looking through the viewfinder of his quantum camera and taking rapid photographs of a beautiful woman while following her through adjacent parallel realities into a different, less-dystopian, version of the future from the ones portrayed throughout the novel. This is no celebration of the male gaze, but rather an inversion of that gaze, from passive acceptance of the symbolic order to a creative receptivity to randomness that transforms a tool of subjugation into a means of entering the space of the female imaginary made actual.

The Adjacent illustrates how science fiction characteristically draws on science – in this case, quantum physics and the associated idea of parallel universes – to conceptualize social change. According to quantum physics, particles can exist in superposition, which is to say in more than one place or state at the same time, and this can be mathematically described by equations that represent what is known as the 'waveform' state. The discovery of the waveform in the first half of the twentieth century created a problem because, on the one hand, it invalidated the laws of cause and effect on which classical physics and Newtonian mechanics were predicated, but, on the other hand, the old laws remained demonstrably valid for most practical purposes. The solution devised to this problem, known as the Copenhagen Interpretation, was the idea that if something is not being observed, then it behaves as a waveform, but if it is being observed, then its waveform collapses so that we see things in only one place at a time. The point of Erwin Schrödinger's famous thought experiment concerning a cat placed in a box with a quantum trigger that might or might not lead to it being killed in some way – for example, by releasing poison – was to illustrate that according to the logic of the Copenhagen Interpretation the cat must simultaneously be both alive and dead as long as the box is not opened and observation has therefore not occurred. The Copenhagen Interpretation is therefore refuted on the grounds that it would be absurd to insist that a cat could be both alive and dead at the same time.

However, the example of 'Schrödinger's cat' can also be used to illustrate the concept of the existence of parallel universes because one way of explaining the uncertainty of knowing whether the cat is alive or dead is to hypothesise that, after the first second of the experiment, there will be two parallel universes in one of which the cat will be alive and in the other of which it will be dead. As the mathematician and physicist Max Tegmark explains, observing the existence of the waveform does not just mean that microscopic particles are superimposed in two different states but also in the mind of the observer. Tegmark gives the example of an experiment in which a playing card is balanced on its edge and viewed by an observer who will win \$100 if it falls face-side up. According to quantum theory, it falls down in both directions at once, in superposition. The point is that it is not just the card that is in superposition but also the state of mind of the observer, which is simultaneously happy and unhappy. That is to

say, the experiment is basically a non-lethal version of the Schrödinger's cat experiment, with the observer in the role of the cat. There is only one wave function and one quantum reality but in practice it is as though our universe has split into two parallel universes. At the end of the experiment, there will be two different versions of the observer, each subjectively feeling just as real as the other, but completely unaware of each other's existence (Tegmark 2014: 189). This is the idea that is the basis of the 'many worlds' interpretation and the theory, which is now widely accepted, that parallel universes exist.

Radical indeterminacy, therefore, becomes the basis for apprehending new realities, which, from the perspective of sf, offer new social possibilities. The use of scientific concepts to argue for social ends is often deeply problematic but that does not mean that it is necessarily inappropriate to employ such concepts imaginatively, as Priest does. Indeed, it is doubtful that science and imagination can be separated from each other in any meaningful way. After all, what is the story of Schrödinger's cat other than a form of sf? Therefore, this article will suggest that ideas from quantum physics provide a way of conceptualising the renegotiation of realism and modernism that characterised the writing of the New Wave in the 1960s and early 1970s as an ongoing cultural 'waveform' that still persists to this day. Although other writers will be mentioned, I use Priest as my main example because he is one of the two major authors – the other is M. John Harrison – whose career spans from the New Wave to the present. Moreover, Priest was one of the first to apply the term 'New Wave' to the fiction being published by *New Worlds* under Moorcock's editorship. As he explains, the term was being used to describe fanzines such as Charles Platt's *Point of View*:

I was by then a committed filmgoer, and was attracted to the French Nouvelle Vague (as well as other European film-makers). I felt the same stirrings of anti-establishment impatience as Godard, Chabrol, Truffaut, etc. When fanzines such as Charles Platt's appeared they were dubbed 'New Wave', which seemed to me a bit of a misnomer, but I recognized (or thought I recognized) some of the same spirit in *New Worlds*, and felt the label was better applied there. I think the article in which I expressed this was clumsily written (I was still barely out of my teens), but the idea caught on at once. (Priest 2008: 118)

I think the qualification from 'I recognized' to 'or thought I recognized' is particularly telling – there is an elaborate kind of movement there which indicates fifty years of history and a refusal to be constrained within a set of parameters which he helped create. This is also visible in the way that Priest has republished his own early short fiction as a collection, *Ersatz Wines* (2008), framed both within and against the context of the New Wave. As he notes, 'in

1966, *New Worlds* represented the cutting edge' (118). What he means by this is implied by a discussion of reading J.G. Ballard in comparison to Isaac Asimov: 'Ballard's plots were weird and ambiguous, his characters highly stylized, his prose mysterious, beautiful and obsessive. His ideas involved non-Asimovian matters like memory, identity, existence, time, entropy, art, surrealism. Once read, a Ballard story could never be forgotten' (22). Asimov was writing about 'technology, empires, commerce and power' and the sort of future that Priest 'was desperately hoping to avoid':

Ballard, on the other hand, was radical, risky, open-source. He gave disturbing unusual insights into the present day and the future he dreamed about was one in which the images of Dali, the ideas of McLuhan and the language of the space age would be employed. He unlocked doors that no one had even known were there before. (23)

Priest's own fiction began to appear from 1966 onwards and he was to sell two stories to *New Worlds* in this period. The first of these, 'The Ersatz Wine', shared cover billing on *New Worlds* 171 (March 1967) with Brian Aldiss' *Report on Probability A* and Ballard's 'The Assassination of John Fitzgerald Kennedy Considered as a Downhill Motor Race'. Priest's story was an attempt to emulate the effects of the New Wave while writing about the artificiality of the modern world around him. Its general flavour is summed up by its closing one-line paragraph: "My life," said the Actor, "is a constant lie" (Priest 2008: 118). 'Conjugation', written after 'The Ersatz Wine' but published first, consists of a sequence of disparate and enigmatic fragments. In retrospect, Priest judges that while *New Worlds* provided a welcome and necessary break from the tired and derivative nature of most of the sf that preceded it, its problem lay in the fact that it 'soon became a self-sustaining and self-referential school of trendy attitudes' (Priest 2008: 119) and his own stories contributed to that result: 'It was actually remarkably easy to turn out stuff like 'Conjugation', while conventional prose was still full of difficulties' (126).

Although he accepted 'Conjugation' for publication, Moorcock did suggest to Priest that it might not be the right direction for his writing to take. At the time, Priest thought this a bit unreasonable given that *New Worlds* was encouraging exactly such experimentation but later he came to see it as valuable advice for reasons discussed below. In any case, he did move on and has never been 'tempted to try anything like it since' (Priest 2008: 127). However, it was exactly this question of the relationship between style and content which came to define the New Wave, especially for Americans, who, as Greenland argues, were outside the context which produced the movement and therefore dependent on trying to extract 'a New Wave formula' from the manner in which the original texts were written (Greenland 1983: 166). Greenland supports this argument by

quoting from Priest's description of this formula in his lengthy article on the New Wave for Robert Holdstock's *Encyclopedia of Science Fiction* (1978):

The writing would be obscure to one degree or another. There would be experiments with the actual prose: with grammar, with viewpoint, with typography. There would be reference to all sorts of eclectic sources: philosophy, rock music, newspaper articles, medicine, politics, automobile specification etc. There would be a 'down-beat' or tragic resolution to many stories, if any resolution at all. There would frequently be explicit descriptions of sexual activity, and obscenities were freely used. (Priest 1978: 170)

Significantly, Greenland draws on Priest's analysis to describe the emphasis on style within the New Wave, which he attributes squarely to Moorcock, as a source of misdirection that obscured the original purpose, which had been to encourage writers to liberate themselves from the 'pulp magazine idiom' by finding 'an individual approach to writing speculative fiction' (Priest 1978: 170). When combined with Priest's insights into why reading Ballard was so exciting in the 1960s, this insistence on the importance of the individual approach can be seen as stemming from the belief that it is the individual writer who, once freed of obligatory genre trappings, is best placed to open new doors of possibility. Reducing the New Wave to a formula occluded this individual approach and thereby destroyed the potential for writers to make it new. Arguably, therefore, the New Wave ended at the point where it became describable as a style. However, as Priest's retrospective account of writing his own stories for *New Worlds* suggests, in some respects it had already reached this point in 1966.

Viewed from this context, Moorcock's misdirecting of readers by emphasising style might be seen as a deliberate manoeuvre to maintain space for those particular individual writers – Aldiss, Ballard and some others – who really were making it new but needed the protective cover afforded by the idea of the New Wave. This led to Moorcock's private advice to Priest at the time not to focus on the formula; advice which Priest 'found, in the end, extremely useful' (Priest 2008: 119). Similarly, Priest might be perceived as continuing this misdirection by beginning his account of the New Wave with the hyperbolic claim that 'the movement as a whole can now be seen as the single most important development of the science fiction genre' (Priest 1978: 164). In fact, his article is quite meticulous in exposing that 'much of the New Wave was unsuccessful' (173), with the one main exception being that it made possible the subsequent situation in which avant-garde work such as Ballard's *Crash* (1973) or Samuel R. Delany's *Dhalgren* (1975) could be published as sf. For Priest, therefore, the main point of the New Wave was that it potentially opened a path for those like him who were 'in it, but not of it' (Priest 2008: 120) to attempt to break fully free

of the constraints of genre sf by moving beyond even the new possibilities that the New Wave had opened up. The concluding paragraph of his encyclopedia entry is accordingly ambitious:

The motives behind the New Wave remain as valid today as they were in 1964, when Moorcock took over *New Worlds*. The idiom of science fiction is no less strong; now is simply broader in its scope. How much longer need the idiom continue? That will probably be the next revolution. (Priest 1978: 173)

Subsequently, Priest's alleged departure from sf and his pronouncements on the topic achieved a certain notoriety in the field. Andrew M. Butler has considered whether Priest 'has elected to leave the ghetto behind, like a British Kurt Vonnegut' (Butler 2005: 7) but, on reflection, concluded that Priest's work can be read as an 'interaction' with sf in which 'meaning is not necessarily to be found in choosing one state over another, but rather in the interaction by the individual between the two' (8). One way to think about this interaction, which Priest embodies, would be to think about it in terms of Slavoj Žižek's concept of the parallax view as a perspective which does not reveal subjective difference so much as 'an "ontological" shift in the object itself' (Žižek 2006: 17). In other words, the significance of Priest's tangential relationship to sf is not what it tells us about him but what it reveals about the plural nature of reality, and the possibilities it affords human beings, which is the subject of both Priest's work and sf in general. As Žižek explains, the 'Real' which is revealed by a parallax perspective is not fixed and familiar 'but the hard bone of contention which pulverises the sameness into the multitude of appearances' (Žižek 2006: 26).

I have argued elsewhere that Priest's fiction employs something like the Freudian psychoanalytic technique of 'repeating and working through' to place a 'repetitive strain' on the 'reality principle' and so creates new possibilities 'as he shows the struggles of his characters to write themselves as beings in their own worlds rather than let themselves be written as things in someone else's' (Hubble 2005b: 47). However, Priest's fiction can also be understood in terms of the ideas of quantum physics, which directly or indirectly underpin much of his fiction, as challenging the limiting constraints of consensus reality. As discussed above, the Copenhagen Interpretation was a fudge which allowed physicists to suggest the waveform had collapsed so that they could pretend that things were in only one place at a time – in accordance with the classical laws of physics – so that, in turn, they could continue to do experiments and make measurements even though they were perfectly aware that the waveform does not collapse. The idea of 'consensus reality' functions in a similar manner to the Copenhagen Interpretation as a means of reconciling our subjective internal modelling of the perceptible world around us with an ultimately random and unknowable

external physical reality. On one level, therefore, consensus reality is the agreed criteria by which we align our internal reality with one another so that we are not swept away by the randomness of external reality but it also has the ideological function of preventing us from taking advantage of the randomness of external reality in order to reconfigure social relations differently. There is clearly a tension between the extremes of unliveable complete randomness and totalitarian social stasis.

If we think about this relationship between internal consensus and external reality in terms of magic, as Priest does in his 1995 novel *The Prestige*, then we can see that the external world of random quantum physics, where things can simultaneously be in two places at once is inherently magical, whereas collapsed-waveform consensus reality is by definition not magical since it only exists by virtue of excluding any random unpredictability. In order for a stage magician to really perform magic, they would somehow have to allow the waveform to function in front of the audience without that audience's observation causing the waveform to collapse. The only way of doing this is would be to misdirect the audience so that they are looking the wrong way when the actual magic happens. While stage magic does not involve actual magic, it is nonetheless dependent on misdirection and Priest makes this comparison explicit in *The Prestige*, in which, in order to perform 'transported man' tricks, one of the rival magicians is using stage magic while the other is performing a version of what Tegmark calls 'quantum suicide' (Tegmark 2014: 216). While 'it is evident that Priest is using the example of the stage magician's use of misdirection, to postpone waveform collapse long enough for the trick to be enacted, as a metaphor for the writer's use of suspension of disbelief' (Hubble 2015: 160), it is also the case that this suspension of disbelief can be seen as functioning as a suspension of the Copenhagen Interpretation. That is to say the stage magician is able to allow the waveform to function in the open rather than in secret. Therefore, the world is changed and the magic *is* real in effect. *The Prestige* does not therefore just indicate how writing is performative in the sense that it causes things to happen in the world but also indicates how that might function at a quantum level – as precisely a negotiation of the tension between stasis and complete randomness – by causing a kind of interrupted collapse of the waveform that enables the world to be changed.

For similar reasons, scientists such as Roger Penrose have posited that consciousness and memory are themselves quantum processes, although some current thinking suggests this is probably not the case. In fact, the evolutionary utility of consciousness is possibly precisely that it does tend to collapse the random universe into a consensus reality which allows people to work together and develop societies. However, on the other hand, creativity, as practised in all forms of art including writing, depends like stage magic on suspending waveform collapse sufficiently to make something new happen. Sustained repetition of

these processes, sustained 'making it new', will eventually result in a collective acclimatisation to this 'newness' which will in turn alter consensus reality. This can be seen historically on all sorts of levels. One of the more seismic shifts, for example, was the development of photography in the nineteenth century, which eventually altered human perception in the ways described by Walter Benjamin in 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction' (1936):

With the close-up, space expands; with slow motion, movement is extended. The enlargement of a snapshot does not simply render more precise what in any case was visible, though unclear: it reveals entirely new structural formations of the subject [...]. The camera introduces us to unconscious optics as does psychoanalysis to unconscious impulses. (Benjamin 1992: 227-8)

The writing movement that embraced 'making it new' as its creed was modernism, which by focusing on self-reflexivity opened up new subjectivities and hence new possibilities for social being. Arguably, one of the new possibilities it enabled was the social democratic settlement that came into place in 1945, a form of consensus reality that understandably, given the disruption of the war years, favoured stability and consequently privileged an aesthetic of social realism over modernism. However, by the late 1950s, it was clear that post-war British realism had run out of steam, as Angus Wilson noted in 1958: 'Without in any way departing from my adherence to the post-war social novel, I fear that the central characters are inferior in reality and depth to Virginia Woolf's, though their problems and values seem to me of greater significance' (Wilson 1983: 133). In other words, post-war writing was less real, because it was less in tune with the random nature of external reality, than the modernist writing it sought to displace. The problem which had dogged the twentieth century, the crisis of representation, which was a post-Darwin, post-Freud, post-Einstein crisis of realism, continued without solution. By the 1960s, Wilson was advocating the 'use of old forms in a new way', or pastiche:

Some of the best work of this kind using old forms as pastiche has been done in science fiction. I tried to do this in some degree in the last half of *The Old Men in the Zoo*, and there are people, Anthony Burgess in particular, who have used science fiction, I think, very seriously. (Wilson 1983: 243)

This was the basis of Wilson's support for the New Wave in general and Moorcock in particular. Similarly, John Fowles was a staunch advocate of Priest in the '70s. In both cases, these mainstream literary figures understood how the interrogative stance towards reality within the New Wave and the avant-

garde sf that succeeded it, was central to twentieth-century English literature. The exclusion of works and writers purely on the grounds of their being sf made no sense to them for the simple reason that any such an exclusion makes a nonsense of the post-war history of English literature, which was shaped by speculative writers such as Naomi Mitchison and the Nobel Prize-winner Doris Lessing. Writers like Wilson and Fowles knew this because they also wrote speculative fiction such as the former's *The Old Men at the Zoo* (1961) and the latter's *The Magus* (1965). Such post-war speculative fiction, including the New Wave, needs to be incorporated within the official history of English Literature so that it actually makes sense. However, any such incorporation runs the danger of rendering these texts subject to a kind of literary 'Copenhagen Interpretation' which shuts down all the possibilities they open up. In this respect, the fate of the surrealist movement as described by Fredric Jameson, sounds an ominous note of warning:

The stunning and depressing historical irony of the surrealist movement was that this pre-eminent anti-aesthetic vanguard movement, which despised Literature and aimed at the radical transformation of daily life itself, became the very paradigm of Literature and literary production in the Western mainstream high-cultural tradition. (Jameson 2005: 317)

It is this danger of being categorised, and therefore contained, as a literary movement which motivates the 'misdirection' of Moorcock and Priest in their descriptions of the New Wave. Their point is to draw attention away from the transformative interrogation of reality that was being conducted by some of its authors and continued throughout the 1970s in works such as Priest's own novels, *Indoctrinaire* (1970), *Fugue for a Darkening Island* (1972) and *A Dream of Wessex* (1977). As Paul Kincaid notes, these novels and also Priest's later fiction often turn on the ways Priest finds 'to cut his characters off from consensus reality' (Kincaid 2008: 90), with varying effects. While *Fugue for a Darkening Island* can be read positively as a rejection of the artificial 'normality' of post-war Britain, which is 'dragged kicking and screaming into the world historical current' (Hubble 2005a: 101), it also documents 'the collapse of a counter-cultural ideal of the open society and the rise of ultra-right politics' (March-Russell 2015: 145). In fact, these novels in general and *A Dream of Wessex* in particular, with its competing visions of socialist utopia and proto-Thatcherite dystopia, serve as 'a prescient demonstration that postwar Britain could break down in two ways' (Hubble 2014: 64).

That Britain did actually go down the Thatcherite route had an effect on the subsequent development of sf. While the New Wave, part of the 1960s reaction to the social stasis of 1950s Britain, tended to promote radical indeterminacy,

British sf in the twenty-first century, written against a background of atomizing neoliberalism, tends – sometimes, at least – to privilege stasis. For example, both Mary Gentle's *Ash* (2000) and Adam Roberts' *Yellow Blue Tibia* (2009) turn on characters who, unlike Priest's magicians, collapse the waveform of quantum randomness in order to create a safe space that ensures continued human existence in the face of the threat of hostile radical indeterminacy. The central event of *Ash* is a fifteenth-century hunt in which the successor of the dying Duke of Burgundy is selected on the grounds of their ability to catch a mythical white hart and reduce it to the state of reality. It is this capacity which maintains Burgundy as the sole guarantor of stable human society. Although, it should be noted that this hunt is won by a woman, Floria, who duly becomes the Duchess of Burgundy, indicating that Gentle is predicated this stability on a non-patriarchal organisation of society. As I have argued elsewhere:

The idea that this ability to reinforce a liveable consensus reality is a rare human attribute is not merely a consequence of the plot but a central aspect of the novel's logic, which is critically concerned with the collective capacity of humanity for creating chaos. (Hubble 2015: 165)

A similar dynamic, although framed in a completely different context, inhabits Roberts' *Yellow Blue Tibia*, set in The Soviet Union in the 1980s, but beginning with an opening chapter in which Stalin gathers together Soviet science fiction writers following the Second World War and commands them to create an imaginary scenario in which aliens threaten the Earth, which is designed to aid the cause of World Communism, only to rescind this decision a few weeks later and command them to forget about it. When years later, one of these writers, Shvorecky, meets another, Frenkel, who is now working for the KGB, and is told that these events they made up decades before are coming true, he is understandably skeptical, especially in a society where deviation from official thinking is punishable. However, Shvorecky increasingly finds himself in situations which do not correspond with the binary logic we unthinkingly accept as part of reality: 'There is either something in a room, or there isn't something in a room, it can't be both' (Roberts 2009: 62); 'I could not see the future. Time doesn't work that way. Time runs forward. Or it runs backward. One of the two. But it must do one of those things, and there cannot be a third thing it does' (64).

These lines, which come relatively early in the novel, follow Schrödinger's refutation of the Copenhagen Interpretation on the grounds that the cat must be either dead or alive but can't be both. As the novel progresses, however, Shvorecky becomes less certain: 'I was either dead or I was alive or there was some third option' (221). By the end of the novel, when he has finally come to grips with the notion of parallel universes and the fact that a fleet of UFOs are

massed in the sky ready to invade Earth, he learns that it is only his American girlfriend, Dora, and her unusual capacity to collapse the waveform, who is keeping chaos at bay. As another of the original sf writers, Asterinov, who turns out to have been an alien all along, leads Skvorecky to safety from Frenkel, the KGB agent, the latter gives vent to his frustration at the indeterminacy of the universe and its capacity to thwart the creation of a perfect, social structure:

'Copenhagen fuck!' Frenkel slurred. 'I wish we'd written that the aliens *blew up* Copenhagen, all those years ago. Fucking Copenhagen.'

'A blameless town,' I objected.

'Blameless? *Fucking quantum* physics.'

'Destroying Copenhagen would hardly alter the facts of the quantum universe,' said Nikolai Nikolaivitch Asterinov. (314)

The novel exposes how the collective propensity to believe in certain realities, such as the existence of UFOs or the desirability of a Communist social system, brings those 'consensus realities' into existence. However, its response to these conditions is ironic as though the only possible response to the vicissitudes of human consciousness is to shrug one's shoulders. The novel ends with Skvorecky finally convinced by an alien that he can live safely with Dora in a world in which UFOs are not accepted as real. It is as though Philip K. Dick's *Time Out of Joint* (1959) ended with Ragle Gumm choosing to return to the conformist 1950s-America pocket universe that he has spent the whole novel trying to escape from.

While Priest's fiction does expose both repressive social systems and the human capacity for creating chaos, he avoids the implicit conservatism of endings like that of *Yellow Blue Tibia* and he does not seek the collective transformation of society by altering consensus reality. Instead, he continues to explore the possibility of individual liberation from constraint by any form of consensus reality. This is apparent in *The Adjacent* in which the central character, Tibor Tarent, deploys the quantum lens of his camera to undo misdirection and make visible the underlying reality of the near-future dystopian Britain he finds himself in. In one scene, he takes a rapid sequence of pictures of retired quantum physicist, Thijs Rietveld, in his East Sussex garden, arms outstretched, holding a conch shell in one hand. On developing the prints, Tarent finds the first to show Rietveld with the shell in his right hand and the second to show the shell in the left hand; while in the third, Rietveld has a shell in each hand, but in the fourth he smiles at the camera with both hands empty. This set of imaginary photographs functions as a visual metaphor for the waveform of quantum mechanics but it also connects with the novel's employment of the photographer as a means of representing male subjectivity. *The Adjacent* figures photography as variously perception, memory and the male gaze and

therefore may be considered as providing a critique of the means by which consensus reality is enforced. For example, early in the novel, it is suggested that photography is an entirely passive activity that records events without influencing them. However, the capacity of the quantum lens, as demonstrated in the sequence of Rietveld with conch shells, demonstrates that the potential still exists for the radical randomness of reality to be represented. By the end of the novel, Priest has altered his definition of photography to ‘creative receptivity’: a capacity to see both present and past without being distracted or misdirected. It is this transformation that allows the male subject to escape finally from the patriarchal order by allowing his female counterpart to lead him away through a series of adjacent parallel realities. *The Adjacent* does not have to be written with characters like Jerry Cornelius, Miss Brunner and Una Persson – although once considered, it is relatively easy to see how it might be linked to Moorcock’s Multiverse – for us to see that it is a persistence of the New Wave concerned primarily with the individual liberation of the writer, Priest, who – as he said of Ballard – continues to open doors that we hadn’t known were there before.

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Aliens in the Twenty-First Century

Gwyneth Jones

Aliens Amongst Us

When I was a young writer it was a matter of conviction in the science fiction world, (and the literary genre too, I do believe) that all British writers and their works were psychically scarred by the Loss of Empire. I used to think, *No I'm not!* To me the whole idea of nostalgia for all that robbery with violence, and brutal slave-driving was ridiculous. I didn't know it but I was living in the afterglow of power: enjoying the downside, when the rich robber barons get mild and charitable in their old age. What's happening now, as we face a suite of newly confident world powers – not at all impressed by our post-World War Two utopian values; or by the fact that they were once imprisoned by the arrogant British for a couple of generations, either – is arguably far more disconcerting; disturbing. We're not waiting for the barbarians anymore. They've taken over the senate. And though EU immigration panic in the UK may be a shameless con-trick, the global refugee and migrant crisis is real, horrible, and currently overwhelming all attempts to provide refuge: wave upon wave of destitute displaced persons, like a supersized version of Europe in 1945. It's scary, it's daunting. The aliens are among us. They bring blessings, perhaps, if we could only see it: but also a terrible warning, and just like in those old B movies, we find it hard to accept the blessings (World Peace, if you remember, was a favourite offer), while the terrible warning is something we can't bear to think about.

Aliens in the Ceasefire

When I last spoke about aliens at a conference things were very different. There were refugee camps and desperate migrants in the world, of course, but they were far away, somewhere else. They could be ignored, and that term 'aliens' wasn't even common currency. It was either official jargon, or pure sci-fi. I was talking to an audience of science fiction academics and specialists about the making of my Aleutian Trilogy, a three-book series covering an alien invasion and its consequences. I laid out my plan: how the ungendered, apparently telepathic aliens arrive; apparently having travelled faster than light. How they encounter hysteria, reverence and opportunist politics. How they take advantage of our indigenous myths, and our naivety, like the sly buccaneers they are: and soon become – almost accidentally, but to their immense profit – a catalyst for the downfall of the native civilization. How they look on with disgust and horror, as we descend into an appalling 'low intensity' global war (known as the Gender War, from its origins in sexual politics), and how they depart again, when it's politically expedient at home – claiming that the thoroughly 'Aleutianized' elite

natives are at last ready for Self Rule. Taking with them the blueprints, so to speak, for galactically important products such as *lignin* (the stuff that makes wood such an amazing material). Some of them suffering pangs of conscience by this time, about the tragic mess they're leaving behind, but even the most good-willed convinced there's no better way to make amends, than just to Quit Earth!, as the natives are eagerly suggesting.

This was in the 1990s, a strangely hopeful and romantic time in world politics: a rare time for difficult, complicated optimism; or so it seems, looking back. The Berlin Wall fell, while I was writing my Aleutian Trilogy. The Soviet Empire collapsed, and the Cold War was over. Countries that had been blanks on the map since 1945 were part of Europe again. Mandela and Dde Klerk had presided over the end of Apartheid; Deng Xiaoping had uttered his momentous "*kai feng*" (Open Up), signalling a new era of economic and social liberty in China (leaving aside a few embarrassing blips like the Tiananmen Square business). 'Developing' nations, long tormented by Superpower proxy wars, could be free of those toxic partnerships, and get on with their development. Terrible things were happening in Central Africa, and in the countries of the former Yugoslavia, as my aliens prepared to depart: but our worst troubles seemed *minor* compared to the threat of Global Thermonuclear Annihilation, that we'd lived with for so long. All of this real world history went into my books – real-time speculative response to the present, I think, is one of the most valuable, most interesting features of science fiction – and shaped my tough but positive conclusion. Like the post-colonials in my trilogy – changed, hybridized, 'Aleutianized' – we could never go back; never undo the wrongs done and suffered. But we could look forward, and maybe even tackle the real problems at last. The subjection of women to men, the subjection of the poor to the powerful. Why not create a more equal global society, in this new Age of Information? What was stopping us?

In that brief pause between one global state of permanent warfare and another, before hope unravelled in so many and complex ways, my (post) colonial scenario seemed a little jaded. The rise and fall of the British Empire was so over. Guilty-conscience 'reverse' colonial sf (stories written by white writers, where the Earthlings get colonized, and suffer like the brown-skinned 'natives' of colonial history) had had its day. But sexual politics, I felt, (and still feel; in fact, much more so, but I'll get onto that) had a special dispensation. It didn't matter, I argued, if the Aleutians, 'implausibly', shared our body plan, our kind of minds and emotions (n.b., I don't actually agree that this is implausible). They weren't *real* aliens. They were stand-ins: representing the possibility of a humanity beyond binary gender roles. They didn't need to be bug-eyed monsters. 'Otherness', in *my* alien encounter story, wasn't the jewel in the crown. It was something to be removed from the equation – so that the women's faction and the men's faction (after a long, bloody struggle with the idea) could face their post-Aleutian future united; more or less as one nation.

Colonialism wasn't something I wanted to justify, or to apologise for, it was a historical phenomenon that suited my needs. The blockbuster scenario, where the aliens come screaming into our airspace, bent on instant genocide, was no use to me. Nor was the other classic form, where the saviour from another star becomes an overnight sensation, Earth stands still, and then he hops in his spaceship and leaves again . . . I needed something slow, full of accidents and misunderstandings. A little group of strangers, drifting in like thistledown from nobody knows where: making themselves pleasant, offering novelty trade goods, not meaning any harm –

They just want to shoot a few *turkeys* –

I needed aliens like the 'aliens' we've actually met, in short. I chose a ready-made story I believed I understood: so that I could subvert it, dissect it, and use it as a way of talking about something different. That's what I thought.

Invasion of the Bodysnatchers

I chose the narrative of colonial empire for the same reasons that the great American writer, the late Octavia Butler often chose the narrative of chattel slavery for her sci-fi dissections of intimate power politics. It's personal (three of my grandparents were immigrants from a starved, benighted colony now known as the Republic of Ireland; we're not sure about the fourth). It's culturally familiar: I grew up immersed in British Empire references, in movies, TV and countless other ways. And it's irreducibly *complicated*: which maps well onto the battle of the sexes. The relationship between the colonizers and the colonized, between slaves and slave-owners, like the relationship between men and women, is never a simple binary confrontation. It's an entanglement: you can't change one party; you always have to change both. You can't separate out a pure sample of either constituent; and the connection is irreversible. The daughter of a slave can't cut her rapist daddy out of her body. The new native rulers, when the colonizers go home, will be the children of the corrupt old rulers who collaborated for their own profit: because *they* were the only young people who had access to alien education and the culture of power . . . There are women, of all cultures, who fanatically, slavishly, defend the traditions that murder, mutilate and enslave them. There are bitter memories that live on, more toxic, more complex, more conflicted, with every iteration; until they wear themselves out, and the only record of past atrocity is written in our DNA . . . I wanted to examine these issues, to put them under the microscope, and in the colonial, or post-colonial, narrative I found my laboratory. Later, I published that 1996 talk in print and online. I called it *Aliens in The Fourth Dimension* (the fourth dimension being time), because it was important to me that my story, and my commentary, were historically situated. The world had changed while I was writing the Aleutian Trilogy; of course it had. The world has changed again, dramatically, in the short course of this new century. And I have to thank you

for inviting me here, and giving me the opportunity to find out what I think about science fiction's aliens *now*. It's been an interesting experience; an education, and full of surprises.

Bear with me, as I follow my trail . . .

In the real world, as opposed to blockbuster movie fiction, alien invasion is not an exceptional event. It's a never-ending process. Animal, vegetable or mineral (in the latter case, here on Earth we may call it meteor strike; or else 'plate tectonics'), it's happening all the time, on every scale. Galaxies invade each other (and leave records of the atrocity in stardust). Humans and hominids have never been an exception to this rule. An insatiable desire to *get about*, whether invading virgin territory or somebody else's manor, could almost be a distinguishing characteristic. The more we look the more we find (as the ice melts, and the technology of the twenty-first century gets on the case) of our own family background and our own ancient traces. Our international connectedness, our global trade and gap-year trekking through the ages, carving out beachheads in the most far-flung and challenging locations. Norman conqueror, Huguenot weaver, Polish freedom-fighter, Kenyan Asian . . . If you were born in the UK for instance, and even if you're convinced you're somehow partly descended from the wanderers who left footprints . . . ooh, at least eight hundred thousand years ago, on what's now a Norfolk beach. Or else the *homo heidelbergensis* crew who were knapping flints on a commercial scale at Boxgrove, over in West Sussex, half a million years ago (when mainland Britain being part of the EU was a long way off becoming a matter for debate) – I can *still* guarantee that your ancestors came from somewhere else. Never say never, but despite the recent flurry of ancient hominid and human diversity, I believe the modified 'Out of Africa' theory remains solid (looking better than the Standard Model of Physics, currently, and oddly enough, almost the same age).

But no matter where in the world you hail from, even some mists-of-time cradle of sentience in the Rift Valley or the Altai of Siberia, you probably aren't a native. People move. Peoples have displaced each other, gradually or suddenly, with violence or without, throughout human and hominid history, in migrations traced by great sweeping trails of linguistic connection and cultural innovation; methods of carving stone; the lores of smelting metal. But how and when did these events, or this process, crystallize into cultural practice; into beliefs; into stories, and then into science fiction?

The first sentient *others* we seem to have recognized were not extra-terrestrials at all (although I know some would disagree). They were non-human animals: but what we recognized in them, as far as we can read the record now, is oddly familiar to fans of those old B-movies (and at least one recent blockbuster). The *Others* were superior and powerful in mysterious ways. They bestowed blessings, they brought warnings; they taught us skills. We found meaning in imitating them, and in placing ourselves (unilaterally) under their

protection.

We don't seem to have regarded them as alien, however: not if the beliefs preserved in living tradition are a guide. They were elders; they were family. I've more to say about them later . . .

The first *terrestrial* alien invaders, without a doubt, were the people from over the hill: predominantly male raiding parties, taking on the neighbours for all the usual reasons – boredom, sheer naughtiness, the excitement of taking risks, the arousal of aggression – with territorial expansion and enhancement of the leaders' status as a bonus. If the behaviour of some of our closest living relatives is anything to go by, we can pretty much watch what used to happen on YouTube, these days.

Reproductive success is always a factor in the popularity of an activity. Like the *bourgeois gentilhomme* in Molière, who had been speaking prose all his life without knowing it, victorious aggressors secured a textbook Darwinian advantage; if only in a meal of extra protein, gained by killing and eating one or two of the losers. The raiders who first decided to take possession of the other group's *females* won a much greater prize. Rape as a weapon of territorial expansion is a brilliant innovation. You slaughter or drive off the warriors next door, and you impregnate their females. Nothing more is needed: you've secured lasting possession of the new territory. The next generation of children will be *your* children. Job done.

Male herd animals do it, male lions do it: it's a commonplace animal behaviour that becomes disturbing only as the animals shade towards sentience, or display high levels of cuteness. Modern chimpanzees are not reckoned to have adopted the strategy, as far as I can make out (though it might be difficult to tell). But we know our ancestors did it. They've told us so, in stunning works of literary and visual art; and in the myths and legends, the world over, that preserve the practices of pre-recorded history. More recently, and with greater impact than when the famous rape of the Sabine women decorates a vase, we know what happened because the DNA tells us so . . . Solving the mystery, for instance, of a population replacement, with no sign of a mass inward migration, in sixth-century Kent and East Anglia. Establishing, forensically, whether impregnation really was used as a weapon of war, in Central Africa and the countries of the former Yugoslavia, in the nineties.

Rape features in my Aleutian trilogy, of course. It's a literary tradition: it's hard to get away from the idea in the post-colonial/colonial narrative. A single, devastating rape acts as a recurrent motif, linking the three books. When humans rise up in a doomed rebellion, the male rebels rape their hermaphrodite masters, in fury and contempt . . . But as a positive, late-twentieth century UK feminist, I preferred not to *dwell* on the subject. It happens to men too, was my message. It's a useful symbol, but it's not really about being female. It's a serious criminal assault, Grievous Bodily Harm, let's treat it as such and drop

the baggage . . . But figures of speech are historical records. I know now what I *didn't* really know, or didn't grasp, back in 1996. The rape of a country means rape. Forcible impregnation of the enemy's females, on a drastic scale, known to us as 'Ethnic Cleansing' is not about humiliating the enemy, or about brutal appetite. Those are just proximate causes. It's about conquest, and it's old as the hills.

The rape testimony of women trapped in hotspots, or in the broad penumbra of the low-intensity globalized war that is slowly engulfing us (with origins in sexual politics), has been transfixing me, recently. I keep thinking: *is this it?* Is *this* how and why the subjugation of human women began? Why they were deprived of their freedom? Hidden, 'protected'; became regarded as property? I see the facts I knew, but a different meaning. Alien invasion, in the real world, isn't just uniquely dangerous for non-combatant women and children, as modern warfare tends to be (be a soldier! It's safer!). Alien invasion is all *about* raping the women.

The first definite example of extra-terrestrial invaders arrived in 1897, when H.G. Wells launched his *War of the Worlds* and thereby, with a little help from H.P. Lovecraft, founded a whole tradition of repulsive, horrifying science-fictional Otherness. (The term extra-terrestrial, meant to be a more polite way of describing our visitors, seems to date only from 1956; first used in a movie called *UFO*).

The huge gap between these two developments (the neighbours moving, in with menaces; the concept of non-human extra-terrestrials taking that role) can be bridged by invoking a horde of subhuman, bestial or uncanny terrestrial foes, symbolic, metaphorical or semi-divine terrestrial monsters; supernatural or whimsical sentient extra-terrestrials *not* regarded as alien; and even non-human animal extra-terrestrials. (Here in the UK we have a man in the moon; with his thorn bush, and his dog. In Japan, a princess lives there. Everyone else apparently agrees it's a rabbit, oddly enough.) But the success of the single, devastatingly invasive species responsible for all those inventions is probably more significant.

For a long time, modern humans' territorial expansion was slow: skeins and strands of migration and growth, webbing the continents; plaques of concentrated population that formed and dissipated, like storm clouds on the surface of Jupiter. Always easily checked by cooling periods, natural disasters; the collapse of local resources, but always bouncing back, and making gains; until our rise to world domination became unstoppable (I don't know exactly when that was), and then at last the expeditions set out from Europe, under sail at first, with their trade goods and their guns, and started painting the entire globe in their national colours: but mostly pink, (because red, which the British would have preferred, would have made overprinting difficult on the schoolroom globes of Empire; apparently). For almost that entire gulf of time, rape was not

just a weapon of war, it was the essential other half of territorial expansion. Slaughter your male rivals, or drive them off. Impregnate the females, or force them into concubinage: job done. There were other means of securing new territory, such as heavy artillery, in the European colonial age. But the threat was still real (wholesale rape in warfare was a terror, throughout the wars of the twentieth century), and I am sure the fear was still there: keeping women subjugated, giving the most brutal men licence. It's with us still, and ever present in this new century of globalized war, when the battlefield can erupt anywhere, at any moment . . .

In the end I didn't write either of the two models for speculative stories about alien invasion outlined above. I don't think I ever intended to invoke that vast sweep of time; of expansion, failure, and expansion again over aeons. I *did* intend to tell the harsh truths about the means used for an alien takeover: but I got side-tracked by fascinating ideas of Self and Otherness. The way their ignorance of gender might have shaped my aliens' world view. The way absurd cargo-cults, generated by the presence of the apparently telepathic, reincarnate immortals could change, forever, the human self-image . . .

For the 'great gulf of time' story, you should try Stephen Baxter, a distinguished British writer and a modern master of the classic forms of sf, who first made his name with cosmic-scale adventures involving the alien Xeelee, but in the last decade or so has been equally interested in the catastrophic near future; and the mathematical inevitability of our current environmental crisis, with its roots in the deep past. Octavia Butler is the writer who tells those harsh truths, in her invasion/chattel slavery trilogy (*Xenogenesis*: otherwise known as *Lilith's Brood*), in which the Earthling survivors of a self-inflicted nuclear holocaust are harvested by the alien Oankali, whose plan is to rape and breed from the humans, in the interests of galactic genetic adventure. The impregnation process is disturbing (the Oankali do not have a human body plan), but the horror is that there is no possible escape: not for Butler's human characters or for their futurity. It's a hard story to read; but compelling.

In my version of this classic form, things became far more of a pantomime. Needless to say, impressionable natives tried to join the super-race. They became convinced they too were reincarnate immortals, and obviously they must be the latest version of somebody famous. The concurrent reincarnations of Jimi Hendrix were cool about it: they'd support each other, have friendly conventions. The rival Bob Marleys, I'm afraid, tended to be viciously litigious. ..In the last episode, which is all about those children of the elite who will be the post-colonial rulers, it was hybridized culture, and I had fun with a flowering of bizarre art-forms: drawing on the response to 'primitive' colonial artefacts, in Earthling 'Modern Art' in the early twentieth century. But enough of this frivolity. I still had a serious story to tell, and so does science fiction.

The War of the Worlds was supposed to be an accusation. In his introduction,

Wells explicitly equates the blobby, tentacled blood-sucking monsters he flung at Woking with a particularly hideous colonial episode: the Tasmanian genocide of the eighteen twenties, perpetrated by white, British settlers (behaving the way colonial 'settlers' have always behaved, a recorded feature of the Tasmanian massacre is the concurrent kidnap of native women and girls for sex). Wells's International Human Rights message was soon lost (not least in the shameless, rip-roaring popular entertainment of the novel itself). Science fiction, the genre of bug-eyed monsters and virgin planets, was to become far better known as the eager partner of the last great expansionist drive, formulated in the nineteenth century US doctrine of Manifest Destiny: the doctrine that directly and indirectly created – accidentally, but to its great profit – (I say *accidentally*, because I'm sure the Imperial USA did not intend to make their mighty successful trade goods, the Internet and social networking, so useful to their enemies) a single, encompassing global culture: horribly divided, but functionally homogenous, before finally hitting its limits: arguably, as recently as September 2001.

In another century, I hijacked colonial history to tell a story about sexual politics. From the perspective of this one, science fiction's alien invasions, human territorial expansion, and the tragedy of sexual politics seem inextricably bound together; seem almost to be a single issue. In peacetime gender equality can take root, in wartime misogyny flourishes. This is a truism, at the very least. But in the Aleutian Trilogy rape is not the whole story. In the end there is a future worth having, created in a crucible of violent change. I choose to hope, as a feminist female human, that we can achieve the same.

But what next for science fictions aliens? Now we know that none of the planets were virgin, and all of the monsters were just strangers, who happened to be in somebody's way? Will new global power-relationships reproduce the same patterns as before, and the same kind of science fictions? Is there a future for extra-terrestrials? Or are they in just as much trouble as the Earthling aliens of the twenty-first century?

Celebrating Difference/Recognising Friends

'*We have no need of other worlds*', said Stanislaw Lem, explaining the psychological significance of science fiction's aliens: '*We need mirrors. We don't know what to do with other worlds. A single world, our own, suffices us; but we can't accept it for what it is.*' My Aleutians, although I tried to make them 'human', so to speak, were certainly the mirror type: solipsistic monsters, reflecting the human condition. But I don't agree with the assertion in that famous quote, or if I ever did, I don't anymore. In this new century – in the pause, perhaps, between one colonial narrative and the next – I feel that I don't want mirrors. *The Other*, that thrilling imaginary monster who is nothing but a hard, shiny surface, seems to stand between me and a meeting with *other people*: each of them a whole world in human form; that I can explore, and learn to understand.

In the Aleutian books I worked hard at making my aliens alien, and at making our fairy-tales about super-beings into speculative alien fact. They had no knowledge of gender roles; they had a different reproductive and heritable traits strategy, tailor-made for hermaphrodites. They had a biologically mediated group mind, and a biologically mediated form of reincarnation. *It ain't necessarily so*, was my message. What's magic to us could be physiology somewhere else. Our model is not the only one possible . . . In my postscript to the Trilogy, eventually published six years ago, a novel called *Spirit*, I was far less rigorous, and in a sense far less optimistic about the cosmos. Proper extra-terrestrials are not human: it wouldn't be plausible. Non-human extra-terrestrials are difficult to write about. You have to concentrate, and so do your readers: which is not an ideal situation in science fiction. Human Diaspora Theory, a sci-fi colonial narrative that posits a far, far future space-faring human empire, solves this problem. Though the idea was conceived, I think, by British writer Olaf Stapledon in the thirties, most of the stories are clearly inspired by the multi-ethnic European settlement of the USA, in the Manifest Destiny era. Typically, humans and allied humanoid aliens are both coded human (the latter distinguished, in a famous TV franchise, by curious facial growths). Indigenous non-humanoid sentients are treated sympathetically (like Native Americans, in a liberal, revisionist 'Western'). I like to think of *Spirit* as an EU variant on this theme. It's the 'United in Despairing Irritation Under Brussels' Galactic Empire.

The story is a retelling of *The Count of Monte Cristo*, set in a time of plots and intrigue and sudden reversals of fortune, close to the founding of Empire, starring a Welsh Pakistani tribal girl, the protégée of a famous House, who gets embroiled in a political plot, suffers an awful punishment – and then events unfold, as in previous science fiction makeovers of the tale: more like Dumas in some ways, differently in others. Humans, known as the Blues (from the Blue Planet), alongside the mysterious Aleutians, are the founding members of the Sentient Biped Diaspora Parliament. Their companions, so far, are the bat-like Sigurtians, who drink blood; the clever, insouciant Balas, who somewhat resemble monkeys; the thoughtful and elephantine Shet, and the small brown nervous Ki, who share a planet with the feral, glamorous An; like mice living with cats. *Possibly* all the planetary nations share a phenomenally ancient humanoid, spacefaring common ancestor. This theory is controversial: outrageously naïve to some, an article of faith to others. But for whatever reason, or reasons, they are all (except the Aleutians) physiologically and sexually humanoid, with cultural practices within normal human limits.

Except for the An, systematically eating the Ki: but maybe that's a metaphor.

If you're a fan of Iain Banks's Culture books, you'll know that science fiction writers like to play games. I gave my inner pet-lover full rein here, obviously. But I meant something by it . . . We were not alone, once. The more we look, the more homo and hominid species we find. There were big-brained giants

(some of them knapping flints near Boxgrove). There were gracile Indonesian elves. There were massively strong, reclusive trolls (although really, to call Neanderthals *trolls* is gross calumny). There were blue-eyed, dark-skinned romantic heroes. Their variety conjures up ‘almost a Lord of the Rings type world’, to quote UCL evolutionary geneticist Mark Thomas, and we certainly lived alongside some of them: intimately, says the DNA. I could have raised *them* from the depths of time, as my companion peoples. (Henry Gee, senior editor at *Nature* and also sf novelist, does exactly that, in his End Of Days epic, *The Sigil Trilogy*.) We are not alone now. The more we look, the more sentence we find in the non-human animals, as twenty-first century experimental tools get on the case: restoring knowledge lost, for some of us, since Neolithic times. They once shared our world as elders, counsellors, respected equals (and also a food source). Now they struggle to survive in the chinks of our terrible global machine. If we don’t watch out, they’ll soon be gone too. And what then? Will we ever find the company we seem to long for, anywhere else in this big scary universe?

It begins to look increasingly unlikely: unless we fill the emptiness ourselves.

The Silence

In science fiction’s fantasies, I’m sure the aliens will be fine. The post-colonial narrative is robust: there are plenty of those stories that still need to be told. Though I suspect they’ll mostly be coming from the old Diaspora, as now: rather than from the independent sf traditions developing in previously colonized, ancient or newly confident world powers. Science Space Opera is a perennial wonderland, and galaxy-spanning far-future human empires always need at least *one* genuinely alien menace; it’s traditional. But meanwhile, here on Earth and in the real world, our searches keep on coming up empty. I follow the reports, the SETI story; the ever more wistful attempts to identify a smidgen of fossilized bacteria in Martian clays, and I’m thinking: if I had a friend suffering this sort of obsessive unrequited crush, I’d be very tempted to try convincing them to walk away . . . The Universe, it seems, is *just not that into us*. The visit we fear, and dream of, and long for may be indefinitely postponed. Realistic science fiction about extraterrestrial aliens, in this century, won’t be about encounter, it will be about speciation.

A few weeks ago, catching the last show in this year’s Brighton Digital Arts Festival, I visited an audio-art installation called *Solar System Radio* by Shrinking Space. The venue was a huge, dank concrete hangar on Circus Street, near the Old Steine. We were given headsets, MP4 players, and a brief induction: we were launched, and left to drift. Confused at first – I’d been expecting the music of the spheres, as in those CDs NASA released in the nineties, allegedly audio transcriptions of the radio emissions picked up on planetary flybys – I was soon hooked: tugged from Venus to Mercury, from Enceladus to the Rosetta Mission

by human voices coming out of the hiss and the sigh of the great silence. But what I noticed most was the way the mission scientists, universally, used the second person plural: seamlessly talking as if *they* were out there in the great beyond: inhabiting the hardware, not sitting at desks on Earth. They had made a transition.

I have no doubt that remote presence robots will play a major part in real space exploration, that's already on the way. If we can just get through our present difficulties, that is . . . Remote presence is a gift to people with minds like ours. We readily accept prosthesis as part of our body, if we're controlling it. We readily accept that we're inhabiting a different embodiment, if an Oculus Rift headset tells us so. I can well imagine, in a few years' time, some young space scientist waking up in Noordwijk, bicycling down the road to the great ESTEC compound, and going to work on a moon of Jupiter. Just a little further along the road, I can easily imagine a software clone, another self (evolved from the same kind of personal data we load into our mobile devices, so they can serve us better), embedded in the hardware: to make the handshake seamless when she logs on. And how long before we start treating these data-clones as if they are people: and then how long before we are right? We *like* treating machines as if they're people (or commensal non-human animals). We already do it all the time. I also have no doubt that within the same timescale there'll be highly distributed AI entities, descended from expert systems, as in Ann Leckie's splendid *Ancillary Justice*, but on a more modest scale for now (the main character in *Ancillary Justice* is a vast starship AI, trapped in a single human body), sentient enough to be coded human, but happy to visit Titan, oversee a human and robot colony on Mars; or travel out to the heliopause, without the massive payload of human life support, or the terror of it failing . . .

The legal status of these human-speciation natives of our new expansion is going to be an intriguing puzzle – often prophesied in science fictions; as in Melissa Scott's *Dreamships*. But the law being what it is, they'll obviously have lawyers of their own, Ghandis of their independence movement, so I think they'll be okay –

I'm not so confident about the virtual worlds path. I'm *puzzled* by virtual worlds. I play fantasy games, a little. I know how easy it's always been to say 'I' when you mean the avatar, in the most primitive gameplay. I can imagine, just about, being sucked in to the point where I'd never want to come out. But how does it work? When 'I' am truly living in the game, where's my body? Squished up in a little umbilicaled cell, *Matrix* style? Or have I been translated, flesh and blood and brain, into data, by a whizzy join-the-dots ray, like Jeff Bridges in *Tron*? That would be a great way to travel, if only there was an interface between the tiny information-space of my game-world, and the vast, staggeringly complex information space of the solar system. Or the galaxy –

But I'm babbling now, and it's time I shut up.

When I was a child, and it was still just possible that jungles lurked under the cloud cover of murky Venus; when seasonal changes, like the advance and retreat of vegetation could still be observed on Mars (I wonder what happened to them?) I was allowed – rather shockingly, in terms of the parental control people imagine was the rule in the fifties – to stay up and watch a now legendary TV series called *Quatermass and the Pit*. (Later a movie, but it's not so great). And now cover your ears, if you don't know the story: beware spoilers. After some strange findings and spooky goings on in a Tube line excavation in the West End, the team finds out that some bad Martians fled their doomed world, *five million years ago* and impregnated (I'm not sure how) innocent pre-humans with the genes for behaving really badly and destroying your planet . . . Interestingly, given the theme of my talk, this plotline was intended as 'an allegory for crises and emerging racial tensions' on the exit ramp of the British colonial empire. But what I remember most vividly, although I was only a baby, is the punchline to this plausible explanation of our woes, *we are the Martians* . . .

I've heard that assertion, or insight, or metaphor, repeated in many contexts, in the decades of sf since *Quatermass*. But now I wonder, what if it's literally true?

What if we are? I mean the 'we' that includes all of us, every survivor of every wave of expansion; every last micro-organism of the *Archaea*. What if life was alien to this part of the universe until something strange gained a foothold on a small blue planet? What if we are *it*, for better or for worse, and everything imaginable starts from here? Or doesn't start at all? It's a daunting thought, and I don't believe it for a moment. But just in case, maybe we'd better try harder not mess things up.

Maybe we'd better start trying to make this alien invasion work.

Note: The original text of Gwyneth Jones' talk was first delivered as a keynote address to the Strangers in Strange Lands conference at the University of Kent, Canterbury (November 2014). She is currently working on a novella for Tor.com and on a monograph on Joanna Russ (University of Illinois Press). Her recent publications have included *The Grasshopper's Child* (2015; reviewed in *Foundation* 124), 'Emergence' in Jonathan Strahan's *Meeting Infinity* (2015) and 'The Seventh Gamer' in Athena Andreadis' *To Shape the Dark* (2016).

The Fourfold Library (4): Peter Higgins on Gene Wolfe, *The Book of the New Sun*

Peter Higgins is the author of the Wolfhound Century Trilogy, recently collected as *Wolfhound Empire* (Gollancz, 2016), a fantastical alternate history of Soviet Russia. In this latest missive from the Fourfold Library, he chooses an equally genre-bending sequence . . .

How can the prisoner reach outside except by thrusting through the wall?
To me, the white whale is that wall, shoved near to me. Sometimes I think
there's naught beyond. But 'tis enough. He tasks me; he heaps me; I
see in him outrageous strength, with an inscrutable malice sinewing it.
(Herman Melville, *Moby-Dick*, chapter 36)

It was reading Gene Wolfe's *The Book of the New Sun* that turned me from being a reader to being a writer: the astonishment of coming across such a work; its scope, its ambition, its aesthetic urgency. Until I discovered Gene Wolfe, I lived with the idea – which debilitated me and stopped me writing – that there was an unbridgeable gap between, on the one hand, books written at full linguistic and thematic stretch, books like *Ulysses* and *Bleak House* and *Moby-Dick*, and, on the other hand, books that fully (and without irony, without post-modern detachment) bought into the new commercial genres of the last century or so: science fiction, fantasy, thrillers. I was fascinated by the former and loved the latter, but as a might-be, wanting-to-be, writer I was stuck between the two with nowhere to go. Then I read Gene Wolfe and realized there need be no such separation at all. It was an illusory wall; hit it and it vanished.

I should be clear that I am not exactly talking here about canons of authoritative texts, the critical discourse that categorizes the literary and the popular. Nor am I talking about realized achievement. I'm not going to argue that Gene Wolfe is 'as good as' Joyce or Dickens or Melville. This is not about making judgements of that kind, it's about freeing oneself from the need to make them. I'm talking about the ambition of a writer setting out to write: the rules you set for yourself, the fears and constraints you let in, the decorums you accept. Or refuse.

What hit me the first time I read *The Book of the New Sun* – and still hits me now, with more force, the more I get to know it – is the sheer *courageousness* and *compendiousness* of Wolfe's work. The massiveness of the way it devours and recycles genres and traditions and the voices of earlier writers that it is made from.

There is a passage in the third volume, *The Sword of the Lictor*, where the wanderings of the torturer-carnifex Severian take him down the side of an immense cliff-face. The collapse of half a mountainside has revealed the stacked strata of geological time:

The past stood at my shoulder, naked and defenseless as all dead things, as though it were time itself that had been laid open by the fall of the mountain. Fossil bones protruded from the surface in places, the bones of mighty animals and of men.

Below the layers of bones comes forest: many geological ages of trees. It's as if the trees were older than the world itself, and formed it: 'tree clinging to tree with tangled roots and interlacing twigs until at last their accumulation became our Urth'. And yet, below the stratum forest, older and earlier, there are civilizations again: 'Deeper than these lay the buildings and mechanisms of humanity'. And deeper still, though still less than half way down the cliff, Severian finds the wall of a great building, tiled with designs of such richness and extent he can't see it whole: 'diagrams so complex that the living forms seemed to appear as the forms of actual animals appear from the intricate geometries of complex molecules'.

This passage has become for me emblematic of the experience of reading *The Book of the New Sun*. Like ancestral bones, the buried traces of Wolfe's precursors – Jack Vance? Clark Ashton Smith? Fritz Leiber? many others, too – crop out from the layers of his golden book. So many traditions of fantasy and science fiction underlie it, twisted together, intermixed and inseparable, and make up its substance, like the deeply-buried strata of the trees. And below all that, there are intricate thematic patterns which the reader feels always too close to, and can't quite see whole.

Wolfe's narrator Severian is afflicted by memory. As he reminds us from time to time, he has forgotten nothing that ever happened to him, no detail is lost. And more than that, he carries memories not his own: in Severian's world, by consuming the flesh of the dead one can absorb into oneself their voices, their personalities, their memories. In the same way, it seems to me, Wolfe the writer consumes and takes into himself his forebears. In the voice of his narrator Severian I hear the voice of Melville's Ishmael and Mark Twain's Huck Finn, the foundational narrators of the American tradition. The sheer ambitiousness, thechutzpah, of this is awe-inspiring.

Like the Dying Earth of Wolfe's novels, his writing contains everything, it is an end and a new beginning, or so it insists. It has the same ambitious, comprehensive absorption of earlier authors and genres that drives encyclopaedic epics like Homer's *Odyssey*, Virgil's *Aeneid*, Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Joyce's *Ulysses*, Eliot's *Waste Land* or Jones' *Anathemata*. And like theirs, Wolfe's epic voice offers itself as the summation and turning point of a civilization. It's a hubristic ambition but it is enabling: the sheer scale and wilfulness of the enterprise liberates the writer from the policeman in the head, the internal voices that say 'who do you think you are?'

My own writing is nothing like Gene Wolfe's. His ambition triggered mine, and I took from him a kind of self-permission – to aim high and broad, to write at full linguistic stretch, to cross frontiers and collide kinds of writing, to open my work to themes and subjects without worrying about illusory cultural separations – but I never thought of imitating him. When I first read him I was lit up with excitement, but as a writing-companion looking over my shoulder I confess I don't entirely welcome his presence. He's too immense. Unfathomable and terrifying. (The secret is in his name: like the death-eaters of his necropolis, he is the gene-wolf, the DNA-devourer.) Severian is the Ishmael of narrators, *The Book of the New Sun* is the *Moby-Dick* of science fiction and fantasy, and Gene Wolfe is the white whale of science fiction and fantasy writers.

Conference Reports

Science Fiction and the Medical Humanities, University of Glasgow, 4 July 2016

Reviewed by Gul Dag (University of Hull)

This was the final event in the Science Fiction and the Medical Humanities project, hosted by Gavin Miller and Anna MacFarlane at the University of Glasgow, and funded by a Wellcome Trust Seed Award in the Humanities and Social Sciences. The conference took place at the Western Infirmary Lecture Theatre at the University of Glasgow, and the programme included three keynote speakers alongside parallel panels considering themes such as posthumanism, mental illness and eugenics.

The day began with Luna Dolezal's keynote address entitled 'Human Life as Digitized Data Assemblage: Health, Wealth and Biopower in Gary Shteyngart's *Super Sad True Love Story*'. Dolezal considered the concept of the quantified self through an analysis of Shteyngart's 2010 novel, with a particular focus on the commercialization of personal data and the advent and use of digital wearables. Dolezal talked about the ways in which populations could be controlled through such technological advancements, and offered a Deleuzian critique of Shteyngart's work as well as signposting key texts in this area, with *Liquid Surveillance: A Conversation* (2012) by David Lyon and Zygmunt Bauman being of particular importance.

The panel on the posthuman began with Simon Walker's paper on technological augmentation in the military setting with a consideration of three narratives: the depiction of the War Doctor in *Doctor Who* (2013); medical experimentation in the context of the Second World War in *Captain America*; and mental performance in *Firefly* (2002). Walker assessed the ways in which the notion of creating superior soldiers has permeated science fiction narratives, and the extent to which medical experimentation has facilitated, and continues to facilitate, this fascination, both within and outside the military setting. Continuing the theme of technological intervention, Sue Smith then presented an analysis of a film produced by the non-profit organization Limbitless Solutions, which included Robert Downey Jr.'s *Iron Man* character marketing a 3-d printed prosthesis. Smith focused on the ethical dimensions of marketing such assistive technologies and the impact that these approaches can have on people – and more specifically children – with disabilities. Smith considered the problematic way in which the company approached and marketed the project, and the ways in which this feeds into contemporary disability studies discourse, particularly within the context of 'fixing' disability.

Daniel Pick's keynote address 'Spectres of JFK: Science, Fiction and Futurology in Cold War Times' considered brainwashing discourse in relation to armed conflict. Pick talked about the ways in which brainwashing narratives like *The Manchurian Candidate* (1962) worked to exemplify ideological tensions during the Cold War, and how such films permeated cultural understandings of conflict. Pick used *They Chose China*, a 2005 documentary focusing upon American dissidents after the Korean War to analyse the ways in which the soldiers who chose to make lives for themselves in China after the war were vilified and accused of having been brainwashed during the era of McCarthyism. Pick provided a link between this discourse and his current Wellcome Trust-funded research project entitled 'Hidden Persuaders: Brainwashing, Culture, Clinical Knowledge and the Cold War Human Sciences, c. 1950–1990'.

The second panel centred on mental illness and the brain in relation to science fiction, with a particular focus on the ways in which illness can have an effect on the writing process. Michael O'Brien began the discussion with a study of the life and work of Philip K. Dick and his issues with mental illness. O'Brien analysed the correlation between Dick's personal life and his literary successes, and posited the argument that Dick's work, and the literary division that arguably existed between his lauded successes and less well-developed texts, can be analysed as a form of self-exploration throughout the course of Dick's life. Jamie Redgate's paper considered metaphor in the context of mental illness in David Foster Wallace's work, and argued that Wallace's depiction of conditions such as depression is central to his representation of identity and selfhood. Redgate focused in part on Wallace's lesser-known story 'The Planet Trillaphon as It Stands in Relation to the Bad Thing' (1984) and argued that this early text exemplifies Wallace's long-standing interest in science fiction in relation to medical practice. My own paper looked at medical ethics in the context of George Alec Effinger's 'Marid Audran' series. Using Effinger's most critically and commercially successful work, I considered the socio-political ramifications of commercializing revolutionary medical procedures, and the extent to which cerebral modifications as outlined in the texts can disrupt and fracture identity and the perceived sense of self.

Organ donation and transplantation were the central themes for the final panel of the day, and Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* (2005) was a particular focus. Yugin Teo considered narrative and storytelling in both the novel and the film, and explored the ethics of caregiving and care work in the narrative. Teo argued that the clones (or synthetic humans) are socialized to develop a duty of care towards their fellow clones and analysed the ways in which this sense of duty manifested itself within the characters during the course of their lives. Donna McCormack's paper dealt with ethics in relation to organ donation in both Ishiguro's novel and Ninni Holmqvist's *The Unit* (2006) by considering the extent to which the discourse surrounding organ donation relates to the

commodification of the body in contemporary dystopian fiction. McCormack evaluated the intersection between care and violence within both texts, and argued that the notion of the sub-human allows for a revision of how bodies and body matter come to be perceived within the field of organ donation.

Benedetta Liorsi continued the discussion on *The Unit* and *Never Let Me Go* by examining both proactivity and prevention in the context of medical intervention. Liorsi argued that the concept of prevention as a medical paradigm has necessitated a move towards considering the ways in which exploitation of the subject can occur in the field of preventative medicine. Arianna Introna's paper also focused upon dystopian fiction, but within the framework of Scottish literature, in her analysis of Ken MacLeod's *Intrusion* (2012). Introna argued that MacLeod's text rejects the 'fixing' of disability and instead focuses upon the ways in which biomedical intervention and genetic engineering can be circumvented and resisted in technocratic societies.

Patrick Parrinder's keynote address, 'Overturning Hippocrates: Euthanasia and the Utopian Tradition', offered an insight into the ways in which utopian societies are constructed within texts, and the extent to which these societies function as 'true' utopias. Parrinder used a number of different texts in his analysis, including Anthony Trollope's dystopian satire *The Fixed Period* (1882), Yevgeny Zamyatin's *We* (1921), and Jorge Luis Borges' short story 'Utopia of a Tired Man' (1975). In his discussion Parrinder showed that death is accepted by the majority of utopian narratives and a good death is even situated as a crucial part of the Eudaimonia, or good life, that such texts seek to portray.

The conference was an international, interdisciplinary event that allowed researchers to examine the intersection between science fiction and the medical humanities through a range of different texts and research projects. It was an interesting and engaging event, one that brought a diverse group of researchers together to discuss medicine, health and illness within the context of wide-ranging science fiction narratives. This conference demonstrated the importance of the overall project, and highlighted some of the exciting new research that is emerging from the field.

Global Fantastika, Lancaster University, 4-5 July 2016

Reviewed by Kerry Dodd (Lancaster University)

With seven panels and three keynotes across two days, Global Fantastika continued the engaging atmosphere that the annual conference is known for – a testament to its original organizer Charul (Chuckie) Palmer-Patel and this year's co-organizer Rachel Fox. Seeking to provide a platform for like-minded researchers to interact within the encompassing umbrella of fantastika, the conference sought to generate original critical engagements within this field.

Opening with an informal social on the Sunday night and registration on the Monday, Global Fantastika was well organized throughout, offering numerous chances for productive discussion.

The first panel of the day left the station with forms of locomotion and travel, namely trains, saucers and automobiles. Chris Hussey spoke convincingly about trains and stations in the work of China Miéville, focusing on their physical and metaphoric illustration of journeys, both within and outside of the tracks. John Sharples discussed the flying saucer in post-war American popular culture, commenting on the fear, fascination and playfulness of this iconic image alongside the atomic bomb and launch of Sputnik I. Lastly, Lauren Randall's engaging paper analysed *Mad Max: Fury Road* in terms of the stasis of Immortan Joe's patriarchal capitalism and Imperator Furiosa's role as female saviour. The panel concluded with responses to the various modes of transportation, connected through the tracks, roads and paths that snake across the landscape.

After a short break, the second panel, on 'Neil Blomkamp's Cinematography', offered an insightful inspection of this director's recent fame. Rebecca Duncan provided an informative introduction to the contextual background, a persuasive and engaging talk on South Africa, apartheid and neoliberal politics in particular relation to *District 9*. Engaging with *Chappie*, Alan Gregory discussed the transposition of techno-heaven versus techno-hell onto anxieties of masculine crisis, commenting upon homosocial bonds of love and rivalry against the concluding technological rebirth. Finally, Rachel Fox brought the two topics together to tackle 'bodies of value' in both films. Knitting the previous strands together, whilst commenting upon the commodification of bodies and consciousness, Fox highlighted the mirroring of racist discourse in contrast to the representation of metamorphosis. The close connection between the three topics invited a vibrant debate questioning how neoliberal movements can be resisted, rerouted and progressed beyond.

After lunch, Mark Bould delivered an energetic keynote on the construction of Afrofuturism as both an archive and a living tradition. Opening with a short clip from *Afrogalactica: A Short History of the Future*, Bould commented on how anthropologists and afonauts work through archival collections in the future, navigating through examples of colonial history. Introducing the deliberate mislabelling of images to present a history based on interpretation and memory, he discussed bringing items out of their original context and how the catalogue system tends to erase the features of the past. Utilizing this discourse, Bould moved onto the post-apocalyptic film *Crumbs*, demonstrating how concerns of history, temporality and semiosis are produced alongside the salvaging and archiving of objects 'perhaps best understood as manifestations of the Anthropocene unconscious'. Providing a gripping commentary upon artefacts and their delineation through description and historical detail, Bould's keynote

offered an informative introduction to Afrofuturism – a multi-media talk, invoking current discussions on this engaging topic.

The third panel sought to cross boundaries, focusing on the representation of territorial delineations and borderlands. Jessica Miller opened by looking towards rethinking the conventions of the fantasy map, pointing towards common cartographical representations and their role within the narrative, and questioning elements of navigation, interpretation and orientation. Kevin Corstorphine tackled Ambrose Bierce's crossing of the United States and Mexico border, interrogating borderlines as products as much of imagination as reality. Focusing on the conceived crossing in Carlos Fuentes' *The Old Gringo*, Corstorphine commented upon fantastical re-imaginings and the opportunities produced by cross-cultural exchanges across borders. Rob O'Connor meanwhile engaged with the prospect of 'otherness' in Lauren Beukes' *Zoo City* and Nnedi Okorafor's *Lagoon*, highlighting how both heavily incorporate landscape to tackle alienation and representation of urban spaces in science fiction. Deftly moving between contact narratives, anthropomorphism and liminality, O'Connor noted that to confront the future we must be aware of the past. Questions drew together the deep connections between the three papers' territories, in particular, how the unregulated space can be distilled, or whether it is beyond the cartographical process.

To close the day, the final panel engaged with re-imagining folklore. Karen Graham introduced the adaptation of Russian folklore, providing an informative overview of central figures and tales. Focusing on the fairy tale as a mirror to society, Graham demonstrated how repetition and reflection allows the audience to look for similarities and differences, questioning how well this process works outside of the European canon and whether fairy tales are meta-textual rather than primarily inter-textual. Dragos Manea offered an alternative, but linked, paper aimed at post-capitalist re-fashioning of Romanian national heroes, particular in the comic book *Harap Alb Continuă*. Focusing on globalized transmedia storytelling, Manea suggested that these tales go beyond standard adaptation to rather re-work and inscribe a nationalist rhetoric. The concluding questions sought to engage with the nature of representation, asking whether adaptations such as Disney embody a homogenisation that resists the variety of interpretation. Following the last panel, the conference moved into the city for relaxed drinks and a meal – an extremely enjoyable night that offered an informal chance for participants to wind down and delve into related topics.

Opening the second day, the esteemed critic David Punter spoke on arachnographia, asking how a spider would write and the method of its representation. Suggesting that the myth of Arachne represents the first story-weaver, Punter travelled along the web of connections and threads in an encompassing and thrilling talk. The spider lies in the corner of the room, the felt but often unseen presence leaving a gossamer trail in its wake which tends

to be difficult to reach, control or be cleansed by modernity thus threatening the order of daily ritual. They represent a perceived threat, not only through arachnophobia but also the depth of folklore circulating around human/spider hybrids and/or their sinister bites. These arthropods are equally invader and trespasser, a connection Punter teased out as embodying the hidden 'immigrant' that finds passage in shipping containers, fruit and other objects. Although abjected, the spider is constantly planning and weaving, building the foundations for the future. Punter's talk was a comprehensive weave of these different strands, offering a multitude of threads for further discussion and interrogating what it would be like to be an arachnid.

The subsequent panel delved into the allure of Weird and Lovecraftian literature, crossing a range of historical periods and media to display the returning allure of this genre. Christina Scholz brought the discussion back to Miéville, focusing on socio-psycholinguistics and postcolonial awareness in *Embassytown*. Confronting the contention between human and inhuman thought and language, Scholz illustrated how the novel's Ariekei offer a postcolonial critique expressed through the Weird's inherent transcendence of genre, cultural and national boundaries. E. Dawson Varughese extended this argument by paying attention to 'Bharati Fantasy' as a genre produced 'in both Indian and non-Indian terms'. Exploring the confrontation between mythology and history, Varughese described this literary encounter as 'weird' due to the slipperiness of its genre identity. Returning to the threat of the past, Kerry Dodd discussed the role of Ancient Egypt within a range of media, from *X-Men: Apocalypse* to Lovecraft, to question why this empire is frequently utilised. Demonstrating the alternate representations and aesthetic incorporation of Egyptology, Dodd argued 'eerie Egypt' seeks to expand beyond current boundaries and borders to question the incorporation of this historical culture. To conclude, Valentino Paccosi engaged with staging the Lovecraftian and comedy in *Hellboy*. Highlighting the failure of language in Lovecraft and the movement to the visual graphic novel and film medium, Paccosi succinctly pinpointed how the addition of laughter affects the linguistic dimensions of these texts.

The following panel, which I was very grateful to chair, investigated Japanese representations of Fantastika. Inés Gregori Labarta examined the meeting of Western and Eastern tradition within *Spirited Away*, focusing on rituals of eating and their representation. Providing an illuminating jump to the Platonic concept of the three parts of the soul, the paper discussed the role of the main characters to assess their function and motivation. Moving onto the changing form of magical realism in *Death Note*, Filippo Cervelli talked about the process of writing and how it becomes inscribed with both judgement and prospective catharsis for trauma. Engaging with the socio-historical context in which the work was produced alongside the process of articulation, Cervelli noted how *Death Note* interestingly moves away from previous instances of

the medium and offers a new light on Eastern fantastika. Closing the panel, Ana Dosen presented on Sion Sono's *Tag*, utilising the Nietzschean concept of *ressentiment* to discuss the repetitive feeling of hurt in the master-slave relationship. Concluding on the prospect of doing something unexpected, the paper drew together the socio-cultural dimensions of Japanese fantastika and its particular method of presentation.

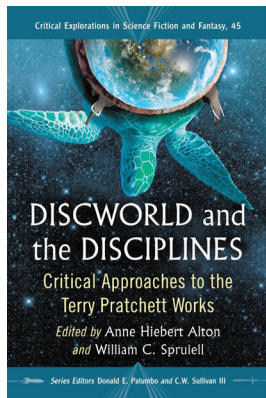
The day's panels concluded with two papers on Young Adult dystopic fiction, both of which engaged with boundaries, rites of passages and othered identities. Andrew Tate delivered an eloquent talk on spectacle and rebellion in *The Hunger Games* series. Broaching the inevitable occurrence of the 'unexpected' and established sacrificing of children and adults often located within this genre, Tate questioned what Young Adult dystopian fiction says about our own political stance. Meanwhile, Alison Tedman analysed reconfigured spatial and grounded boundaries in *The 100*. Focusing on the emphasis of renewal rather than the archetypal post-apocalyptic discourse, the paper marked the movement from the ecotopian idealism to the survival horror realism within the series. Questions interrogated the enduring success and attraction of the Young Adult format, particularly the impact and message that can be read through its reappraisal of a multitude of boundaries.

The last keynote provided a fantastic duet from Sarah Ilott and Chloe Buckley on 'Feminist Rewritings of the Spiritual and Physical Wilderness of the Bush'. Engaging and in-sync throughout, both speakers delivered with real conviction, supporting each other's argument and deftly navigating between the works of Helen Oyeyemi and Nnedi Okorafor. Presenting the African Bush as a literal and imaginative heterogeneous location, not for male adventure but rather a female space, both speakers commented upon how looking to the past and future reveals the physical immediacy of this topography. Establishing the connection between corporeal and spiritual negotiation, the Bush acts as a counter site reversing power hierarchies offering a specific transformative experience. Analysing historic representations of the Bush and its utilisation, the speakers investigated ways in which contemporary authors re-negotiate this space as 'a physical, psychological and spiritual place of female conflict'. Commenting on the ambiguous utopian nature of this location, Ilott and Buckley illustrated how its heterotopian nature embodies both possibility and danger. Delivered with power and assertion, the following questions brought up the contention between the Bush as an ecological and conceptual space, which formed an insightful discussion around the physicality and spirituality of this topography.

Bringing the conference to a close, Chuckie Palmer-Patel delivered a short concluding comment of appreciation to speakers and contributors, noting the success and vibrancy of discussions across the two days. The conference saw the launch of the *Fantastika* Journal, which will be publishing an edition with extended articles of select conference papers shortly. Professional, exciting and

sociable for both days, Global Fantastika was a delight to attend, deliver and chair at, a welcoming community that continues to ignite the spark of interested academics under the fantastika umbrella. Next year's conference, Performing Fantastika, will be from 3-5 July 2017, centred on performative bodies.

Book Reviews



Anne Hiebert Alton and William C. Spruiell, eds. *Discworld and the Disciplines: Critical Approaches to the Terry Pratchett Works* (McFarland, 2014, 244pp, £27.95)

Reviewed by Kanta Dihal (St Anne's College, Oxford)

The Discworld was still growing at the time *Discworld and the Disciplines* was being written. The authors use the present tense when referring to Sir Terry Pratchett, which will surely cause a little sting of sadness in any dedicated reader reading the opening sentence of this book. Pratchett passed away in March 2015, and the

final Discworld novel, *The Shepherd's Crown*, appeared half a year after his death. Even so, the authors that contributed to this collection had access to a bibliography of Pratchett's works that at the back of this collection spans nearly five pages: starting with *The Colour of Magic* (1983) onwards, Discworld matured long before its final instalment, and a critical exploration of the Discworld was to be expected even before its end.

As the title suggests, *Discworld and the Disciplines* focuses not on Pratchett's oeuvre as a whole but on the Discworld series that made him famous. The rationale for this collection is the interdisciplinary approach to Discworld that each chapter applies: Pratchett's work, as the editors state, 'encompasses the most important elements of interdisciplinarity'. Indeed, the volume addresses politics, philosophy, linguistics, sociology and literary theory. Pratchett's writing, however, is not the only aspect of Discworld analysed in this volume. It is difficult to encompass everything related to Discworld within one noun – 'franchise' might come closest, although for the subtitle of the book the editors have decided to go with 'Terry Pratchett works'.

This collection shows that, when studying Pratchett's works in-depth for a long time, one cannot help being influenced by his style. Bracketed asides and snarky interjections are found in every essay, which in some cases provides welcome relief from the standard dry academic writing, and in others unfortunately sounds contrived and significantly less amusing than those found in Pratchett's own works. As Spruiell puts it in one of his footnotes, some writers 'have found after lengthy exposure to Pratchett's prose that it has worn grooves in their heads, even if whatever is flowing through them is not nearly as entertaining'.

Spruiell's chapter, in fact, aims to give the reader an in-depth understanding of what exactly makes Pratchett's style so recognizable. It is a corpus linguistics analysis which focuses on several lexical units that seemed to

be used comparatively often by Pratchett. Spruiell takes these phrases and compares them to several linguistic corpora to prove that, indeed, Pratchett's very frequent use of such words and phrases as 'bits' and 'a sort of' contribute to his characteristic style. Spruiell's unique contribution lies in the quantification of Pratchett's style, down to assigning 'surprisal scores' to names in order to prove that Mightily Oats and Dangerous Beans are indeed more surprising names than, for instance, John Smith. This chapter is slightly less accessible to readers from other disciplines and requires some knowledge of logarithms, although the conclusions are more accessible for a general audience. As Spruiell himself admits, many flaws can be found in his methodology, making the chapter mostly a demonstration of how a linguistic analysis of a corpus can work which can still appeal to an audience of Pratchett fans via its practical application.

When discussing Pratchett's writing, one will be hard pushed to avoid discussing humour. A remark that is made again and again in the sociology of humour is that it is extremely frustrating to discuss humour academically, as it is felt to be inappropriate to kill and dissect jokes for a living. The chapter that discusses humour most directly, however, Gideon Haberkorn's 'Debugging the Mind: The Rhetoric of Humor and the Politics of Fantasy', offers a very insightful analysis of the complexities of Pratchett's puns and a contextualization of his style through a comparison with P.G. Wodehouse and Jerome K. Jerome. Written, like all the chapters, by a non-UK based academic – yet, nevertheless, centring Pratchett within an English comic tradition – Haberkorn's essay offers a fascinating interaction in terms of cultural perspective.

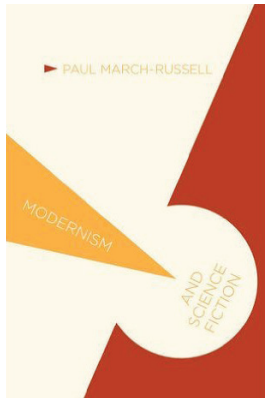
Of course, Discworld is first and foremost Pratchett's creation, yet this collection also shows how important artists were: Alton's long chapter, on the visual aspects of Discworld, focuses on the two most famous Discworld illustrators, Josh Kirby and Paul Kidby. This chapter, which expresses a strong preference for Kidby's illustrations as they display 'a deeper level of sophistication', greatly benefits from the many illustrations the editors have managed to include.

Discworld and the Disciplines contains only six essays: this is partly explained by the fact that the two chapters written by the editors are each over fifty pages long. By comparison, the other chapters are perhaps been too limited in their scope: in an interdisciplinary collection. The short chapters would all have benefited from more space to fully develop their arguments and explain the specialist approaches used. Gray Kochhar-Lindgren's chapter, for instance, sheds interesting light on the origins of the title of *Monstrous Regiment* (2003); however, despite discussing this title for three pages, he leaves little room to explore Pratchett's gender politics.

The essay collection also includes a very useful annotated critical bibliography, which seems to span everything published on Pratchett in English: not only does it present a comprehensive overview of articles and a few books, it even mentions a monograph which 'includes a short paragraph' on Pratchett, an encyclopaedia

which 'includes only a few sporadic mentions of Pratchett's works', and a 'fan-created appreciation piece' which 'relies heavily on Wikipedia'. There is also a separate section on MA theses and dissertations, which suggests that very little more advanced scholarship has turned to Pratchett, although this section also includes Ph.D theses. Altogether, this sense of completeness mainly emphasizes the lack of critical attention given to Pratchett, which might well have been intentional on the compilers' part.

Discworld and the Disciplines is a useful introduction to interdisciplinary critical approaches to the world Pratchett created. However, if the length of the chapters had been a little more balanced, the disciplines would have been represented in better proportions. This book invites researchers from across the humanities and social sciences to study Pratchett; it is up to others to address the many questions this book poses.



Paul March-Russell, *Modernism and Science Fiction* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2015, 206pp, £60.00)

Reviewed by Paul Kincaid

The opening night of *Guy Domville* in January 1895 was a disaster, effectively scuppering any plans its author, Henry James, might have had for a career as a playwright. One of the few positive reviews was by H.G. Wells, whose own first novel, *The Time Machine*, was published that May. Following the success of the novel, Wells moved to Sandgate, a vigorous bicycle ride

from James' home in Rye. The two became friends, along with a circle of other writers living around Romney Marsh, including Joseph Conrad, Ford Madox Hueffer, Stephen Crane and Edith Nesbit. The group read and admired one other's work. There were differences between them: James, in particular, was an exponent of the new, more experimental mode of writing later to be known as modernism; Wells was a more journalistic and populist writer, but still this loose grouping fed off one other intellectually and creatively. In 1901, Conrad and Hueffer produced their own scientific romance, *The Inheritors*, clearly influenced by Wells. Following the success of *The War of the Worlds* in 1898, James wrote to Wells to suggest that they collaborate on a novel about Mars (though quite how James's endless sinuous sentences might have worked with Wells's tight, sharp prose is difficult to imagine). And anyone who imagines that Wells was not concerned with the modern condition has not read with sufficient attention novels such as *The Invisible Man* (1897) or *Ann Veronica* (1908). There was, in short, cross-fertilization and little in the way of conflict between the supposedly

incompatible modernism of Henry James and the science fiction of H.G. Wells.

It was not to last; the philosophies that underpinned their writing endeavours were too different. James took to criticizing Wells's journalistic style; Wells took to parodying James' convoluted sentences. It came to a head in 1914, when the *Times Literary Supplement* published a two-part essay by James on 'The Younger Generation', which consisted in part of a vicious attack on Wells whose work was, so James said, without literary merit. Wells responded a year later in the infamous fourth chapter of *Boon*, a mean-spirited satirical attack on James and everything he represented that is unlike anything else in contemporary literature. *Boon* is a mess of a book that Wells had started and abandoned countless times over the previous decade or so. And though he seems almost immediately to have regretted the impulse to incorporate his attack on James, the damage was done.

And the damage wasn't limited to their friendship. These two pieces of work, James's arrogant essay and Wells's ill-tempered response, affected the entire subsequent history of the relationship between science fiction and the mainstream. The divisions went deeper than a personal spat, of course; as Paul March-Russell points out, the Victorians regarded 'opaqueness, lack of vision and moral turpitude [. . .] as symptoms of an underlying malaise'. Stylistically, modernist writing, as epitomized by James, went counter to this Victorian precept, while Wells embodied it; hence James' criticism of his journalistic prose. Modernist critics and their successors, therefore, had at least a fig leaf of literary reason when they followed James in looking down on any manifestation of science fiction (an attitude whose echoes are still evident today). On the other hand, the sf writers who most self-consciously clung to the Wellsian model, that is those who most readily self-identified as science fiction writers, also clung to this Victorian ideal of clear, uncluttered prose. Thus, at least in its surface detail, sf eschewed the modernist pattern. The two would not, could not, meet.

At least, that is the common version of the story in which the split between the modernist literary establishment and genre science fiction is made personal, as summed up in Robert Conquest's oft-repeated doggerel from *Spectrum 2*: "Sf's no good," they bellow till we're deaf. / "But this looks good." – "Well then, it's not sf." In which case, just the existence of novels like *Brave New World*, *Swastika Night* or *Nineteen Eighty-Four* should give us pause. And as March-Russell suggests in this slim volume, the interconnection between science fiction and modernism is far richer and more complex than the common version of the story might allow.

Immediately at issue, of course, is which modernism is meant. In narrowly literary terms it tends to relate to the techniques of uncertainty (stream of consciousness, unreliable narrator, etc.) developed by writers like James, Woolf, Eliot and Pound, building on the advances in psychology pioneered by Freud. This narrow sense of the word doesn't get much of a look in here

because, until the New Wave experimentations of the 1960s, it barely impinged on science fiction. In rather broader cultural terms modernism refers to any artistic response to a world in which Victorian certainties had been undermined. The series editor, historian Roger Griffin, cites Phillip E. Johnson: 'Modernism is typically defined as the condition that begins when people realize God is truly dead, and we are therefore on our own'. To the extent that modernism is the artistic descendant of Nietzschean philosophy, and given how much sf is concerned with how one lives in and makes sense of a godless universe, our quest for transcendence satisfied by the scientific not the spiritual, then sf has to be inherently modernist. In scientific terms, modernism describes a world in which a series of advances, Darwin's evolution, Einstein's Relativity, Godel's Incompleteness, etc., had made the universe bigger, more complex, less readily encompassable. The deep past opened up by advances in geology, for instance, made a vastly expanded landscape available to the Victorian imagination, but this in turn led to a rapidly increasing dis-ease with the present. Yet anchored to this was the more domestic sense of modernization, the role of technology in everyday life. New modes of transport, railways, automobiles and planes brought with them a speed that seemed to collapse time and space, while telephones, sewing machines, and a flood of kitchen gadgets started to transform family life during the early years of the twentieth century. The scientific and technological aspects of modernism are thus built around an awkward mixture of frightening mystery and achievable utopia. In political terms it was the rise of movements in which history was regarded as predictable and controllable, leading to rationally structured attempts to create utopia such as fascism and communism. March-Russell sticks to Griffin's notion of modernism throughout (sometimes, I think, too rigidly), theoretically hovering somewhere between the cultural and the political senses, though in practice his argument tends to partake, willy-nilly, of all three representations of the idea, the religious, the technological and the political. This is not a criticism of March-Russell so much as an indication of how slippery a term 'Modernism' is, as impossible to pin down to one definition that works in all instances as 'science fiction' is. When, part way through the book, he begins casually to use the term 'modernist science fiction' as if it is completely unproblematic, however, it seems as though he is using 'modernism' in yet a fifth sense, as a periodizing word that simply marks out the time between the Victorian *fin de siècle* and the emergence of postmodernism during the 1960s.

As befits a contribution to a series under the imprimatur of an historian, the general approach is historical. Thus, Chapter 1 deals historically with scientific romance from the middle of the nineteenth century until the early years of the twentieth, and thematically with 'individual desires of self-transcendence through science and technology'. The idea of self-transcendence is convincingly part of the modernist enterprise, since the godless world requires the emergence of

the individual as hero. But it is also a part of the sf enterprise that is inherent in the long history of the genre (one thinks of *Robinson Crusoe* and its many descendants as just one iteration of the trope). There is, for instance, an interesting discussion of the way an early scientific romance like Edward Bulwer-Lytton's *The Coming Race* (1871) fed upon contemporary scientific and pseudoscientific ideas like Maxwell and Thomson's electromagnetism and Crookes' radiant matter. This shows the engagement of sf with modern thought, though it's the same sort of engagement you would have found in the work of Thomas More or Mary Shelley. What we are seeing, therefore, is a congruence between the interests of sf and modernism but, it has to be said, no more necessary connection than that. When March-Russell says of George Bernard Shaw's expressionist drama, *Back to Methuselah* (1921), or C.S. Lewis's Christian fable, the 'Space Trilogy', that neither 'embody the common interests of sf and modernism during the interwar period', he is conceding the point. Indeed, when he begins Chapter 2, which deals historically with British and European science fiction of the interwar years, and thematically with utopias that all too often turn out to be not very utopian, by claiming, quite correctly, that 'Many of the social and political movements that can be described as modernist programmes are utopian in basis' we get the impression that modernism draws from sf rather than the other way around.

Chapter 2 builds on the idea that the modernist response to a world in which the old religious and class certainties no longer applied was to create political systems that were intended to be so rational that they were inescapable, so ordered that they provided their own new certainties. The rapid reunification of Germany upset Europe's political order, while the working classes and women were clamouring for the vote; the old order no longer worked. A new system was needed, totalizing, ordered, utopian, which was in their varying ways the promise of both communism and fascism. The science-fictional response was an upsurge in utopian fiction throughout the modernist period, though these tended to be at best ambiguous and at worst dystopian. In the 1930s there was a tide of work that specifically warned of the dangers of fascism, from Mitchell's *Gay Hunter* via Jameson's *In the Second Year* to Burdekin's *Swastika Night*. It is one of the strengths of the book that March-Russell finds an array of less familiar titles to stand as exemplars of his thesis, though at the same time, while pointing out that the narrative voice in *Swastika Night* is explicitly gendered, he fails to mention that the novel was originally published under Burdekin's male pseudonym, Murray Constantine, which adds a layer of complication to the gendering of the novel that would, I think, have been worthy of note.

Chapter 3 deals historically with American (primarily pulp) science fiction between the 1930s and 1950s and thematically with aspects of an engineered future that characterized this sf. This is the chapter that deals with the historical science fiction we most readily recognize, the space opera of the 1930s and

the hard sf of the '50s, and perhaps as a consequence is the chapter that most clearly separates sf from modernism. But it does so in a way that illustrates that the overall historical pattern of the book is not replicated within the chapters. Here, for instance, is a fascinating discussion, if barely two pages long, of John Dos Passos and his great modernist text, *Manhattan Transfer*, which establishes engineering as one of the great devices, themes or metaphors through which the writer encapsulates the modern age. And it is good, in this instance, to see it firmly rooted in a historical perspective which is traced back to Poe (the Victorian age was a modern age also). But in an illustration of the sometimes skittering nature of the connections made but not always fully developed in this book, the argument takes us from *Manhattan Transfer* back to Poe, forward to Edward Bellamy then F.W. Taylor's *Principles of Scientific Management* (which also hangs like a tutelary deity over the utopian texts of Chapter 2) and Chaplin's *Modern Times*, then back to Henry Adams, back again to the dime novels of the second half of the nineteenth century, then forward through *Weird Tales* and Edgar Rice Burroughs, H.P. Lovecraft and *Flash Gordon*, before arriving at Gernsback's *Amazing Stories* which is pretty well contemporary with *Manhattan Transfer*, and all in the space of eight pages. The difference between these two contemporary works, *Manhattan Transfer* (1925) and *Amazing Stories* (1926), is illustrative of the fact that if we are to talk of them both as modernist then we are talking about two very different modernisms. But the structure of the book tends to disguise such differences.

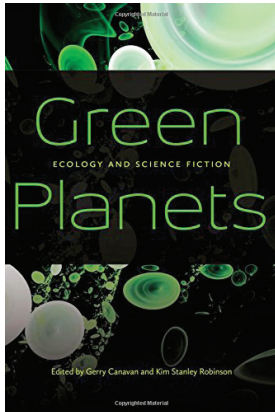
Finally, in the last substantial chapter, Chapter 4, March-Russell deals historically with the New Wave of the 1960s and thematically with the more experimental aspects of science fiction that emerged at this time, experiments that often harked back to the literary modernism of the early twentieth century. This is the point at which science fiction and modernism seem to achieve their closest conjunction, though in evoking Jameson's notion of late capitalism during his discussion of Philip K. Dick, March-Russell also indicates that at this point sf is already moving beyond modernism into postmodernism.

The operative word in the book's title is 'and'; this is in the end not a work that argues that modernism necessarily informs science fiction, or conversely that science fiction necessarily informs modernism. March-Russell highlights writers who were undoubtedly modernist (Lewis Grassic Gibbon) who wrote science fiction (as Leslie Mitchell) but he equally highlights authors who contended that modernism's contribution to humanity was slight (Olaf Stapledon); he notes that Heinlein was dismissive of the modernists while Pohl read the French Symbolists. What we see, rather, is that for a period that stretched from the end of the nineteenth century into the second half of the twentieth century, science fiction and modernism were often congruent, sometimes converging, sometimes at odds, but they necessarily dealt with the same issues since all fictions deal with the modern experience, occasionally in the same way. Looking

at modernism and science fiction is not to look at the same enterprise, but at how different writers responded to issues in ways that might intersect or share characteristics, regardless of whether the authors intended this or were even aware of it. March-Russell says as much when, in a digression about the crime pulps of the 1920s, he notes 'the innovations of Hammett and Hemingway can be viewed as parallel developments that occasionally overlap'. He repeats the point when he remarks that the cyborg vision, a crucial underpinning of the entropic ideas that developed in the sf of the '60s, was 'prefigured in both modernism and sf'; increasingly the book separates sf from modernism. What March-Russell identifies as 'Ballard's desire to construct an avant-garde literature using the tools of sf' coupled with Moorcock's 'nomic (sic) quest viable only outside of sf' (146) actually suggests that the closer one comes to modernism, the further one has to go from science fiction. And this tells us more about the world in which science fiction and modernism separately emerged than it does about either of these literary movements.

This is an often valuable and always interesting book, but there is, throughout, a strong sense that there is too much subject struggling to get out of too little book. As if the more we get into the relationship between science fiction and modernism the bigger the subject becomes, so that at times the book seems more like an exercise in compression and excision than in explication. When March-Russell talks of 'The celebration of machine technology' found in some British writers of the 1930s, he links it to the Left's interest in the Soviet Union, then seen by many as the embodiment of the future, and this in turn he links to Russian interest in the work of Wells. Though Russian scientific fantasy was based on a long fantasy tradition in Russian literature, and scientific fantasy was well established before Wells began writing, let alone being translated. There's a sense that science fiction is thus being isolated from its own history in order to show it in a modernist light; but the truth is that what we identify as modernism, either politically or culturally, has roots that can be traced back decades or even centuries. But modernism's debts to the past are only mentioned if they undermine the modern, as when March-Russell argues that Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* (1927) is more Gothic than modern. By covering so much ground in so short a space, examples of both the modern and the science fictional are often left hovering in isolation, orphaned from what they each grew out of. There are reasons why science fiction and modernism both emerged at about the same time in response to the same issues and concerns. They did not respond in the same way; sf was often more fearful of political and technological change than modernism, but a network of linkages can be traced between them. March-Russell does a good job of sketching out these similarities and differences, but it is no more than a sketch. This is not so much a criticism of *Modernism and Science Fiction* as a plea for the book to be longer. It feels like it needs to be two or even three times the length it is, to provide space to more fully develop the

connections and argument that are so tantalizingly hinted at here.



Gerry Canavan and Kim Stanley Robinson, eds. *Green Planets: Ecology and Science Fiction* (Wesleyan University Press, 2014, 280pp, £21.00)

Reviewed by Sándor Klapcsik (Technical University of Liberec)

The front and back matter of *Green Planets* highlights the book as a timely and thorough criticism of the ecological aspects of sf. The editors are a well-known critic (Canavan) and a world-famous sf writer (Robinson), the preface cites Mark Bould and China

Miéville's *Red Planets* (2009) as inspiration, and the back cover includes comments from Fredric Jameson. The reader's expectations, therefore, are high, which raises the question: does the book really become, as one reviewer claims, 'one of the decade's most significant contributions to ecocriticism and science fiction criticism?'

Canavan's introduction clearly explains the general structure of the book: the first part focuses on utopias, maintaining Samuel R. Delany's distinction between 'Arcadias' and 'New Jerusalems', paradises of nature and technological super cities. The second part discusses urban and rural post-apocalyptic dystopias, 'Brave New Worlds' and 'Lands of the Flies' respectively. The third part analyzes novels and films that indicate that the final ecological catastrophe can be avoided. The book thus tries to give a balanced tone to ecological issues in sf, a tone that is linked by Canavan to Carl Freedman's distinction between deflationary and inflationary modes of critique.

The collection loosely follows a historical approach as well, at least in the sense that three of the four contributors in the first part mainly select pre-modernist and modernist authors for their analysis, while Rob Latham gives a historical overview of ecology in sf, primarily focusing on New Wave writers. Christina Alt analyzes H.G. Wells' *The War of the Worlds* (1898), where human beings are compared to animals or microscopic organisms and where the ultimate defeat of the alien invaders derives not from humanity's technological mastery, but from earthly bacteria, which suggests the reduced significance of human beings. Correspondingly, some human characters intend to use earthly germs to cause deadly plagues among the Utopians in Wells' *Men Like Gods* (1923), although on this occasion such attempts remain unsuccessful. Michael Page outlines the relevance of evolution and apocalypse in four exemplary works from the Golden Age. He succinctly demonstrates that although the ecological

portrayals in Golden Age sf often only serve as 'the extrapolated background setting' for 'crudely executed' adventure stories, in some cases, ecological challenges in these books 'offer valuable reflections and insights on ecological questions for today'. Gib Prettyman underlines the significance of Daoism in Le Guin's utopias, disavowing that they only represent escapist fantasized world reduction. Instead, as Prettyman claims, we should read them as works of Yin Utopianism, in which Daoist philosophical worldviews and Marxist criticisms of consumer culture are irrevocably interwoven.

The second group of essays are somewhat uneven in their quality, in particular, Sabine Höhler's analysis of Garrett Hardin's *Exploring New Ethics for Survival: The Voyage of the Spaceship Beagle* (1972) and Andrew Milner's piece on Australian apocalypse both lose their focus. While they manage to compare the subject matter of relatively forgotten texts with contemporary economic and social conditions, it remains unclear in both cases what the general significance of these works are and what sort of impact they have on the reader. Milner admits that the novel he analyzes 'is clearly not the game changing climate change dystopia'. Höhler reflects on the Social-Darwinian aspects of Hardin's views, but fails to clarify to what degree the ecological concerns compensate for these problematic aspects. Adeline Johns-Putra gives a more intriguing interpretation of Maggie Gee's *The Ice People* (1998), placing it into the context of recent literary fiction which features sf and post-apocalyptic tropes. She focuses on the ecofeminist critical approach to 'care' in Gee's work, which destabilizes and reinterprets the phenomenon 'not just as a female prerogative in the face of masculinist scientism but as an ideal environmentalist response in and of itself', thus displaying 'the dark side of care itself'. Elzette Steenkamp analyzes South African sf, focusing on Jane Rosenthal's relatively unknown novel *Souvenir* (2004) and Neill Blomkamp's recent blockbuster *District 9* (2009). The former revolves around the adventures of a cloned sex slave; the novel also expresses critical nostalgia for travelogues of colonialism in a way similar to, for example, J.M. Coetzee's fiction. In *Souvenir*, scientific quests and frontiers of cloning are intertwined with traditional settler narratives, especially those concerning the South African Karoo. Steenkamp interprets the representation of apartheid in *District 9* along similar lines, claiming that 'Blomkamp is at once lampooning and buying into Hollywood's need for 'recognizable' villains (mostly Russian, German, South African or Nigerian)' and other traditional stereotypes of South African nationality. Christopher Palmer provides a theoretically complex analysis of three recent novels: Douglas Coupland's *Girlfriend in a Coma* (1998), Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* (2003), and China Miéville's *Kraken* (2010). Palmer asks an extremely relevant question: how can writers deal with environmental dystopias and post-apocalyptic scenarios today, when 'apocalypse threatens to become cliché because we have lived it too long'? His answer is that contemporary novels tend to include elements of comedy;

furthermore, the central element of apocalypse presents three broad features. First, 'catastrophe is repeated: the novel involves a series and variety of catastrophes'. Second, catastrophe is 'subjective' in the sense that it is often only 'dreamed or imagined'. Third, the apocalyptic event is 'taken for granted' and is not explained in the novel because 'the event is too predictable to be worth explanation'. This summary well illustrates Brian McHale's argument, in *Constructing Postmodernism* (1992), that realistic descriptions of nuclear apocalypse, 'however thoughtful and earnest [. . .] can only be inadequate', while uncanny repetitions and metaphorical representations of the event can renew the genre.

The third section revolves around the interrelated nature of utopias and dystopias, focusing on works that indicate that the final apocalyptic event can somehow be avoided. Eric C. Otto approaches Paolo Bacigalupi's short fiction from this angle; he claims that Bacigalupi's 'eco-dystopian representations, while harrowing, are indeed part of the utopian project to imagine and bring about positive social change'. Brent Bellamy and Imre Szeman analyze 'science fiction', that is, 'quasi-scientific, quasi-science-fictional texts [which] depict the world after the final collapse of civilization and the extinction of the human race, often at hyperbolic geologic time scales extending millions of years'. Bellamy and Szeman give a deconstructive analysis of this subgenre, claiming that although seemingly these texts give warnings about the possible extinction of the human race, they reinstate utopian and escapist impulses by positioning the reader or viewer as witnesses of a perfectly operating world without humanity but with flourishing nature. Timothy Morton provides a complicated, philosophical albeit somewhat digressive analysis of the recent blockbuster *Avatar* (2009), while Melody Jue analyzes the complex questions of the nonhuman and the Oceanic in Stanislaw Lem's *Solaris* (1961). The book ends with a short list of texts and films that revolve around, or in some cases only feature, ecological questions and an interview between Canavan and Robinson. Robinson still holds hope for humanity, but criticizes contemporary corporate capitalism and several texts of contemporary sf, especially stories that feature Singularity and the topic of uploading human consciousness into computers, since such works 'point us in wrong directions, as being disguised versions of immortality or transcendence – the rapture of the nerds'.

To sum up, *Green Planets* reminds us of the many pitfalls of a contemporary globalized economy and the politics of neoliberalism. Contributors also draw attention to the problematic underpinnings of patriarchal and anthropocentric worldviews. In the meantime, several forgotten or unknown sf texts and films come to light, while well-known works and blockbusters are compellingly reinterpreted. The book is not perfect in the sense that a few of its essays lose a degree of focus, but as a whole *Green Planets* does indeed become 'one of the decade's most significant contributions to ecocriticism' – even if not to sf criticism as such.



Carlo Pagetti, *Il senso del futuro: La fantascienza nella letteratura americana* (Mimesis, 2012, 321pp., €26,00)

Reviewed by Umberto Rossi

The new edition of this monograph, based on Pagetti's graduation thesis (1967), which was originally published by Edizioni di storia e letteratura in Rome in 1970, is indeed an act of what we could call, after Fredric Jameson, 'archaeology of the future'. At that time neither *Foundation* nor *Science Fiction Studies* existed; the only academic journal devoted to sf was Thomas D.

Clareson's *Extrapolation* – which, unsurprisingly, is never mentioned in *Il senso del futuro*, and did not review Pagetti's book. Those were undoubtedly pioneer years for sf criticism, and there were neither the internet nor emails to keep scholars in touch – no way to access library catalogues unless one physically accessed the libraries. Also the availability of English-language primary and secondary literature in Italian libraries was limited, especially when it came to science fiction (even today, finding a complete run of *Foundation* in an Italian library is an impossible mission); and if one wanted to purchase sf novels and/or monographs on the genre (the few already published then) the only resources in those pre-Amazon days were the expensive international bookshops, only present in major Italian cities (the purchase then entailed long and enervating waits, given the slowness of Italian mail).

Moreover, in those years, Italian academia was still quite impervious to criticism from English-speaking countries. Italian intellectuals mostly read and spoke French, not a few of them knew German, but English was a language taught in schools for accountants. Benedetto Croce, whose philosophy and literary criticism was only beginning to be called in question in the 1960s, drew on German idealism; Leo Spitzer and Erich Auerbach were also powerful influences, as well as the French structuralists.

On the other hand, Italy was being invaded by American culture through cinema, television, music and those then disreputable forms of literature, crime fiction, spy novels, and – last but not least – science fiction. But this invasion had not reached our universities yet. Though those were the years in which some English Literature professors devoted themselves to American literature as something worth specializing in, following the insights of Cesare Pavese, who had read American writers as antidotes to the stifling cultural isolation of Fascist Italy. But academicians were interested in the Great Authors: Hawthorne, Melville, Whitman, Henry James – not writers who talked about starships, aliens and time travels.

Pagetti's *Il senso del futuro* is thus a milestone inasmuch as it marks the moment at which Italian academia became aware of sf as a form of literature worth studying, analyzing, discussing, even translating (the translation of Philip K. Dick's *Martian Time-Slip* available in Italian bookshops today is still the one Pagetti produced in 1973). And what I find interesting in this monograph, old as it may be, is that it preserves not just the sense of the future (this is the literal translation of the Italian title), but also the sense of wonder of a young Italian *americanista* mapping a vast and little-known territory – a relatively new world for Italian culture, which had discovered English language science fiction only in the early 1950s.

What is important is that in the pages of *Il senso del futuro* we have a bold attempt to trace a history of sf from a point of view that is at the same time peripheral (with respect to the US and the UK) and alien, as its critical positions and presuppositions were quite different from those of the English-language critics who were tackling the genre in those years (although one has to notice that Pagetti was well aware of what at least two American critics were doing in those years, as he often quotes H. Bruce Franklin and Leslie Fiedler, and would later publish in *Science Fiction Studies*). No wonder then that Pagetti's vision of the origins of the genre is quite different from what one may find, say, in Brian Aldiss' *Billion Year Spree* (1973) or, more recently, Roger Luckhurst's *Science Fiction* (2005). *Il senso del futuro*, after an introductory chapter that rejects the idea of a formalistic definition of the genre and chooses to envision it as 'a cluster of myths that find a concrete literary expression in a given culture' (translation mine), such as the myths of the future, of cosmic journey and technological development, traces the sources of sf to the origins of American literature. By so doing, he curiously anticipates Thomas M. Disch's thesis in *The Dreams Our Stuff is Made Of* (1998), but delves even deeper than Poe: pagetti proposes Charles Brockden Brown's *Wieland* (1798) as the inaugural text of the genre, placing it in a cultural context (the colonization of the New World and then the life of the new republic) where the techno-scientific imagination, as well as the scientific hoax, play a vital role.

The third chapter deals with the two writers who, according to Pagetti, most influenced modern sf, that is, Nathaniel Hawthorne and Edgar Allan Poe. It is above all in such short stories as 'The Man of Adamant' (1837), 'Dr Heidegger's Experiment' (1837), 'Rappaccini's Daughter' (1844) or 'The Birthmark' (1843) that Hawthorne's contribution to the scientific imagination should be found, even though Pagetti points out Chillingworth in *The Scarlet Letter* (1850) and Westerwelt in *The Blithedale Romance* (1852) as early examples of the haunted or evil scientist. As for Poe, Pagetti discusses his interest in science (never forgetting that in the first half of the nineteenth century the term also applied to such disciplines as mesmerism, which fascinated both Hawthorne and Poe), and finds in 'The Unparalleled Adventure of One Hans Pfaall' (1835) that 'all

the future imaginary discoveries of science-fiction, the *tone* with whom they are presented are already present' in the description of the balloon used by Pfaall to reach the Moon.

The fourth chapter begins with a brief discussion of H.G. Wells's canonical novels, but that is not the object of this extended analysis as Pagetti's focus is on American literature. This chapter mostly deals with more or less famous American authors of the nineteenth century, such as Fitz-James O'Brien, Thomas Wentworth Higginson, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Mark Twain and Ambrose Bierce, not to mention Henry James, all of them staging 'the clash of reality and illusion', brought about by scientific discoveries that make us mistrust tangible experience because 'science has taken man beyond the Pillars of Hercules, but has not revealed the meaning of the new reality, it only taught man that every value is *relative*'. Hence, Pagetti sees a continuity between Brown, Hawthorne and Poe on the one hand, and a then young and promising novelist, Philip K. Dick, whose name repeatedly pops up in the pages of *Il senso del futuro*.

The fifth chapter focuses on the presence of the machine in American literature, for example, in Herman Melville's 1856 short story 'The Bell-Tower', which presents us with an early version of the robot, and the utopian and dystopian attitude of those writers that followed Hawthorne and Poe, such as Edward Bellamy and Jack London. Pagetti argues that, although science and technology promised an improvement of human society, they also threatened to unravel its fragile fabric; scientific progress created the socialist utopia depicted in *Looking Backward* (1888) but also the industrial capitalism that establishes a ruthless dictatorship in *The Iron Heel* (1913).

The sixth chapter may sound surprising to sf historians: the interwar period, when the term 'science fiction' was invented by Hugo Gernsback and the so-called Golden Age started for good, is cursorily discussed and its authors, from Edmund Hamilton to Robert Heinlein and Fritz Leiber, are put back in their proper perspective, 'from the point of view of science-fiction understood as valid literary fiction [*narrativa letterariamente valida*]'. According to Pagetti, the Golden Age classics 'are imperfectly aware of the symbolic possibilities inherent in sf, and remain mostly unable to interpret the living and concrete reality of the America in which they live'. Here we see how far Pagetti's approach is from today's sf studies: literary hierarchies impinge upon this monograph; Asimov, Van Vogt and Leinster stand no comparison with the Great Classics (Poe, Hawthorne, Melville) and the Moderately Less Great ones (Brown, Bellamy, London, etc.). Let me quote a tell-tale remark: 'Robert Heinlein, like Leiber, has a predilection for a colloquial language, sometime crammed with dialectal forms'. It is quite clear that Pagetti sees the articulate, complex and lofty prose of Hawthorne and Melville as the touchstone of literary value, and Golden Age authors fail the test; it is the Italian literary tradition that can explain this stance, however, inasmuch as our national language has always been opposed to the many dialects (some

of which can be considered languages in their own right) daily spoken in Italian cities and towns. Moreover, Pagetti seems to subscribe to a hierarchical idea of literature: high and low artistic forms must not be confused, and sf novels and stories must prove that they belong to the realm of high art, not to the disreputable forms of mere entertainment. When, in the eighth chapter, Pagetti deals with Ray Bradbury, who is presented as the first American sf author who qualifies for the realm of High Literature, he closes the discussion regretting that Bradbury, after his science-fictional phase, has moved to horror fiction, and then, as a proof of his debasement, notices that 'in 1964 eight of Bradbury's horror stories have been turned into comics. They might be awarded citizenship also in the world of *Fahrenheit 451*'. These conclusive remarks do sound like an indictment, and comics are undoubtedly seen as a disreputable form *in toto*.

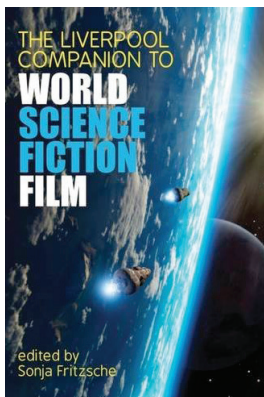
Of course the text must be read in a historical perspective; the days of comics studies in an academic context are still far away. Moreover, I suspect that, by adopting a hierarchical approach to sf literature, Pagetti is striving to prevent any scathing criticism which might have been levelled at the object of his research in such a conservative academic environment as the Italian one in the mid-1960s. By carefully discriminating between good and bad sf – in a way that may sometimes sound naïve or hasty today – Pagetti wants to prove that, though there may be a lot of trash in sf, some texts do qualify for the canon.

Even though Pagetti never uses the term 'canon' in his book, such a canonizing effort is particularly visible after the seventh chapter, where there is a discussion of sf structures, thematics and mythologies. The ninth deals with the social or sociological science fiction of the 1950s, which Pagetti sees as the real Golden Age; then the tenth chapter portrays two exemplary writers, Robert Sheckley and Philip K. Dick, considered as the true heirs of the American romance; followed by the eleventh devoted to Kurt Vonnegut, Jr, whose *Cat's Cradle* (1963) is, according to Pagetti, the 'arrival point for all 20th Century American science fiction'.

Compared to the canon adumbrated in these chapters, the last one is a sort of anti-climax: after the golden age of social sf, there is a decline: the most interesting authors seem to have lost their edge, the new ones (e.g. Disch, Le Guin, Delany) do not seem so promising as their forerunners were, and the action is in the UK, so much so that Pagetti must briefly deal with J.G. Ballard and the British New Wave. But even here, while we may consider the general design questionable with the benefit of hindsight, there are so many brilliant insights that one might want to pursue: Pagetti, without using the phrase 'postmodernist fiction,' connects sf to John Barth's *Giles Goat-Boy* (1966) and William Burroughs' *Nova Trilogy* (1959-64); he notices that sf themes and myths are spreading outside the specialized magazines and series; and, notwithstanding his not-so-positive assessment of what we might call today 'American New Wave' (*pace* Luckhurst), he is aware that the writers emerging in the 1960s have a denser

literary background, that they are importing techniques and devices from High Modernism, and that a critic cannot stop at genre and national borders if s/he wants to paint a sufficiently wide picture of the sf phenomenon (hints at other media are few but not totally absent).

All in all, this new edition of *Il senso del futuro* is a welcome contribution to the corpus of secondary literature on sf and its derivatives; a precious read for all those who believe that the history of sf runs parallel to the history of how (academic) criticism became aware of, discovered, understood and/or misunderstood sf. Moreover, having recently worked on Italian sf, that peripheral and obscure province of world sf, I tend to think this book is an unavoidable milestone of its history, notwithstanding the indisputable fact that Pagetti only deals with English-language authors. On the other hand, I am well aware that for most readers of *Foundation* this will remain a remote and alien territory, given the language in which it was written. But sometimes – as sf teaches us, and the current attention to the issue of world sf proves – it is important to know that alien worlds exist, even though we might not be able to reach them.



Sonja Fritzsche, ed. *The Liverpool Companion to World Science Fiction Film* (Liverpool University Press, 2014, 256pp, £75.00)

Reviewed by Alison Tedman (Buckinghamshire New University)

This collection analyzes selected science fiction films from Africa, Asia, Europe, North America and South America, framing these within national or regional science fiction history. It makes a valuable contribution to recent work on world science fiction that seeks to address the previous marginalization of countries viewed as on the periphery of sf development.

In the introduction, Sonja Fritzsche draws on Istvan Csicsery-Ronay Jr. to observe that unravelling world sf films' 'complex meaning-making practices' has been difficult for those without contextualizing knowledge. To address this complexity, individual aesthetic and ideological analyses trace the meanings of sf tropes or themes, such as ecological sustainability, in precise geographical, political and cultural production contexts. Definitions by Brian Stableford, Darko Suvin, Vivian Sobchak and others are prevalent throughout, providing a grounding framework for study.

Fritzsche describes world sf filmmakers as 'reinterpreting [. . .] contemporary understandings of the genre'. This phrase is certainly germane to Wanuri

Kahiu's stylish short, *Pumzi* (*Breath* 2009), set after a World Water War in a society based on self-generated power and fluid reclamation. In Ritch Calvin's eco-cinecritical study, the film is related to female custodianship of resources in African 'matrilineal societies'. An explanation of the significance of water to African environmentalism illuminates the influence of Kenyan ecofeminist Wangari Maathai. Contextualizing Kahiu's choice of sf as a mode, Calvin points to her prior use of realism, in connection with Kenya's Riverwood filmmakers. A technophobic theme in *Pumzi* is defined as bearing specific ideological import in an African context that also references 'ecocatastrophic' and environmentalist science fiction. In Calvin's reading, the film is discussed both as African and as Kenyan, precluding an over-simplified categorization of African-related sf and directorial identity.

The interrelation of place, technology and nation is addressed in a divergent context in Jie Zhang's analysis of *Death Ray on a Coral Island* (1980). The film arguably 'provides a unique window into the political and cultural milieu' in which sf was temporarily a permissible form in China. Zhang positions the film in terms of history, science, gender and family, and theorizes the emotion induced by 'rendering China visually absent' yet 'narratively essential'.

In their overview of Indian sf cinema, Jessica Langer and Dominic Alessio situate the genre historically from 1882, before focusing on contemporary sf as 'a major box-office draw in India and its diaspora'. Increased production from 2003 is exemplified by the popular *Krish* franchise (2003–), *Ra.One* (2011) and the high-budget, digital effects action hybrid *Endhiran* (2010). The latter's spectacular sequence, featuring robot Chitti, accrued many YouTube views, and the authors examine western responses to this. They also consider 'indigeneity, coproduction and international reception' in Indian sf, positioning the powerful cultural specificity of musical numbers against and beyond transnational influences.

Takayuki Tatsumi focuses on *Gojira* (1954), locating its central figure's adaptive meanings in relation to Japanese history, science fiction and folklore, as well as global historical and cultural contexts. Tatsumi traces the cultural resonances of *Gojira* to Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Lost World* (1912), Ray Bradbury's 'The Fog Horn' (1951) and its adaptation *The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms* (1953), among other texts.

European and North American films are included in the collection in order to avoid 'reinforc[ing] a separate "foreign" canon'. In his chapter on British sf cinema of the 1950s, Derek Johnston constructs a transmedia reading of Hammer's adaptations of fantasy television, including the *Quatermass* serials, and of related marketing. This is followed by analysis of the hybrid influence of sf tropes within Hammer's gothic horror.

Moving to eastern Europe, the next two studies challenge assumptions about the subject within the frame, in relation to cinema's socio-political milieus.

Firstly, Jason Merrill analyses, among others, the Czech films, *Daisies* (1966), persuasively read as sf, and the more speculative *The End of August at the Hotel Ozone* (1966). The films' metaphoric, nihilistic scenes of female violence and destruction are positioned, using Judith Butler's work on gender as performance, against directives concerning gender roles under Communism. Merrill concludes that western film theory such as Laura Mulvey's oft-cited work may be 'successfully applied to non-Hollywood films', but will prove rewarding if it is mediated by an understanding of context.

Next, Evan Torner interrogates an interplanetary quest narrative to illuminate an unintended bias in the representation of race in the East German/Polish film *Silent Star* (1960). The multicultural ambitions of this film, featuring a diverse cast, relate to a political and cultural context in which "'utopian realism" [. . .] encouraged an optimistic identification with the proletarian reality'. Through a discussion of pre-production, actors' pay, and filmic strategies, Torner concludes that the film exemplifies a systemic, 'ambivalent position on race'.

French sf films, as Fritzsche notes, have appeared individually within the canon of sf studies. The experimental and fragmented nature of France's science fiction output is treated as integral to its history in Daniel Tron's 'Looking for French Science Fiction Cinema'. Tron cites Méliès, Truffaut, Godard, Resnais and Marker, the influence of the magazine *Métal Hurlant*, and the film work of three of its artists, notably Jean Girard (Moebius). Jeunet and Caro's *Delicatessen* (1991) and *The City of Lost Children* (1992) are analysed, to reveal 'post-apocalyptic, science fantasy hybridization' and the continuation of earlier sf's 'experimental', 'surrealist' and 'noir-metaphysical' techniques.

The next two chapters consider the capacity of sf to draw on and transform national cultural themes. In examining Irish sf cinema, Katie Moylan draws on critical definitions of sf while placing films in their socio-economic context, to argue that the 'intersections of science fiction conventions and recognizable Irish narrative themes [. . .] rework and challenge traditional onscreen representations of "Irishness"'. *Earthbound* (2013), a film about a character who believes himself to be an alien, 'locates its critique in its focus on post-Celtic Tiger Ireland'.

Raffaella Baccolini's chapter illuminates films that are unlikely to be widely known outside Italy. She classifies the limited output produced in what 'is not considered an appropriate, native genre' into films 'for the domestic market, which are often comedies, farces and satires' or 'more serious, adventurous dramas' for export. *Nirvana* (1997), a cyberpunk film about a 'virtual reality game programmer' and a sentient game avatar, 'succeeds in combining authentic science fiction themes with characterizations that are typical of Italian comedy'. *Fascists on Mars* (2006) is closely discussed in relation to satire and to discourses of masculinity.

Although positioned under 'North America', Robyn Citizen's chapter is among

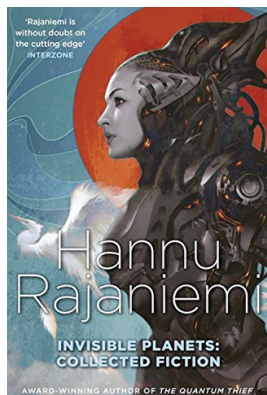
those in the book that cover several regions. Citizen first casts revealing new light on black female representation in sf films that include *Alien vs. Predator* (2004) and *Children of Men* (2006). The study examines the extent to which sf from American, British or other national contexts offers the potential 'to recast black femininity in new terms'. The analysis moves from the mainstream to the 'avant-garde science fiction film *Les Saignantes*' (Cameroon, 2005), a film that sets 'female power' at its narrative centre.

Opening the section on South America, Mariano Paz considers Argentina's *Goodbye Dear Moon* (2005) as revealing 'the tensions and dichotomies' of national politics in the 1990s, and a critique of 'the current postcolonial and globalized' international context through its use of sf, comedy, 'sarcasm and irony'. This study defines Argentinian sf as 'intellectual or speculative', and utilizes methodologies of 'hybridity and hybridization' from Homi Bhabha and Néstor García Canclini to interrogate the way in which *Goodbye Dear Moon* combines Hollywood conventions with indigenous 'motifs'.

This is followed by Alfredo Suppia's exploration of Brazilian sf, including 'dystopian political allegories' and 'ecological speculations' during the 1970s–80s. After a period of slump and recovery, digital sf children's film *Cassiopeia* (1996) broke new ground, while *Our Home* (2010) linked science fiction to spiritualism, rendering sf 'more familiar' for a domestic audience. The study highlights 'two central tendencies' towards parodic and serious science fiction in Brazil.

References to accessible production tools and the convergent distribution properties of the internet are threaded throughout the collection. Fritzsche points to 'a digital, neoliberal culture' as a factor behind an international increase in sf whilst Pawel Frelik highlights the impact of digitality on global sf, encompassing low-budget 'paracinema', 'mockbusters' in America, 'the revitalization of sf cinemas' in Spain, Mexico and India, 'the resurgence of the short [sf] film', and fan culture.

This collection contributes significantly to the growing body of work on world sf, extending the terms of reference for dialogue within this field. As a minor point, perhaps more studies on national cinemas that are less well-covered in other texts could have been incorporated, but that is not to detract from the strengths of the book. Instead, it represents a diverse, theoretically astute yet accessible selection. Its readers are likely to seek out the films under discussion and view them with newly informed understanding.



Hannu Rajaniemi, *Invisible Planets: Collected Fiction* (Gollancz, 2016, 256 pp, £14.99)

Reviewed by Jeremy Brett (Texas A&M University)

Finnish-born author Hannu Rajaniemi might perhaps be described as ‘the poet of the transhuman’. He is by no means the first author to chronicle the meshing of humanity and technology into a grander, more expansive evolution, but his ability to develop this high concept into thoughtful stories written in deep emotional language, certainly rank him as among the best of these. Rajniemi’s work can be challenging –

stories of posthumanism, after all, are often driven by far futures of such dizzying otherness that they risk leaving the reader free of any strong sense of emotional or intellectual context – but his fiction is grounded in real human feeling.

The majority of Rajaniemi’s stories in this collection involve humans transmuted through technology into new forms or technology that has taken on anthropomorphized or other natural forms. In ‘The Server and the Dragon’, an AI is literally born from a seed launched millennia ago by an exploratory spaceship which then grows into a parent that, feeling the primordial human urge to create, births its own pocket universe as a mother does a child:

The server cradled its cosmic child [. . .] primordial chaos reigned on the other side, a porridge-like plasma of quarks and gluons. In an eyeblink it clumped into hadrons [. . .] the baby had its own arrow of time, its own fast heartbeat, young and hungry.

The server encounters a ‘dragon’, the avatar for a collection of sentient data that takes joy in flying free as a dragon does and which seduces the server with the temptation of transformation. This is a gracefully written story, poetically blending technological development with organic metaphor.

The server cannot change its nature because of an ancient law made by its creators forbidding self-replication. The threat to human society of technology learning to reproduce is a common theme in Rajniemi’s stories. ‘Deus Ex Homine’ presents a chaotic future where tech run rampant has transformed machine-bearing humanity into gods and superheroes. The world is torn by the so-called ‘godplague’ – ‘a volition-bonding, recursively self-improving and self-replicating program. A genie that comes to you and makes its home in the machinery around you and tells you that do as thou wilt shall be the whole of the law. It fucks you up, but its sexy as hell’. Submolecular machines infect humans and cause them to give birth to new generations of human/AI hybrids. It’s a

natural extension of the age-old Frankenstein story where the created returns to haunt (and, in this case, irrevocably alter) the creator.

'Elegy for a Young Elk' also explores the limits of an Earth where intelligent technology merges with humanity. Kosonen is a 'stayer', a human who has remained on Earth when most of the population has entered a Kurzweil-like singularity and become god-like. He is assigned by a transhuman who resembles, and may in fact be, his wife, to infiltrate a living, AI plague-infested city protected by an almost literal firewall and which is populated by moving, breathing buildings and cars that attack like animals, and contact his son Esa, who has become lost to his technological omnipotence. As Esa says, 'You don't know what it's like [. . .] the plague does everything you want. It gives you things you don't even know you want. It turns the world soft. And sometimes it tears it part for you. You think a thought, and things break. You can't help it'. The new singularity is terrifying in its power and reach, but Rajaniemi preserves a moment of hope, when Kosonen is able to pass out of the city by presenting to it his sadness, his jealousies, his disappointments – his human nature is his ticket to freedom.

'The Jugaad Cathedral' details a world a little closer to us in time, but where much of life is lived in online virtual reality communities, notably Dwarfcraft, a fantasy world where people not only take up quests and fight monsters but build mighty structures like the cathedral of the story's title. Meanwhile, in the 'real world' many lives are governed by apps like F+ Friendipity, which charts, predicts and manipulates social interactions, and worldwide computer networks are heavily regulated by governments attempting to control the flow of information. Only in virtual spaces can people be free as the perception of what qualifies as reality evolves. Cathedral-builder Raija snaps at her friend Kev, 'you'd rather hang out with *real* people, and do *real* things? I was going to *tell* you, you idiot. I was going to tell you how real it is. Now fuck off. I have a megabeast to kill'. Raija's cathedral, electronically-based as it is, is an example of a new form of reality and of immortality: 'It's like building pyramids: it doesn't have to make sense. It will be here as long as the Web is – so maybe forever. Even if we don't finish it, somebody will find it, one day, and wonder what it's for'.

The charming story 'His Master's Voice' is also optimistic in the face of technological advance. The heroes are an intelligent and artificially created dog and cat, who miss their master, from whose childhood memories they were created. They go on a quest for him, in the tale of another future where technology has outstripped humanity, yet one where the traditional loyalty of a dog for his master triumphs. And in the long story 'Skywalker of Earth', Rajaniemi tells yet again of humans to whom technology has granted incredible powers, but this time through the lens of an elaborate pulpy space opera satire, complete with a star-spanning villain named Soane who speaks in 1920s slang and lacks only an elaborate moustache to twirl. He is opposed by the aging hero/former villain

Dupres – who can explode entire suns – and in the end Dupres’ granddaughter defeats Soane and builds a new starship with which to explore the universe.

Not all of the stories in this collection involve explorations of technology and the transhuman, however. In a change of mood and theme, Rajaniemi gives us several stories involving the mythology of his native Finland. Among these is ‘The Oldest Game’, which has a folkloric mood to it, where a man on the verge of suicide engages in a drinking contest with Pellonpekko, the god of crops and the field, and outdrinks death itself. And the fairy tale ‘Fisher of Men’ presents a siren-like figure who seeks to mate with and marry mortal men.

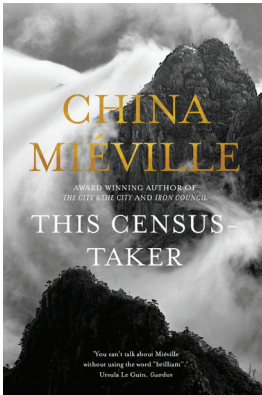
The collection has its share of love stories as well. Perhaps the saddest story in the book is ‘Shibuya no Love’, where the core human needs of love and sex are filtered through technologies in which people’s relationships are built and experienced in the mind rather than physical reality. A depressing falseness exists in this popular form of e-love. In contrast to ‘The Jugaad Cathedral’, virtual reality is no substitute for the solid and the real. The collection’s most surreal story by far is ‘Paris, in Love’, in which the city of Paris itself is anthropomorphized to the point where it falls in love with the young tourist Antti. The story is rich with clever imagery, and, given that Paris acts the part of a spurned lover so well that the city transports itself to Antti’s home in Finland to be with him, it may be the ultimate chronicle of the power of love to transcend boundaries.

The collection includes several technological experiments made by Rajaniemi himself, exploring the ways in which texts and storytelling may evolve as technology and the ways in which we absorb information change over time. In ‘Snow White Is Dead’ and the introduction to it, he introduces the concept of ‘neurofiction’. Rajaniemi and mathematician Sam Halliday collaborated on a project designed to test brain-computer interaction by producing a story that changes depending on the reader’s cerebral response (as read by an Emotive EPOC headset); according to Rajaniemi, ‘the story starts by throwing verbal images of life and death at the reader. A machine-learning algorithm tries to determine if the reader’s response to each subsequent scene is closer to one or the other’. The result is a series of possible paths through the story through which the computer guides the brain depending on its reactions. Rajaniemi chose to use fairy tales as the basis for the experimental story, based on that genre’s reliance on simple archetypes and binary choices of action. The story as published here is the one based on the most common paths chosen by readers’ brains; what is particularly interesting, besides the textual development itself, are the ways in which Snow White is revealed by Rajaniemi as less a character and more a template on which readers may imprint their own narrative choices. It’s a fascinating method of giving the reader a degree of agency in textual construction

The collection ends with another literary experiment, this time involving microfiction. In the fall of 2008, Rajaniemi was asked by New Media Scotland to

be its 'Twitterer-in-Residence', and for one month wrote a daily story for NMS' Twitter feed using the 140-character limit. Rajaniemi supplies here twenty-three of these literary tweets. The experiment is a testament to Rajaniemi's broad creativity as well as an exciting test of the imaginative ability of the reader to fill in gaps where detail is necessarily scarce. The power of this type of fiction (the best of which, Rajaniemi notes, 'combines the ephemeral, immediate nature of social media with the haiku-like precision of microfiction') lies in what is *not* written; that is, what vast universes can the reader construct in their mind out of the simple matter laid before them?

In a time where readers (and moviegoers, gamers, fanfic writers and other media consumers) are less inclined to be passive and to desire more creative input in the development of narratives they love, neurofiction and microfiction are interesting platforms for exploring the ways in which readers move from the passive recipient of text into active shapers of narrative. This is of a piece with much of Rajaniemi's short fiction, where humans have changed their worlds through technology so profoundly that they become godlike world-shapers and wielders of unimagined power.



China Miéville, *This Census-Taker: A Novella* (Picador, 2016, 160pp, £12.99)

Reviewed by Carl Freedman (Louisiana State University)

Picking up a new book by China Miéville, one now expects, as a matter of course, that it will be something different from anything that this author has done before. Prior to *This Census-Taker*, Miéville had published nine novels – or ten, if one counts the haunting, underrated novella *The Tain* (2002) – and, though each unmistakably bears his stamp, no two of them are

very similar to one another. The sort of radically new direction that most good novelists are lucky to manage once or twice in a career, and that many never manage at all, is something that Miéville has managed in book after book after book.

Yet even the reader thoroughly familiar with the entire Miéville oeuvre to date may find *This Census-Taker* even *more* different, in some ways, than expected. This is particularly true of the indeterminacy of its setting. There is no novelist at work today for whom the creation of setting and environment is more important than for Miéville; and generally, in his fiction, we have a pretty clear idea of where we are. *King Rat* (1998) and *Kraken* (2010) are set in London, while *Un Lun Dun* (2007), as its title implies, is set in an ontologically parallel city that

is London's counterpart and negation. Bas-Lag is an invented world (but not, evidently, a planet) about which we learn a great deal in *Perdido Street Station* (2000), *The Scar* (2002) and *Iron Council* (2004), though we suspect that the author knows much more about this world than he has chosen to reveal in those three long novels. It is not possible precisely to locate on any map the twin cities Beszel and Ul Qoma, in which *The City & The City* (2009) is set, but they certainly seem to be somewhere in Eastern Europe. *Embassytown* (2011) is set on the planet Arieka, located near the edge of the known universe.

But where is *This Census-Taker* set? No completely clear answer is forthcoming; and, indeed, those who enjoy Miéville's fiction mainly for his lucidly detailed and three-dimensional world-building – so that, for instance, we can hardly believe that Bas-Lag exists 'only' on paper and in the author's imagination – may not find this latest work a favourite, at least at first. Yet *This Census-Taker* has other strengths. It is set in a town (unnamed, though sometimes called 'the bridgetown') that is bifurcated by a bridge over a deep canyon and that extends, on either side of the canyon, up a rugged mountain; most of the inhabitants live on the relatively level ground, but a few live high up in the mountains. We see the (unnamed) protagonist, who is also the narrator, mostly as a child who lives in one of the more isolated mountain dwellings. Details of the social life of this environment are sparse, but it seems to be a rustic society that functions on a fairly low level of material production and consumption – and yet that also exists in close proximity (whether geographical, temporal, or both) to social formations on a higher level of economic development. This bleak setting – an impoverished lifeworld of small agriculture, artisanal crafts, and petty commerce – is delineated for the most part without overtly fantastic or science-fictional departures from the normal assumptions of our own mundane environment. Yet there are exceptions, hints of magic – and one very strong hint in particular. The protagonist's father, an artisan, earns his living by cutting metal in order to make keys for paying customers. But these are not keys that open the sort of locks you and I know; they are, for instance, the 'keys' to love, to strength, or to the future.

The scarcity of detail and the general parabolic manner of *This Census-Taker* – Kafka and Calvino are evident among the precursors of this text – might tempt one to say that the action of the story could take place anywhere. Yet that would be profoundly wrong, and a betrayal of Miéville's unswervingly Marxist commitment to historical specificity and, particularly (as *The Scar* and *The City & The City* make especially clear), to what Trotsky theorized as the law of combined and uneven development. In *This Census-Taker*, it is clear – and important – that the economic underdevelopment of the setting is no 'natural' or spontaneous phenomenon, but rather the result of large social forces that we only barely glimpse around the edges of the text. Trotsky's fundamental insight – which was revised and expanded by such later scholars as the

Guyanese revolutionary Walter Rodney – can be expressed by saying that *underdevelop* is a transitive verb (cf. Rodney's most famous work, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* [1972]). Social formations do not just 'happen' to be underdeveloped in comparison with other, richer sectors of the world capitalist system; on the contrary, underdevelopment is a dynamic, system-wide process that works to impoverish some societies while (typically) enriching others. In *The Scar*, Miéville delineates this process in considerable detail with regard to the relations between the economically and militarily dominant city-state of New Crobuzon and other, weaker social formations of Bas-Lag. Though far less detail is forthcoming in *This Census-Taker*, it is possible to identify at least one big factor that is partly responsible for the environment's bleakness: war. The bridgetown has recently suffered military ravages – from both external and civil war, it appears – and is currently under some sort of external administrative supervision. One might say that the underdeveloped town suffers from violent *trauma*.

The social trauma that partly structures the underdeveloped town 'rhymes' with a (by no means unrelated) individual trauma that gives rise to the main narrative of the text. Here too detail is sparse and uncertain. The story begins with the (probably) nine-year-old protagonist running down the mountain, screaming that his mother has killed his father. But he soon realizes that he has things backwards: it was actually his father who killed (or somehow got rid of) his mother. It transpires that the father, while capable of appearing normal (if gruff), is a violent sociopath who regularly beats animals (and probably also people) to death and tosses their corpses down an effectively bottomless pit. Understandably terrified, the boy seeks help from the street urchins of the town and also from the respectable adults who staff the amateur security apparatus that is the closest thing the bridgetown has to a police force. The adults are sympathetic, and suspect that there may be something in the boy's claims; but their makeshift investigation leaves them without the sort of hard evidence that could justify removing the boy from his father's custody. The other children are even more sympathetic, but – for reasons never made entirely clear – are also unable, ultimately, to help. Eventually, however, the boy is rescued by the census-taker of the title. While in town on professional duty, he meets the boy, recognizes his talents, and recruits him for his own organization. The novella itself is feigned to be the work of the protagonist as an adult, writing down his memories in an attempt – which is very far from completely successful – to figure out what happened to him as a child.

The sparsity and uncertainty of detail in *This Census-Taker*, on both the social and individual levels, are part of an interesting formal experiment. The clear and solid world-building for which *Perdido Street Station* is justly popular depends on a kind of epistemological security and confidence; if, after reading that novel, we know almost as much about New Crobuzon as about Dickensian

London, it is necessarily through a narrative strategy of virtually Dickensian omniscience. The realism of the nineteenth-century novel (and, as I have suggested elsewhere, the method of Bas-Lag novels can be understood as the realism of an alternate universe) depends upon a fictional all-knowingness that no individual possesses in the real world. In the real world, our understanding is always partial – at best – and often downright wrong. In this way, many of the innovations of modernism that reflect an epistemological uncertainty – as typified, for instance, in much of the work of Samuel Beckett – are more ‘realistic’ than realism itself.

So it is with *This Census-Taker*. Reminiscent in many ways of Beckett’s own work, the novella sacrifices the detailed world-building for which the author is famous in favour of a persistent indeterminacy, an indeterminacy that expresses the maimed, fractured perception with which the situation of *double* trauma has left the protagonist. Years later, writing in a situation of what appears to be relative safety (though perhaps of sharply restricted freedom), he can never completely make sense of things: ‘Thinking my own past self is mostly a mystery story’. He thinks his mother was killed but cannot be absolutely certain; it is, maybe, just possible that she merely went away. He is not sure how old he was during the main action of the story. Most (but not all) proper names elude him. He cannot decide whether he should refer to himself in the first, the third, or even the second person. It is no wonder that the manuscript he has left us lacks chapter titles and even chapter numbers. This is not realism, not even the realism of a wholly invented environment. But, as Brecht might remind us, it is all too much like actual reality.



Martyn Amos and Ra Page, eds. *Beta-Life: Stories from an A-Life Future* (Comma, 2015, 400pp, £12.99)

Reviewed by Jennifer Harwood-Smith (Trinity College Dublin)

Beta-Life is an anthology of stories set in 2070 whose ambition ultimately pays off. In their introduction, Amos and Page declare the golden era of futuristic sf to be behind us, as technology and society have become too complex to be easily predicted. The anthology’s major strength is that it faces not only this challenge, but also

the greatest problem of futuristic fiction, namely that it dates much faster than present-day fiction. Perhaps the most interesting aspect of the collection is the collaboration between the nineteen science fiction writers and the scientists who helped inspire their stories. Each scientist provides an afterword which explains

the real-world science of the story; this not only helps to contextualize the story, but also provides a fascinating insight into how each writer approached the future potential of their chosen technology. While some stories are stronger than others, there are no weak entries in the collection, and each adds to the anthology, producing a coherent body of work, and certainly some of the most interesting futuristic fiction of recent years.

'The Sayer of the Sooth' by Martin Bedford is something of a risk, as its premise is Bedford's great-grandson reading the story from this collection, a framing which could have come across as contrived. However, the tale's strength is the interaction between the story Bedford is supposed to have written and his descendant's reaction to it. The interweaving narratives, and the potential for the great-grandson to overwrite the ending, make the story more complex than we might otherwise suspect. Furthermore, the corrections the great-grandson makes to the technological knowledge of the time are at once informed, snarky and genuinely entertaining.

'Swarm' by Robin Yassin-Kassab explores a future in which nanotechnology can not only prevent aging, but can also monitor and shape human behaviour. It is arguably the most pessimistic story of the collection, in which nanotechnology is used for assassination and, in one instance, to make a mistress more pleasant. It is technology without regulation and, from the glimpse of this 2070, is very much a dystopia. By contrast, 'Growing Skyscrapers' by Adam Marek is a more balanced story, mingling the wonders of growing organic skyscrapers with the persistence of poverty and squatting; Marek's 2070 may have overwhelmingly beautiful constructions, but there are still those who will not benefit from it.

'The Loki Variations' by Andy Hedgecock and 'Everyone Says' by Stuart Evers focus on the immersive effects of, respectively, gaming technology and reality TV on the human consciousness. The former, written as a report from multiple sources, tells the story of how a video game helped create a revolution, and much like *World War Z*, its format is both convincing and engaging. In many ways, it is minimalist storytelling – much like computer games sometimes need to be – but with a powerful impact on the reader. The latter takes reality television to a new level, with the ability to form mental links to anyone willing to open their minds and lives to the general public. This full immersion in another's life, at a cost, becomes more than just entertainment, but a lived experience.

'A Swarm of Living Robojects Around Us' by Adam Roberts is an intriguing look at the ethics of imbuing robotics household devices with artificial intelligence. Roberts uses an extremely casual writing style to great effect in this story; the reader is drawn in and engaged in the mysterious death in a house full of artificial intelligences. Roberts also makes effective use of the infodump, and the story has the best features of all speculative science fiction, namely complexity and entertainment.

'Luftpause' by Annie Kirby explores the implications of using pheromones to

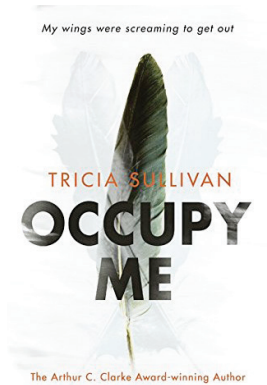
determine not only feelings but also personality traits. Kirby's semi-dystopian world where pheromones control one's destiny is chilling, and an interesting interpretation of the research on termite pheromones that the afterword by Seth Bullock describes. Similarly, 'The Quivering Woods' by Margaret Wilkinson explores the psychological effect and uses of artificial simulations, with an interesting twist at the end.

'Certain Measures' by Sean O'Brien suggests a more realistic and chilling version of Asimov's psychohistory, where crowd simulations allow the government to control social narratives for their own gain. While this has become something of a clichéd trope, O'Brien's treatment is both fresh and interesting without stretching credulity. By contrast, 'Blurred Lines' by Julian Gough is a love story of shared minds; based on the concept of brain-to-brain communication, it is an emotional and tender journey through a relationship across continents and consciousness. Similarly, at the heart of Sarah Schofield's 'The Bactogarden', set within a world of synthetic biology, in which fungi and cultures can be manipulated at will, from building repair to designer cuisine, lies a touching story of toxic friendship and heartbreak. Alternately, Zoe Lambert's 'Keynote at the European Conference on Artificial Life, 2070' explores an illegal experiment in the creation of a collective consciousness across siblings. Lambert's story, told from the viewpoint of one of the experimental subjects, is both shocking and believable in the fine tradition of the mad scientist, with just enough world-building dropped in to show how the world has changed.

'The Familiar' by Lucy Caldwell examines the use of robot avatars to assist disabled children. Caldwell's exploration of the concept through the eyes of a child allows her to demonstrate both the personal and the political implications, with a touching honesty. Similarly, 'The Longhand Option' by Dinesh Allirajah is an intriguing investigation not only of the kind of robots which could be developed in the future, but also of how children's education and experiences can change with it, all embedded in a moderately dysfunctional but loving family. Allirajah's story is perhaps the most fun and optimistic of the collection, using caste characters skilfully. In that regard, Frank Cottrell-Boyce's 'Bruno Wins!', examining both flock technology and the hype surrounding technological innovation, features an expert touch of light humour.

'Making Sandcastles' by Claire Dean is one of the shortest stories in the collection, but it is no less impactful for its brevity. In a world where anything can be fabricated, even organs, the world is still dystopian and controlled by corporations. 'Fully Human' by K.J. Orr explores the potentially devastating impact of programming the brain. A harrowing tale, Orr investigates the worst case scenario, and the impact it has on those carrying out the programming. Joanna Quinn's 'The War of All Against All' explores the potential of using human minds to analyse data, and the dangers of doing so in a totalitarian government. Lastly, 'A Brief History of Transience' by Toby Litt is unusual in formatting terms

alone, as it is one long paragraph. It is a fascinating examination of the collapse of consciousness, and its form suits the content. In addition, it is fitting to end the collection with the final closing of a mind, in a creative and interesting context. Overall, *Beta-Life* not only accomplishes its goal of introducing readers to potential futures, but is also a strong collection from writers who not only understand their subject but also their craft.



Tricia Sullivan, *Occupy Me* (Gollancz, 2016, 272pp, £16.99)

Reviewed by Nick Hubble (Brunel University London)

Someone has been cutting ontological corners in Tricia Sullivan's latest novel, which traces the attempts of an angel, Pearl, to deal with the fallout of the cosmic credit crunch while saving the threat to the future of humanity posed by Bethany Collins 'because her boyfriend doesn't satisfy her sexually'. We first encounter Pearl, working as a flight attendant for a transatlantic airline, in the act of throwing a hijacker off a plane. This circumstance is enlivened by the facts that the plane is cruising at 32,000 feet at the time, and that Pearl gets sucked out of the cabin along with the hijacker when she inadvertently tears a hole in the fuselage. Desperate to catch and save the man plummeting beneath her, Pearl leans into higher dimensional space, or HD as it is abbreviated throughout the novel, in order to come out below him, before spreading her wings and soaring back up to him. However, at the point of opening her arms to catch him, she is engulfed by a blast of fire and the man and his mysterious briefcase suddenly turn into a predatory, giant pterodactyl. A burning Pearl escapes by diving under the surface of the sea. Thereafter, radical indeterminacy permeates the novel, which switches location between Long Island, Scotland and HD, as Pearl chases after the briefcase, which we come to realize also somehow contains her, even if, as at one point, it is disappearing down the throat of another dinosaur, which itself is sinking helplessly into a Cretaceous swamp. This sounds madcap and zany as Sullivan freely acknowledges through Pearl:

We were in a briefcase in a spinosaurus on the ocean of prediction.
We thought we were small but we were very, very large. We thought
we are large but that wasn't right, either.

It's like Horton Hears a Hoo.

Yet the zaniness is not an end in itself; it simultaneously permeates and is

contained within a wider metaphysical framework in a manner which one might have said is not dissimilar to the best work of Philip K. Dick if it were not for the fact that Sullivan is on record as categorically rejecting such comparisons.

The problem with linking women writers to better-known male counterparts in this manner is that it suggests that critical legitimacy is only ever awarded on patriarchal terms. But Sullivan explodes that argument in *Occupy Me* by shifting the terrain of the debate to a completely different order of both magnitude and meaning. It is not just that what she is doing might playfully be described as feminist Dick, it goes beyond that as Pearl notes at one point when seemingly confronted by the impossibility of the briefcase being too heavy to lift: 'It felt like somebody was pulling my cock and I don't even have a cock'. This feeling is not the recognition of a female lack but the prelude to Pearl's characteristic mode of interaction with the matter of the Universe by means of bracing herself against it so that the force she exerts on it equals the force it exerts on her. Earlier in the novel, a character helpfully identifies this approach as 'Isometrics', which is a static form of exercise and training for strength-based athletic disciplines. Here, though it becomes a means for Pearl to transcend the detached status of an individual sentient being by connecting materially with the universe:

As always when I lift, the world parts like a pair of lips and I can see its language emerging from the mouth of the cosmos, I glimpse realities that are folded up in dimensions of where I am. It's a rush better than flying, better than sex.

The recurring imagery of *Occupy Me* is yonic rather than phallic; concerned with opening oneself to possibility rather than trying to take advantage of it. When doused with crude oil, Pearl does not just drink it: 'I took it up my snatch. Into my ears. My follicles'. Encountering eggs made of all the lost waveforms in the universe, Pearl weighs them in her hands and embraces their materiality: 'I put the eggs up inside myself, one at a time. I felt their mass pressing against my pelvic bone and it took some concentration to hold them in'. Not only does Sullivan deconstruct the privileging of presence over absence central to the western metaphysical tradition but she moves beyond it into a different realm of permeable boundaries. Her relationship to the briefcase and the HD it contains is described as that of lovers whispering in the dark, when either or both might say: 'I missed you. You fit so nicely in my hole. Thank you'. The traditional (male) critical subject-object relationship with the world has no purchase here.

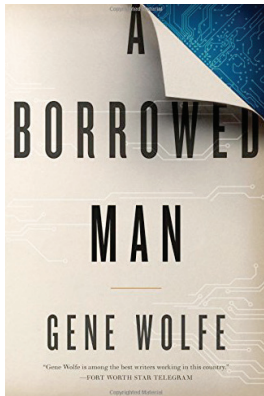
Occupy Me is the twelfth novel of a writing career spanning over twenty years and including such successes as winning the Arthur C. Clarke Award for *Dreaming in Smoke* (1999) as well as being shortlisted for both *Maul* (2003) and *Lightborn* (2010). However, such a brief summary conceals the reality of an ongoing struggle for recognition and periods out of contract and having to write

on spec. This is partly a question of the relative lack of recognition for women sf writers. Indeed, it was an interview with Sullivan which led to the 2010 focus of the *Vector* editorial blog on 'SF by Women', in response to an extended sequence of male writers winning the Clarke from shortlists with typically only one female writer on them. But, as Sullivan wrote frankly about it in a post on her blog last year ('Who Walks Away', August 2015), her own struggles reflect a wider problem of sf itself and the publishing industry surrounding it. While she 'wanted science fiction to be a literature of possibilities, of imagination, of human progress, not just a collection of tropes', publishers wanted an 'exciting, streamlined, grabby kind of thing' that was easy to get into. Regardless of what Sullivan wrote, though, and however garlanded it might be, it did not sell and thus, in order to gain those sales, she wrote (as Valerie Leith) a fantasy trilogy at the turn of the millennium and, more recently, the YA novel, *Shadowboxer* (2014). Each time this was seen as an 'abandonment' of sf, while the subsequent novel – *Maul* after the fantasy books and now *Occupy Me* – is always the 'return' to sf. Against this imposed narrative, Sullivan argues on her blog, 'It is not a return because I never left SF. Science fiction abandoned me. Science fiction pushed me out the door. Science fiction left me begging for scraps'. This highlights a structural problem with the genre in that its tightly-policed definitional boundaries have acted as a constraint on exactly that openness to the universe which Sullivan is trying to articulate and which one might have thought should have been at the heart of what sf is.

Of course, the nature of sf has shifted significantly in the last 10-15 years, most obviously with respect to the way it has become permeated with fantasy. A useful illustration of this can be seen by relating *Occupy Me* to two other recent novels deploying the trope of angels – Aliette de Bodard's *The House of Shattered Wings* (2015) and Justina Robson's *Glorious Angels* (2015). These novels share a feminist rejection of patriarchal orders in favour of a more receptive stance to the materiality of the world and taken collectively they demonstrate the full spectrum of the conjoined genre of sf and fantasy (sff). While *The House of Shattered Wings* revolves around the use of magic, this did not stop it winning the BSFA Best Novel Award. In *Glorious Angels*, the magic turns out to be largely the product of scientific technology. In *Occupy Me* everything that happens has a science-inspired rationale but it often functions in practice like magic. These three novels map out some of the parameters of an sff genre in which women writers are resolutely not asking for anyone's approval or even their acceptance. As Sullivan says, 'I don't beg. I don't want your scraps. I go and hunt down my own food' and she describes *Occupy Me* as 'SF on my own terms'.

Unsurprisingly, therefore, the novel makes few concessions to easy reading but fuses literary and sf devices with an unyielding pace of narration. As readers, we do not always know what is going on or even which character is narrating.

The justification provided in the text for this is that ‘entropy loves order because more order burns everything down faster’. So order, with its hierarchies and binary classifications, is rejected in favour of continuous everyday intervention ‘against the grain of time’. This is not the abstract theoretical formulation that it might seem but a reference to a constant and necessary component of human society, the ‘care-givers’ to whom Sullivan dedicates the novel. For what is care other a constant war of attrition against sickness, hunger, loneliness and despair? It is this caring behaviour that unites the positive characters in the novel from Pearl, herself, to Alison, ‘Schrödinger’s veterinarian’, and Akele, the night watchman at Dubowski’s Environmental Reclamation. The defining feature of this caring is strength: the isometric strength to resist when ‘the ineffable is bearing down on you as if to crush you beneath its casual, steel-shod heel’. Ultimately this is a novel about the giving and receiving of care in all its forms. *Occupy Me* invites us to enter it, but the only way we can fully do that is by simultaneously opening ourselves up to it.



Gene Wolfe, *A Borrowed Man* (Tor, 2015, 300 pp, £11.99)

Reviewed by Carl Kears (King’s College London)

Gene Wolfe’s *A Borrowed Man* is a science fiction mystery novel set in a future in which clones exist. The protagonist and narrator, Ern E. Smithe, is a replica (a ‘reclone’) of a mystery writer who lived a hundred and fifty years before. The voice that leads us through the narrative, then, is the personality of a deceased writer that has been uploaded into a clone. Smithe the reclone is a piece of property. He belongs to the Spice

Grove Public Library, where he lives on a shelf in the Fiction department – a shelf that seems to be much like a small and comfortable apartment. Clones may be checked out if the interested browser has authorization. If they remain unchecked on the shelf for a substantial amount of time, however, they are deemed defunct and, soon after, incinerated.

Colette Coldbrook, a wealthy patron, takes Smithe from the Library, revealing that her murdered father owned a physical copy of *Murder on Mars*, a book written by the human E.A. Smithe. That book, she believes, contains a hidden secret, a key that will open a doorway to the mysteries surrounding her father’s death and, moreover, help her unlock a trove of immense family wealth. As E.A. Smithe later remarks, ‘motivations [. . .] The reasons why people act. Motivations are always important, and I haven’t been thinking enough about them’. Wolfe’s novel suggests that we, its readers, have not been thinking about

them enough either. Colette, the catalyst for Smithe's journey from the Library to various kinds of other worlds, has 'motivations', but, as we are in a Gene Wolfe novel, the desires and wants she makes explicit are there for us to reasonably doubt.

A Borrowed Man – the 'borrowed' clone of the title, as well as the book that you hold in your hand (and, in many ways, this is a book *about books in a post-book world*) – would form a good introduction to Wolfe's writings. It moves along at a steaming pace and its narrative is perhaps less circuitous or labyrinthine than some of his earlier masterworks. However, *A Borrowed Man* does begin with what could be perceived as characteristic Wolfean elements:

FROM THE SPICE GROVE PUBLIC LIBRARY

Murder is not always such a terrible thing. It is bad, sure, sometimes awfully, awfully bad. But only sometimes. I have been lying here on my shelf trying to figure out why I wrote all this, and I think maybe that is it. The law is not perfect.

You kept reading! All right, here we go.

In these opening lines, we are greeted by a variety of easy-to-overlook signatures such as 'not always', 'sometimes', 'maybe' and 'not perfect'. Here is something about the 'motivations' behind the book we are about to read and it lies in a certain person's – or personality's – view of an imperfect law. What law is this? Why is this narrator so unsure about things and, moreover, why is he/she/it so surprised that you kept reading? Who, or what, is the narrator and why is he/she/it 'lying' on a 'shelf'? The answer to the latter follows immediately, but it only intensifies our need to know more: 'I am really a young guy behind an older guy's face; you must understand that or you will not understand half the stuff I am going to tell. I was a mystery writer, a good one. You must know about the truckloads of his memories I am carrying from all his brain scans; so please keep them in mind all the time, just like I have to'.

Wolfe's devoted readership will be inclined to feel assured that they are in the company of another unreliable or multi-personality narrator akin to the famous Severian of the Guild from *The Book of the New Sun*. But Smithe is not Severian, particularly where mentality and style are concerned, and *A Borrowed Man* is a distinct work of its own. On the one hand, the novel is an absorbing tale about the rich, striking and tragic Colette. Smithe and Colette will team up to offer their thoughts on the state of a world in which the population has decreased considerably. Flying above 'New America' with Colette, the clone-narrator remarks that 'this is a lovely world [. . .] People are wonderfully fortunate to be born now. I remember a world whose sky was gray with smoke or black with dust'. The early stages of the novel lure us in with such observations as we,

like Smithe, are absorbed by this changed world full of screens, assistant 'bots' (humanoid machines that seem to be on order for those who can afford them, for the purposes of administration or housekeeping), 'eephones', and enamoured by Colette. Things change, but we, of course, are not 'thinking enough' about 'motivations' in these early, whimsical stages. So the reader, much like Smithe, feel the lies, the deceit – some from Colette, some from the world in which the book is set – when they come.

On the other hand, *A Borrowed Man* is a vision of a future in which the experience of reading and writing has altered and, in doing so, has transformed the world itself. Wolfe creates a clean and orderly textual landscape where libraries are dotted through unobtrusive cities and robots clean big, safe, fresh, quiet houses, but where physical books are a thing of the past:

Colette nodded and waved her hand, leading me to a couple of stones about a hundred steps away. I dusted off both with my handkerchief, which got me a really great smile, and I sat on mine after she had sat down.

Opening her shaping bag, she took out the plastic-bound book she had shown me before. 'Books like this are almost obsolete now. Did you know it?'

'The librarians have told me so. I would hate to believe it.'

'You must, because it's true.'

At the very core of this novel is a fleshing out of an idea Wolfe expressed in his essay, 'Books in *The Book of the New Sun*' (1984): 'Two hundred years ago, Dr. Johnson said that a man would turn over half a library to make one book. Today, no one could possibly turn over half of any one of the many thousands of larger libraries on Earth. In the future the task of turning over large libraries will have to be left to computers; and those of us who have had trouble getting to sleep, as I do, can amuse ourselves with the image of those mainframes of the coming decade, equipped with optical character readers and book-feed and page-turning mechanisms, reading, reading, through the night [. . .] The library, or at least the large public building, has ceased to be a place for human beings and become a place of machines'.

In the future of *A Borrowed Man*, where communication, reading and *finding out* are for the most part done with those things Wolfe refers to as 'screens', rare physical books are print-on-demand products that can be tampered with by each reader. Messages, glyphs and codes can be hidden in them. Indeed, Smithe informs Colette of one of a dozen ways this is done: 'there are chemical formulations that will disappear into the paper when they dry, only to reappear if the paper is warmed'. Digital 'books' also exist in several forms, as Colette informs Smithe: 'Sometimes people want to see the author's original text, prior

to editing. Suppose a Chinese book has been translated into English. There could be three or four translations, and arguments about which translation is best'. But this is not a future in which the characters are found longing for some bygone age of print; it is rather a wonderfully realized exploration of where our own screen-obsessed present might lead, an enquiry into what becomes of the writer when he or she exists at a remove from their work. What forms will our reading practices take in the centuries to come, Wolfe asks, and how will they shape the future history of our planet?

While 'books about books' have an esteemed history in the field of science fiction, *A Borrowed Man* certainly explores the afterlife of the book in new and interesting ways. Books open the way to new worlds, Wolfe seems to suggest, and, in the future, we might walk within and feel those worlds too. But the death of the book object as we know it today in favour of electronic or enhanced texts in control of those who pay for them also brings the possibility that the author grows increasingly obscure, receding further into the past with each new product developed in his or her name.

Over a long and distinguished career, Wolfe has repeatedly and innovatively used established sf conventions in order to redefine and revolutionize the field, challenging the expectations and beliefs of even the most experienced readers of the genre. Despite the novel's pace, Wolfe deftly allows the reader to either move along with that narrative (an enjoyable romp in its own right), or to call into question what they are being told by an entity who has, for the most part, lived on a shelf in a library, but is speaking to us through the memories of a long gone writer. Furthermore, the narrator is a version of that writer only up until the point in his life the uploaders, the clone-creators, deemed worthy of inclusion. As the plot gathers momentum, Smithe begins to tell us a little of why he writes in the style he does, and also that he is leaving certain things out of the telling. He also reflects on the process of writing the story:

I have got used to formal English when I talk [. . .] they put this mental block on me; so when I know what I want to say, another part of my mind, a part I cannot control, turns whatever into formal phrases and sentences. [. . .] So what I do is dictate when I tell you what I said, and use the keyboard for what I think. Neat, right? Only I do not know how to back up on this one. I know you can pull up a manual on the screen, but I do not know how. I need to find that out, too.

Increasingly, then, we are encouraged to ponder the future of book composition and of the writing process, to think about what kind of world it will be when our books are screen-based and read us as much as we read them. But we are also asked to consider the origins, the very make-up, of the words we are reading. What has been lost in the electronic abyss? What is it in Smithe's story that has

not been 'backed up'?

Unlike the Library of All Books in *The Book of the New Sun*, the library of *A Borrowed Man* is a different kind of space, one where order takes hold and books speak less of the unfathomable ages but instead bespeak absence and presentness – such 'books' are copies of authors, recorded voices, cloned and re-cloned personalities that have taken the place of manuscript production. It is not an implausible scenario.

A Borrowed Man, like most of Wolfe's novels, pays rereading. Ghosts lurk half-hidden within each paragraph. But this is also a novel that will appeal to lovers of adventure fiction in search of a navigable sf tale. Moreover, all readers – whether sf aficionados, detective story-enthusiasts, or, more broadly, those in search of the latest outputs in American fiction – will certainly be left with questions, especially about the 'motivations' of Colette and Smithe himself. Indeed, that is the novel's greatest achievement: a reclone, animated by a copied and downloaded personality, absorbs us, leads us and convinces us before we have a chance to blink. *A Borrowed Man*, then, is a work in which we find a grandmaster of science fiction doing what he does best.



Ian McDonald, *Luna: New Moon* (Gollancz, 2016, 416pp, £9.99)

Reviewed by Chris Pak

Ian McDonald's novel about the colonization and terraforming of the Moon is the first part of a diptych, the sequel of which is the forthcoming *Luna: Wolf Moon* (2016). *Luna: New Moon* examines new forms of living set against a magnified instance of capitalist accumulation and the political and economic competition between oligarchic power brokers which expands upon the concerns of earlier works such as *Desolation Road* (1988) and *Ares Express* (2001). *Luna* stages the implications of consolidated corporate power, subordinated labour and the possible interstices for negotiating new forms of culture that function as an adaptation to the governing model on the Moon. These productive adaptations, however, are only accessible to the few individuals who are members of the five ruling families and their employees, yet the oligarchs are themselves bound to a corporate destiny that constrains their self-determination.

The novel follows several members of the upstart Corta family, the newest of the ruling families on the Moon, along with Marina, a researcher who stumbles into their employ. The Corta household is undergoing a period of change as their matriarch, Adriana, is projected to abdicate and to pass the leadership of

the family business to her sons. Taking advantage of this period of uncertainty, the longstanding feud between the Cortas and MacKenzie Metals is renewed and the clandestine jockeying for power rises to the surface, threatening to re-arrange the power balance that has governed exchange on the Moon for decades. To an extent that surpasses the Cortas and the other families, 'MacKenzie Metals isn't pride. MacKenzie Metals isn't family; it's a machine for making money'. The narrative centres on Adriana's children and their sometimes divergent goals, some of whom reject the family's expectations, others of whom abide in an uneasy relationship with their family and who negotiate their place in relation to Luna's high society by cultivating alternative family bonds at the margins of power.

The narrative is composed of a polyphony of perspectives and forms, including an autobiographical sequence that skirts the edges of a confessional relating to Adriana's rise to power. The narrative opens with reflections on theatre as Ariel Corta, daughter of Adriana and a celebrated lawyer at the Court of Clavius, wins a court case by challenging the defendant to a duel to the death: 'all trials are theatre'. That the novel is prefaced with a 'Character List', a *Dramatis Personae*, emphasizes the theatrical aspect that feeds into the characterization of politics in the novel. MacDonald has also described *Luna* as 'Game of Domes,' alluding, of course, to *Game of Thrones*, and as '*Dallas* on the moon', which highlights the corporate intrigue that dominates the novel.

Through these different perspectives and narrative voices, the history of Luna and its relation to Earth is sketched and the root of the enmity between the Corta family and the other ruling families is disclosed. Throughout the narrative the implications of the financialized economy on Earth and the Moon is also uncovered. Adriana recounts how the mechanization of production on Earth resulted in 'the great class war; final class war: the hollowing out of the middle class', and that this state of affairs was what allowed Adriana to build her fortune supplying helium-3 to Earth: 'I'm the one per cent of the one per cent; the ones who left Earth'. On Luna, the logic of capitalist governance is taken to its extreme as all forms of interaction revolves around Contract Law and the leveraging of advantage. Rafael, the oldest of the Corta sons, is confronted by Sohni Sharma, a postgraduate researcher from Earth who rejects Rafael's world: 'you're rats in a cage, one look, one wrong word away from eating each other'. Society on the Moon is a fragile construct that is only tentatively maintained by agreements between individuals with power.

Luna is governed by five families, known as the Five Dragons: Corta Hélio and MacKenzie Metals, Taiyang (Sun family), VTO (Vorontsov family) and Aka (Asamoah family), all of whom are granted contracts to operate on Luna by the Lunar Development Corporation, headed by Jonathon Kayode, the 'Eagle of the Moon'. These five families monopolize industry in their specialized fields and aggressively resist any of their rivals' attempts to diversify or compete in their

business arenas. The uneasy peace that is maintained on the Moon can be attributed to the priority of Contract Law and the impossibility of engaging in any business endeavour without the granting of a license. Mysterious organizations and affiliations, such as the Pavilion of the White Hare, the Sisterhood of the Lords of Now and the Wolves illustrate how further configurations of individuals belonging to the various families are attained, pointing to additional arenas for the manoeuvring for power. As the narrative progresses, the authority invested in the Eagle of the Moon is shown to have been undermined in subtle ways and it becomes clear that the reins of power cannot be clearly traced to the ostensible hierarchy on Luna.

There is more than a passing nod to Frank Herbert's *Dune* (1965) and Robert A. Heinlein's *The Moon is a Harsh Mistress* (1966). The organization of the oligarchs into ruling families, complete with dynastic succession, alludes to the family houses of *Dune*, as does the echoes of the Bene Gesserit in the depictions of the Sisterhood of the Lords of Now, the trial by combat that bookends the arc of the novel, the prohibition against guns, and the prescience attached to statistical modelling and artificial intelligence (which also echoes Kim Stanley Robinson's *2312* (2012)). *Luna* also impresses upon the reader the brutal expectations of life on the Moon, with every aspect necessary for survival, from air, water, carbon and data being strictly metered. Known as the Four Elementals, these resources are a ubiquitous concern given that 'chibs' that track the crediting of these necessities to personal accounts are implanted into the eye upon reaching Luna as an ever-present reminder that everything on the Moon must be bought: 'you learn that you don't own your body. You don't own anything. From the moment you step off the moonloop, everything is rented'. The scarcity of resources and the necessity of manufacturing sustainable closed life-support systems means that everything, including bodies, are recycled and re-consumed. The foundations for existence on Luna are literally built upon the bodies of predecessors, yet Adriana reflects that they 'never thought twice about the blood in the soil'. That these sacrifices are facilitated by the uncompromising living arrangements on Luna, however, re-assigns responsibility for these forgotten deaths to those who maintain the system of corporate bondage on Luna, namely the ruling families and the Lunar Development Corporation. *Luna* alludes to these predecessor texts in order to revise their assumptions and stances: Adriana explains that 'people say the moon is hard; no, people are hard. Always people'.

Luna also engages in a dialogue with the sf tradition of terraforming. The novel incorporates, interrogates and offers revisions to key themes that relate the motif of terraforming to society, ecology and the aesthetics of nature. 'Here there was no Mother Nature, no Gaia to set against human will. Everything that lived, we made', explains Adriana. As one of the people responsible for building Luna, she addresses a theme central to the terraforming narrative:

Down on Earth they say we've raped it, taken its natural beauty and despoiled it [. . .] To see the beauty of this place, you have to go under the surface. You have to dig down to the cities and quadras, the habitats and agrarian. You have to see the people.

Despite her recognition of the ugliness of the planet – which can be attributed to the callousness with which the Moon's oligarchs treat the disenfranchised as much as it can be attributed to the sere landscape – Adriana is able to appreciate the beauty that does exist and which escapes a superficial experience of Lunar society. Upon first encountering the site that would become the centre of her dynasty – an underground lava tube – she thinks of it as 'an empty, virgin universe, precious as a geode'. From her perspective there is nothing to the Moon other than what she and others like her are able to impose. It is both true that the colonization of the Moon has resulted in its despoliation, and it is also true that new forms of culture have emerged to compensate for this loss. This ambivalence reoccurs throughout the novel and encourages the reader to scrutinize the Corta family's position in relation to the total population of the Moon, along with the role of the other families in maintaining a system that, despite its compensations, remains undeniably uncompromising for the majority of those without power.

Luna turns inward to experiment, as the terraforming tradition often does, with new permutations of society and culture. As Adriana reflects, 'there are old world words and ideas the new generations have no reference for'. The importation of a polyphonic array of cultural experiences from Earth animates life on Luna; the landscape is invested with symbolic meaning, with music and stories that endow significance to existence on the planetary body, yet these importations are subject to a revised understanding that de-contextualizes them and makes of them something new. As an experiment in types of society, Luna has afforded opportunities for the development of ever-shifting multi-racial, multi-lingual and multi-gendered modes of existence. Furthermore, genuinely new modes of posthuman being become possible: Wagner 'Lobinho' Corta, the fifth son of the Corta family whom Adriana has disowned, is a moon wolf, a member of a distributed community that mysteriously partitions their human identity, allowing for a dual affiliation that models its social mores against their namesake species. As a moon wolf Wagner is able to join with others in a communal consciousness, what he thinks of as 'a rational miracle' and 'a new way of being human'.

Marina reflects on the openness of sexuality on Luna in contrast to the expectations on Earth and entertains a theory that sexual liberation – and by extension other forms of cultural experimentation – can be attributed to Contract Law. Because there is no law governing relations on Luna, apart from

the contracts that are negotiated between individuals and corporations, there is no compulsion to adhere to traditional moral touchstones or to historical expectations and behaviours. Because everything can be negotiated, the only imperative are the desires of the two parties. What this does mean is that individuals become subordinate to the overarching requirements of contracts as negotiated by the corporations from which life on Luna is ultimately possible.

Luna is a remarkable examination of the consequences of capitalism and corporate power. It masterfully re-works the tropes of the narrative of colonization and terraforming to imagine new social arrangements in a context of resource scarcity, and it speaks to the wider sf tradition to reflect on the shape of a future society that both converges economically and diverges culturally and sexually. It explores posthuman modes of existence, diversifying cultural, racial and gender-based identities, and reflects on novelty in the context of a world subject to constraints both corporate and physical. The nightmare vision of absolute corporate power and the subjugation of the majority of the population to the demands of industry and economics sits in tension with the promise of new forms of being human that might offer a way to resist or to negotiate control on Luna.



Brian Catling, *The Vorrh* (Coronet, 2016, 512pp, £8.99)

Reviewed by Juha Virtanen (University of Kent)

It almost feels inappropriate to begin this review by referring to notions of genre, especially in light of the arguments Samuel R. Delany made in his 1996 essay, 'The Politics of Paraliterary Criticism':

What [. . .] critics of the paraliterary [. . .] don't seem to realize is that our very insistence that our genre *might be* susceptible to 'rigorous definition'

functions today as a ready-made admission that the genre *must be* substantially less complex and vital than any of the literary genres.

Nevertheless, genre seems to be an unavoidable question for Brian Catling's *The Vorrh*. Although it might be the author's debut novel, Catling has arrived at *The Vorrh* having already built a long career in avant-garde poetry, sculpture and performance; and while *The Vorrh* is unmistakably a work of fantasy, it is equally defined in *opposition* to that genre. For instance, Alan Moore's foreword to the novel characterizes Catling's work in these terms:

A genre that's been reduced by lazy stylization to a narrow lexicon of [. . .] wizards, warriors, dwarves and dragons [. . .] is certainly a genre insufficient to contain the vegetable eternities of Catling's *Vorrh* [. . .] *The Vorrh* could easily be taken for the work of someone who [. . .] had never read a line of fantasy, such is its staggering originality.

Framed in this manner, *The Vorrh* occupies a curiously chimeric space: it is both a work of fantasy and *anti*-fantasy, insofar as its aspirations seemingly reach beyond the preconceived borders of the genre, while it simultaneously conforms to recognizable generic conventions. The effects of Catling's approach are both thought-provoking and, at times, troubling.

The aforementioned impressions from Moore are easy to understand, as the scale and complexity of Catling's novel is staggering. Centred around a magical African forest – which shares its name with Catling's title – and the fictional city of Essenwald that resides on its edges, the novel is set in an alternate version of our world, at an indeterminate era sometime after the First World War. Its chapters are written from multiple points of view, and its cast of characters is considerable. These include Peter Williams, a veteran of the War who enters into the Vorrh alone; Ishmael, a cyclops raised by Bakelite robots underneath a mysterious large house; Ghertrude, a young woman who discovers Ishmael and takes him out into the world; as well as fictionalized versions of real-life figures such as the photographer Eadweard Muybridge, the physician William Gull and the surrealist Raymond Roussel. Many of the interconnected plotlines – particularly those of Williams, Ishmael and Roussel – involve quests into the Vorrh, where the characters are confronted by the landscape's mysterious powers. Others, such as Ghertrude's, are strictly limited to events within Essenwald, while the stories of Muybridge and Gull take place in America and the UK. Moreover, the novel's frameworks often resemble metafictional intertextuality: Williams' story recalls Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*; Ishmael's experiences echo Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*; and Catling's imaginative account of how Roussel came to write *Impressions of Africa* almost reads as if it were a pastiche of a Künstlerroman.

Consequently, *The Vorrh* as a whole is comparable to Michel Foucault's analysis of Roussel's work, in the sense that it traverses, what Foucault termed, 'the two great mythic spaces so often explored by Western imagination: space that is rigid and forbidden, surrounding the quest, the return, and the treasure [. . .] and the other space [. . .] of the metamorphosis, of the visible transformation of instantly crossed distances, of strange affinities, of symbolic replacements.' In other words, Catling draws upon quest narratives, mythical landscapes and magical weapons in order to transform them into self-conscious and explicit referents of the modern world. This can be seen, for example, in the pairing of Essenwald and the Vorrh. The former is described as a simulation of

a 'European city, imported piece by piece [. . .] and reassembled [. . .] over a century and a half' in a clearing made at the perimeter of the forest. The latter, however, is associated with unknowingness and uncontrollability:

It was said that nobody ever reached the centre of the Vorrh. [. . .] Business expanded and flourished on its southernmost outskirts, but nothing was known of its interior, except myth and fear. It was the mother of forests; ancient beyond language, older than every known species, and, some said, propagator of them all, locked in its own system of evolution and climate.

The pairing between the two therefore carries connotations of colonial anxiety. While the Eurocentric city has been able to thrive economically as a result of its vampiric exploitation of the natural resources at the edge of the forest, its residents nevertheless know that they are unable to conquer the Vorrh. Its unpredictable climate makes it impossible to reach by plane; its pathways are overgrown with jungle; and anyone who tries to explore it by foot does so at the cost of severe mental and physical danger. This does not mean that *The Vorrh* itself identifies with these anxieties. Rather, these facets of Catling's novel can be read as an indictment of colonialism and imperialism, as well as the continued exploitation of less economically developed countries under globalized capitalism. The plotline involving Maclish – a master of the slaves who work on the outskirts of the Vorrh – serves as ample evidence of this.

However, despite its imaginative condemnation of colonial exploitation, the strange affinities and symbolic replacements of *The Vorrh* are not always progressive. Many of the novel's details and symbolisms around gender seem troubling due to their pervasive phallocentricity. Early in the novel, the sight of a 'mad' woman – who is menstruating – causes a male character to experience such fear that 'his testicles [a]re sucked up into his pelvis'. The relationship between Ghertrude and Ishmael is embroiled in conflicts that often manifest in sexual encounters. Moreover, Ishmael is consistently characterized as possessing a supernatural virility: when he attends an orgiastic celebration during a carnival that takes place in Essenwald, he is able to cure the blind Cyrena by copulating with her. Elsewhere, the magical bow that accompanies Williams on his quest into the Vorrh is fashioned from the sinews and bones of Irrinipeste, his dead lover. With the latter two examples in particular, the dream-like narratives of Catling's novel can at times seem as reactionary as Aristotelian biology. According to Aristotle's genealogy of animals, as with the symbolism around Williams and Ishmael, 'the female always provides the material, the male that which fashions it, for this is the power that we say they each possess, and this is what is meant by calling them male and female.' Of course, any narrative that is set in a patriarchal and phallocratic society,

which the world of *The Vorrh* undoubtedly is, will inevitably be met with the difficult task of portraying the structures of that society without endorsing them in the narrative itself. However, the consistent phallocentricity in *The Vorrh*'s motifs and symbolism render many of its passages uncomfortably chauvinistic. These aspects, in turn, detract from the philosophical depth and poignancy that Catling's novel might have otherwise had.

Call for Papers Special Issue on Science Fiction and Theatre

Compared to film, TV and the novel, science fiction theatre is not a widely discussed topic. But, whilst there is only one book from the 1990s that lists the history of sf plays, there is a long legacy of staging the fantastical, including the importance of Karel Čapek's *R.U.R.* (1920) in coining the term 'robot'. With contemporary mainstream plays such as *Constellations*, *The Nether*, *Mr Burns* and *X*, sf theatre may be experiencing something of a revival. There are an increasing number of sf theatre companies worldwide as well as a new anthology in sf plays.

Foundation seeks articles for a special issue on science fiction and theatre, to be published in winter 2017. Why is sf not analysed as often in theatre than other media? What is lost and what is gained when a text is adapted for the stage? Are there any genre tropes that cannot be staged effectively in theatre? What tropes work particularly well for the stage? All topics and methodologies are welcome including (but not limited to) stage depictions of the future, constructions and representations of sf tropes, performing the non- and post-human, space- time on stage, and adaptations of sf films and novels.

Please send submissions of up to 6000 words by 5th February 2017 to journaleditor@sf-foundation.org, attaching the file in either .rtf or .doc format. For questions about formatting, please see the style guide at www.sf-foundation.org; for all other enquiries, please contact Susan Gray at susan.gray87@gmail.com

2017: A Clarke Odyssey

A Conference Marking the Centenary of Sir Arthur C. Clarke
Canterbury Christ Church University, Canterbury, UK
Saturday 9 December 2017

**Keynote Speakers: Stephen Baxter
Dr Sarah Dillon (University of Cambridge)**

Sir Arthur C. Clarke is one of the most important British sf writers of the twentieth century – novelist, short-story writer, scriptwriter, science populariser, fan, presenter of documentaries on the paranormal, proposer of the uses of the geosynchronous orbit and philanthropist.

We want to celebrate his life, work and influence on science fiction, science and beyond.

We are looking for twenty-minute papers on topics such as:

- any of Clarke's publications
- influences on Clarke
- Clarke's influence on others
- the Second World War
- Sri Lanka/Ceylon
- the Cold War
- adaptations to film, television, radio and comic books – *2001: A Space Odyssey*, *2010: The Year We Make Contact*, *Rendezvous with Rama*, *Trapped in Space*, etc.
- collaborations
- A.I. and computers
- alien encounters and first contact
- astronomy, space and space travel
- Big Dumb Objects
- the destiny of life and mind in the universe
- the far future
- futurology
- politics
- religion, the transcendent and the paranormal
- science and scientists
- world government
- Young Adult fiction
- the Arthur C. Clarke Award for science fiction, the Sir Arthur Clarke Award for achievements in space and the Arthur C. Clarke Foundation awards

Please submit four-hundred-word abstracts and a hundred-word biography to AndrewMButler42@gmail.com and P.A.March-Russell@kent.ac.uk by 30 July 2017.

The conference will be co-organised by Dr Andrew M. Butler (Canterbury Christ Church University) and Dr Paul March-Russell (University of Kent). Further details will be available from <https://2017acl ClarkeOdyssey.wordpress.com/>

Foundation Studies in Science Fiction

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Between 1998 and 2011, the SFF published a series of essay collections under the general editorship of Farah Mendlesohn. We are now selling off our surplus stock for the astonishing price of just £1 (plus postage and packing). If you would like to make an order, please contact Simon Bradshaw at sjbradshaw@mac.com. The remaining titles are:

Mark Bould and Michelle Reid, eds. *Parietal Games: Critical Writings by and on M. John Harrison*

This volume brings together M. John Harrison's pioneering criticism from the late 1960s in such sf venues as *Foundation*, *Speculation* and *New Worlds* through to his work in the 1990s and early 2000s for such mainstream publications as *The Guardian*, *The Times Literary Supplement* and *The Spectator*. Harrison is not only one of the most trenchant and insightful critical voices inside and outside sf, he also offers a distinctive and important view on genre fiction comparable to such contemporaries as Samuel R. Delany, Michael Moorcock and Joanna Russ. The volume also contains a revealing interview with Harrison, a foreword by Elizabeth Hand, and essays by John Clute, Rjurik Davidson, Graham Fraser, Nick Freeman, Rob Latham, Farah Mendlesohn and Graham Sleight on Harrison's fiction and criticism from the Viriconium sequence, via the weird fiction of the 1980s and 1990s, through to the award-winning *Light* (2002).

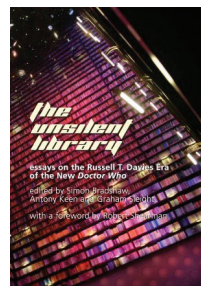


Andrew M. Butler, ed. *Christopher Priest: The Interaction*

One of the most lauded of all British science fiction writers, Priest's novels – including such award-winning works as *Inverted World* (1974), *The Prestige* (1995), *The Extremes* (1998) and *The Separation* (2002) – nevertheless skirt at the edges of the sf genre. This collection examines Priest's anomalous position within modern sf as well as his short stories and non-fiction, published in such venues as *Foundation* and *Speculation*. Gilles Dumay interviews Priest whilst there are essays by Andrew M. Butler, Nick Hubble, Paul Kincaid, Nicholas Ruddick, Andy Sawyer, Graham Sleight, Victoria Stewart, Thomas Van Parys and Matthew Wolf-Meyer.

Simon Bradshaw, Graham Sleight and Tony Keen, eds. *The Unsilent Library: Essays on the Russell T. Davies Era of the New Doctor Who*

The return of *Doctor Who* in 2005 has been one of the BBC's great success stories. This was largely down to the distinctive re-invention of the programme by its showrunner, Russell T. Davies, and the group of writers – many, like him, long-term Who fans – the assembled. *The Unsilent Library* examines the storytelling style and techniques of the first five years of New Who. Ten in-depth critical essays explore how its writers have updated the long-running series to stand in the forefront of contemporary sf/drama. Contributors include Richard Burley, Catherine Coker, Andy Duncan, Paul Hawkins, Tony Keen, Una McCormack, Leslie McMurtry, Clare Parody, James Rose and Graham Sleight. With a foreword by New Who writer Robert Shearman.



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A previously unpublished interview with Michael Moorcock
Brian Baker tours Europe with Brian Aldiss
Jonathan Barlow conjures with Elric, Jerry Cornelius and Lord Horror
Nick Hubble on the persistence of New Wave-forms in Christopher Priest

Peter Higgins is inspired by Gene Wolfe's *The Book of the New Sun*
Gwyneth Jones revisits aliens and the Aleutians
Conference reports from Kerry Dodd and Gul Dag

In addition, there are reviews by:

Jeremy Brett, Kanta Dihal, Carl Freedman, Jennifer Harwood-Smith, Nick Hubble, Carl Kears, Paul Kincaid, Sandor Klapcsik, Chris Pak, Umberto Rossi, Alison Tedman and Juha Virtanen

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Anne Hiebert Alton and William C. Spruiell, Martyn Amos and Ra Page, Gerry Canavan and Kim Stanley Robinson, Brian Catling, Sonja Fritzsche, Ian McDonald, Paul March-Russell, China Miéville, Carlo Pagetti, Hannu Rajaniemi, Tricia Sullivan and Gene Wolfe

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