FOUNDATION

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THE REVIEW OF SCIENCE FICTION

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Editorial

Good news: thanks to the labours of the Science Fiction Foundation's unpaid Acting Administrator, Mr Charles Barren, this journal has now been awarded an Arts Council grant. The Council has kindly sent us a sum of money to assist in paying our bills for the current financial year. It will also enable us to advertise more widely, and thus to boost *Foundation's* subscription list. We thank the Arts Council for its tangible appreciation of our efforts, and we also thank Charles Barren most warmly for undertaking the necessary negotiations on our behalf. The Arts Council money will enable us to continue without making additional demands on the dwindling resources of North East London Polytechnic (although NELP continues to support us in a variety of ways—not least by employing Mrs Joyce Day, our part-time subscriptions secretary).

Coincidentally, this could be regarded as our tenth anniversary issue. The first issue of *Foundation* was dated March 1972—and Charles Barren, then a lecturer at NELP, was the Editor. The journal has changed considerably since its early issues, but one feature has remained constant: we have always given a great deal of space to practising science-fiction writers as well as to academic critics, and we pride ourselves on that fact. *Foundation* has always been a magazine for writers and for ordinary readers of the sf genre, and not purely for teachers and researchers (although the latter are by no means under-represented). Sometimes all these capacities mingle in one person—for example, the invaluable Dr Brian Stableford, whose contribution to the present issue results from an important piece of primary research into 19th Century sf.

The early issues of *Foundation* have long been out of print, but it may be useful to remind readers here that Gregg Press of Boston has published a 600-page volume containing full reprints of the first eight issues of the journal. The book is available directly from the publishers, priced $35, and the address to write to is: Gregg Press, 70 Lincoln Street, Boston, Mass. 02111, USA.

We are pleased to be able to present two "Profession" pieces in this issue, including one by the writer who is probably the most influential of all British sf authors since Wells—J.G. Ballard. (On a personal note: I have recently finished compiling *J.G. Ballard: A Primary and Secondary Bibliography,* which should be published later in 1982 by G.K. Hall, the parent company of Gregg Press, at the address given above.) The other piece is by George Turner, who is of course no newcomer to *Foundation.* Already well known as a critic, he has in recent years taken up sf novel-writing. We also publish articles by Gregory Feeley and George Hay. Like Charles Barren, the latter is one of the people to whom *Foundation* owes its existence: Mr Hay was the journal's first Features Editor. In the Reviews section we welcome Gilbert Adair, John Dean and Gary K. Wolfe as new contributors.

At the close of his "Profession" piece J.G. Ballard states that there is an urgent need for a serious new sf magazine in Britain. Although a couple of periodicals exist on the margins of our field, there is no magazine in this country devoted solely to the publication of high-quality science fiction and fantasy. Indeed, none has existed for over ten years,

since the demise of *New Worlds.* We have long felt that *Foundation* warranted a complementary publication, one which would present new fiction rather than criticism, autobiography and reviews. Unfortunately, the SF Foundation has not had the financial resources to launch such a magazine.

Now, however, a collective of eight people has been formed in order to publish just such a magazine—*Interzone.* Several members of the collective have strong connections with *Foundation,* although the new magazine is not owned by the SF Foundation and has no formal link with that organization. The Council of the SFF has nevertheless welcomed the creation of *Interzone* and has offered it advertising space herein (the advert, which gives details of the likely contents of the magazine, is on page 77). The first *Interzone,* dated Spring 1982, should be out shortly after the appearance of this issue of *Foundation.* We hope that all our readers look out for it, and consider placing a subscription. The magazine is partly-funded by charter subscriptions, and at this time of writing over 400 have been received. That is a very encouraging start, but *Interzone* will require continual reader support and steady sales in order to survive.

Contributors to *Interzone* will receive a fair rate of payment for their work. The editors will get no remuneration. It is an idealistic venture, admittedly, but one which we are convinced can succeed. Without a new magazine in Britain it is hard to imagine where young writers will publish their work. Where else will the Aldiss and Brunner, the Ballard and Moorcock, the Keith Roberts and M. John Harrison of tomorrow emerge from? Those writers, and many others, were nurtured by *Science Fantasy* and *New Worlds.* It is safe to say that without those two grand old magazines our science-fictional scene would have been vastly impoverished. Since they ceased publication it *has* become impoverished, in the UK at any rate. *Interzone* hopes to remedy that—with your support. If it can combine the best qualities of the old *Science Fantasy* and *New Worlds,* and add something new for the 80s, it will provide a much-needed revitalization of British sf. There is little point in a critical journal like *Foundation* existing if a creative venture such as *Interzone* cannot succeed. So please help make it succeed—subscribe now!

David Pringle
December 1981

Recently received:

Philosophical Speculations in Science Fiction and Fantasy, No. 2, Summer 1981. Edited by Erwin H. Bush and others. (Burning Bush Publications, PO Box 178, Kemblesville, PA 19347, USA). Four-issue subscription rate: $11 in USA and overseas via surface mail ($16 overseas air mail); single copy $3 ($4.25 air mail).

Second issue of "a new journal devoted to the philosophical aspects of the sf and fantasy field"; contains articles by Justin Leiber, R.A. Lafferty and others. This issue is 56 pages long, and also contains a cartoon and book reviews.

J.G. Ballard, one of the most important and unusual writers in world sf, was born in Shanghai on 15th November 1930. He had just turned eleven years old at the time of the Pearl Harbor bombing, and he spent the subsequent war years in a civilian prisoner-of-war camp. In the following piece, transcribed from an interview recorded on 24th July, he talks about that early period and his later years of development as a writer.

(Although this article is based on a verbal interview, it has been edited to form a roughly chronological narrative. David Pringle's original questions have been replaced by appropriate quotations, culled from various sources. The choice of these quotations is entirely the responsibility of Foundation's *editor, and Mr Ballard should be given none of the blame . . .)*

The Profession of Science Fiction, 26: From Shanghai to Shepperton

J.G. BALLARD

(with DAVID PRINGLE)

Shanghai was an American zone of influence. All the foreign nationals there lived an American style of life. They had American-style houses, air-conditioning and refrigerators, and American cars. I never saw an English car until I came to Britain in 1946. We had Coca-Cola—and American-style commercial radio stations. We used to listen to the radio a lot. Shanghai itself had about ten English-language radio stations, and they were blaring out American programmes and radio serials. (I think there were sf serials.) And of course there were American films on show in the cinemas which I went to from a very early age. I started going to the movies when I was six or seven, something my own children didn't do (they had television). One had a peculiar cultural diet, in a way. I spent a great deal of time reading as a child—all the childhood classics, like *Alice in Wonderland, Robinson Crusoe* and *Gulliver's Travels,* as well as American comics and the American mass magazines of the day, *Collier's, Life* and so on. I don't think I read any Jules Verne, though I certainly read H.G. Wells. There were popularized versions of Wells's novels in the American comic books, and those things called Big Little Books. I must have read a bit of science fiction in book form, but I certainly didn't buy the sf magazines until much later, when I went to Canada.

Shanghai itself was one of the most extraordinary and bizarre places on earth, a place where anything went, completely without constraints. Every conceivable political and social cross-current was in collision there. War in all its forms was institutionalized in Shanghai, after the Sino-Japanese War began in 1937. I remember in '38 or '39 having to

leave our house on the outskirts of the city, and move into a rented house in the centre of Shanghai, because the Chinese and Japanese forces were firing shells whose trajectories went right overhead . . . I remember seeing a lot of troops, and going out frequently to the battlefields around Shanghai where I saw dead soldiers lying around, dead horses in the canals and all that sort of thing. The Japanese were sitting around the city, and in fact occupied all but the International Settlement. Our house was on the western outskirts of Shanghai, actually outside the International Settlement and within the area controlled by the Japanese. The whole business of checkpoints and military occupation had been there since the earliest days I can remember. Huge armies engaged, naval forces came up the river, and large sections of the city were under air attack by Japanese bombers. This had been going on for years, so Pearl Harbor wasn't that big a surprise . . .

My father was a chemist originally. He joined a big Manchester firm of textile manufacturers—this was before I was born—and he moved into the management field. They had a subsidiary in Shanghai of which he was the chairman and managing director throughout the 1930s and into the 40s. I was sent to the Cathedral School in Shanghai before the war. A very authoritarian English clergyman was the headmaster there, and he used to set lines. It's the most time-wasting enterprise one could imagine, but he would say "500 lines, Carruthers! 600 lines, Ballard!" for some small infringement. 500 lines was about 30 pages of a school exercise book. You were supposed to copy out school texts, and I remember starting to copy from a novel about the Spanish Armada. It was something like G.A. Henty, or it might have been Kingsley's *Westward Ho!* (I remember that. It has a marvellous last paragraph which has stayed with me all my life; the last paragraph of that novel is a fine piece of prose, and you ought to find echoes all over my fiction!) Anyway, I started copying out this high adventure narrative. I suddenly realized—I was only about nine or ten—that it was easier, and it would save a lot of effort, if I just made it up, which I did. So from then on I would make up my own narratives. I think the authoritarian clergyman must have scanned my lines because he reprimanded me by saying: "Ballard, next time you pick a book to copy your lines from don't pick some trashy novel like this!" He didn't realize I'd written it myself. I think there's a judgment on my whole life and career there—I've gone on writing within that sort of seditious framework! I went on writing little short stories and pieces, even when we were in the prison camp—just adventure stories and thrillers, my own variants on whatever I happened to be reading.

> From that hour Ayacanora's power of song returned to her; and day by day, year after year, her voice rose up within that happy home, and soared, as on a skylark's wings, into the highest heaven, bearing with it the peaceful thoughts of the blind giant back to the paradises of the west, in the wake of the heroes who from that time forth sailed out to colonize another and a vaster England, to the Heaven-prospered cry of Westward Ho!
>
> —Charles Kingsley, *Westward Ho!*, 1855 (final paragraph)

I remember the very first little book I produced. Of course it was never printed, but it was my first effort at a book. It was about how to play Contract Bridge. I learned to play the game at an early age, because Bridge-playing was all the rage. I must only have been about 11, because this was before the camp. My mother used to hold Bridge parties, almost every afternoon it seemed. To a child the bids conjure up a whole world of mystery because they don't seem to be related to anything. "One heart, two hearts, three diamonds, three no trumps, double, redouble—what the hell does all this mean?" I thought. I used to pace around upstairs listening to these bids, trying to extract some sort

of logical meaning. I finally persuaded my mother to explain how Contract Bridge was played. I was so impressed by the discovery of what bidding meant—deciphering these cryptic and mysterious calls, particularly when I discovered they relate to the whole world of conventions so that they are a code within a code—that I wrote a book. I think I filled a school exercise book on the basic rules of Contract Bridge and what the main conventions were—I even had a section on "Psychic Bidding", which was pretty good for an 11-year-old! It was quite an effort of exposition. I haven't played Bridge for years and years now, though I used to play chess with my son before he left home. I've always been very interested in chess; it's more of a solitary man's game.

The Japanese didn't intern everybody simultaneously. It was staged, and I think it took six months or so before we were interned. We had very hot summers and cold winters in Shanghai, and I remember wearing light clothes when we arrived in the camp. Pearl Harbor was in December 1941, so it must have been the following summer. To me, the period of internment wasn't a huge surprise as my life had changed continuously. From a huge house with nine servants, a chauffeur-driven Packard and all the rest of it, I was suddenly living in a small room with my parents and sister. Although that may seem an enormous jump, in fact it was all part of a huge continuum of disorder . . .

I have—I won't say *happy*—not unpleasant memories of the camp. I was young, and if you put 400 or 500 children together they have a good time whatever the circumstances. I can remember the acute shortage of food in the last year, and a general breakdown of facilities. Drinking water was no longer brought in by road tanker to the camp for the last year or more, once the tide turned against the Japanese. I remember a lot of the casual brutality and beatings-up that went on—but at the same time we children were playing a hundred and one games all the time! There was a great deal of illness, and about three-quarters of the people in the camp caught malaria, though not my family, thank God. My sister, who is seven years younger than me, nearly died of some kind of dysentery. I know my parents always had very much harsher memories of the camp than I did, because of course they knew the reality of the circumstances. Parents often starved themselves to feed their children. But I think it's true that the Japanese do like children and are very kindly towards them. The guards didn't abuse the children at all.

I saw it all from a child's eye, and didn't notice the danger. Right next to the camp was a large Japanese military airfield (I think it's now Shanghai International Airport). This was under constant attack in the last year or so from American bombers and low-flying fighters. The perimeter fence of the camp was in effect the perimeter of the airbase. We looked right out over the airfield. Although we had a curfew imposed by the Japanese during the air attacks, they became so frequent—almost continuous towards the closing stages—that we were often out in the open with anti-aircraft shells bursting over our heads. I daresay my parents were driven frantic by all this, but children don't remember. It wasn't like a dream, because dreams often *are* unpleasant and full of anxiety. I had no sense of anxiety, I don't remember any fear, but I look back now and I think "My God, why didn't I turn and run!" I was totally involved but at the same time saved by the magic of childhood.

Most of the British nationals there were people from the professions, senior management personnel, and most had university training of various kinds. A school was started in the camp, and the headmaster was a missionary called Osborne (oddly enough, I discovered years later that he was the father of Martin Bax's wife, Judy—Martin Bax is

the editor of *Ambit*). There were a lot of missionaries like him, who had been teaching all their professional lives. So a school was started and ran most of the time—though towards the end, when the Japanese wanted to penalize the adults in the camp, the first thing they did (with a sort of fiendish logic) was to close the school and impose a curfew. All the parents were stuck in their tiny little rooms, trapped with their noisy offspring! But I think that people like Osborne did a very good job, because I didn't feel when I got to England, despite very nearly three years in the camp, that I was much behind. I think in many areas I was absolutely up to scratch, for all the interruptions.

Outside a relatively few enclaves in Western Europe and the United States for the past few decades, the vast majority of the world has always lived the sort of life I lived in Shanghai, in that close proximity to violence, death, disease and the like. On the whole, we live enormously protected lives in Europe and the States, and children are particularly well protected here. In the historical sense of how most people have lived, my own life has probably been very close to . . . How can I put this? My life is probably much closer, in its proximity to death, disaster and destruction, to that of any Elizabethan poet or dramatist, than it is to that of most people living in this country today. If you'd been brought up in Renaissance Italy, say, or in France under the Ancien Régime, you'd probably have lived in a world very similar to that in which I was brought up. Most people in the world still do! Coming to England in 1946 was a shock that I've never recovered from. Even though Britain was directly involved in World War II—this island had been the springboard for the invasion of Europe—English life as a whole in '46 seemed enormously detached from reality. It seemed a world of self-enclosed little suburbs and village greens where nothing had ever happened.

My father stayed in China, and I came over with my mother and sister. We had friends who lived down in the West Country, near Plymouth, and my mother rented a house there for a couple of years. We lived in a sort of Daphne du Maurier-land—in fact, there was a little creek which was reputed to have been the source of inspiration for her novel *Frenchman's Creek,* only a few hundred yards away. There was indeed the remains of a great old wooden ship lying there in the mud: it's quite possible that it gave her the idea. It's full of little smugglers' coves and caves, that part of the world . . In about 1948 my mother and sister went back to China, and—when I wasn't at school in Cambridge—I stayed with my grandparents near Birmingham. My mother came back from China, but my father was still there in '49 and he was caught by the communist advance from the north. He was held in Shanghai for about a year after the communists arrived, but eventually he was released and was able to make his way to England. That was in 1950, and they bought a house in the Manchester area. By then I was at university. When he arrived here, my father became a consultant in the pharmaceutical field; he became director of European operations for an American pharmaceutical company, a big Boston firm—which he remained until his retirement, shortly before he died in 1966.

My mother's maiden name was Edna Johnstone. Her parents lived in West Bromwich, near Birmingham (I never met my father's parents: they lived in Blackburn in my father's youth). They were teachers of music. I remember my grandfather, with whom I stayed in the late 40s for about a year when my mother went back to China, as a very straightlaced puritanical Edwardian gentleman. My grandparents were in their 70s, I think, after the war, and were rabidly right-wing Conservatives. They were faced with the apocalypse of the post-war Labour Government, which shattered everything in their world. But in *fact,*

according to my mother, my grandfather was a bit of a maverick. He shocked his very bourgeois family, round about the turn of the century, by forming his own band! It may be that the maverick tendencies of my own come through him . . .

> A man of vigorous and stubborn temper, the Reverend Johnstone was one of those muscular clerics who intimidate their congregations not so much by the prospect of divine justice at some future date but by the threat of immediate physical retribution in the here and now. Well over six feet tall, his strong head topped by a fierce crown of grey hair, he towered over his parishioners from his pulpit, eyeing each of them in their pews like a bad-tempered headmaster obliged to take a junior form for one day and determined to inflict the maximum of benefit upon them.
>
> —J.G. Ballard, *The Drought,* 1965 (Chapter 5)

I went to the Leys School in Cambridge for a couple of years in the late 1940s. I disliked it intensely, but I'd been through so many strange experiences before and during the war that it was just another strange experience that I coped with. I wasn't unhappy there, actually. I had a great deal more experience of life in general than almost all the boys that I met there. Although they'd lived in Britain during the war, they'd had very sheltered lives (the school had been evacuated to Scotland). I didn't have anything very much in common. The big saving for me was that the Leys School was in Cambridge itself. I'd sneak off to the Arts Cinema to see all the French films of the 40s. I'd go to the Cambridge Film Society and soak myself in *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari* and all those experimental films of the 20s. And there were always art exhibitions of various kinds on in Cambridge. Also I had two or three friends among the boys in the class above mine who went up to Cambridge University to read medicine, and through them I had an early entry into Cambridge undergraduate life. I used to visit the colleges. If I'd gone to a school out in a remote corner of Dorset or somewhere it would have been a bit of a strain, but being in Cambridge it was like being a member of a junior college there, which was a big help to me.

I became very interested in psychoanalysis while still at school, and read almost all the Freud I could lay my hands on. In fact my chief reason for reading medicine when I went up to King's College was that I wanted to become a psychiatrist—a sort of adolescent dream, but I was quite serious about it. England seemed a very strange country. Both the physical landscape and the social and psychological landscapes seemed fit subjects for analysis—extremely constrained and rigid and repressed compared with the sort of background I had. To come from Shanghai, and from the war itself where everything had been shaken to its foundations, to come to England and find this narrow-minded puritanical world—this was the most repressed society I'd ever known! I became intensely interested in psychoanalysis and began to devour every library I could lay my hands on when I was 16 or 17. I read a good number of Freud's major works then, plus a lot of other works on psychoanalysis and psychiatry. Jung, of course, who was really a great imaginative novelist (in a sense, Freud is too!). But while I was still at school I was reading not just psychoanalytic texts but all the leading writers of the day—Kafka of course, and Hemingway—the strange sort of goulash of writers and poets that you read when you're that age.

I was already writing experimental fiction, what might be classed as avant-garde fiction. I'd been writing bits of fiction ever since I was quite a small child. I wanted to become a writer, there's no question about that, but I didn't see writing and a medical career as mutually exclusive. I wanted to study psychiatry professionally, and first of course I had to gain a medical degree—which was five years ahead, then two years doing

the Diploma of Psychological Medicine: seven years in all. That seemed a lifetime away, and I took for granted that I would write my own fiction throughout this period. I didn't see myself as a professional writer; it didn't occur to me that I could become one just by *decision*. I was writing a lot of fiction—I don't say it was particularly naive—but it was very experimental and heavily influenced by all the psychoanalysis I'd read, by all the Kafka and so on . . .

> Popularly regarded as a lurid manifestation of fantastic art concerned with states of dream and hallucination, surrealism is in fact the first movement, in the words of Odilon Redon, to place "the logic of the visible at the service of the invisible". This calculated submission of the impulses and fantasies of our inner lives to the rigours of time and space, to the formal inquisition of the sciences, psychoanalysis pre-eminent among them, produces a heightened or alternate reality beyond and above those familiar to either our sight or our senses. What uniquely characterizes this fusion of the outer world of reality and the inner world of the psyche (which I have termed "inner space") is its redemptive and therapeutic power. To move through these landscapes is a journey of return to one's innermost being.
>
> . . . At the same time we should not forget the elements of magic and surprise that wait for us in this realm. In the words of Andre Breton: "The confidences of madmen: I would spend my life in provoking them. They are people of scrupulous honesty, whose innocence is only equalled by mine. Columbus had to sail with madmen to discover America."
>
> —J.G. Ballard, "The Coming of the Unconscious", *New Worlds* 164, July 1966

I'm almost certain I became interested in the Surrealists at school, because I know that by the time I went up to King's I was already very interested, going to exhibitions and so on. I read medicine, and my interest in psychoanalysis abutted Surrealism at all sorts of points. When I was in my early 20s, long before I started writing sf, I had reproductions of Surrealist paintings pinned up wherever I was living. They were totally out of favour then and it was difficult to get hold of works by the Surrealists. If there was an exhibition somewhere or another—usually in a small commercial gallery in London—it wasn't well reviewed. If you wanted a reproduction of the latest painting by Dali or Magritte you stood a better chance of getting one in something like *The Daily Mirror* or *The Daily Mail* than you did in the serious papers. They were hardly mentioned in the columns of papers like *The Observer* or *The Times*—if they were, it was always in a derogatory way. I didn't give a damn about that; I was absolutely convinced that this was one of the most important schools of painting in the 20th century, one of the most important imaginative enterprises the century has embarked on. I felt that then and I still do.

Salvador Dali has still not been welcomed into the fold of critical respectability. Good—I'm glad in a way, and I don't think it matters a hoot. His recent exhibition in London was enormously successful, and I think that speaks for itself. There's a continuing public interest in Dali which makes the responses of the critical bureaucracy totally irrelevant, as they always have been. The triumph of the Surrealists in the 1960s, when they really arrived for the first time, was a triumph of their own talents. No critic discovered the Surrealists and persuaded the public that here was something worth looking at. They did it themselves. Their hour came, and quite rightly. I remember being interested in Francis Bacon in the very early 50s, when he was virtually unknown and painting most of his early masterpieces, and he was treated with the same sort of disdain that the Surrealists received until about 15 years ago (and Dali still does receive). There's an enormous resistance here to certain categories of imaginative work, both in the visual arts and in the novel. This is a very puritanical country. The Protestant non-conformist hatred of the imagination—of symbolism as a whole, let's say—runs through the whole of English life, and a large section of American life too for the same sort of reasons. Great

works of the imagination, of the 19th and 20th centuries, are far too seditious of the bourgeois certainties.

But there *were* Surrealist works in the Tate Gallery in the early 1950s. I remember seeing Delvaux there, along with a few Chiricos and Ernsts and Dalis. They were in a sort of little dark ante-room. I know that before I went to Canada with the RAF, and when I came back, in the early years of my marriage, I was intensely interested in the Surrealists—and in the Pop Artists as they emerged. I don't think my attitude to the Surrealists has changed. My whole imaginative response to them was fully fashioned by the time I started writing science fiction. And although the Surrealists in particular were regarded as totally disreputable by the guardians of bourgeois culture there were still exhibitions. I remember going to an exhibition of new Magrittes in a little gallery near Berkeley Square—this was in something like 1955—which included many paintings of his which are now world-famous. They were openly derided, and not just by art critics: no literary reviewer would refer to the Surrealists at all. When I wrote my first serious novel, *The Drowned World,* somebody at Gollancz suggested to me that I delete the references to Surrealist painters—this was 1962—because, it was felt, the references diminished my own novel by association. He regarded my novel as a serious piece of imaginative fiction, and by bringing in the Surrealists, these references to Ernst and Dali and Delvaux, I diminished my novel. I refused of course. But that was 1962!

I wasn't acquainted with literary Surrealism. The French texts probably weren't translated. I remember reading Edmund Wilson's *The Wound and the Bow* as a student, his accounts of writers like Joyce and Hemingway. His chief interests were Eliot, Pound and so on. The Paris in which those writers for the most part lived was also inhabited by the Surrealists, but they figured in the margins of the text, in the margins of the biographies of those writers. It was primarily the artists who were referred to. I've never really been interested in literary Surrealism—in Jarry and Appollinaire, yes, but they're not strictly speaking Surrealists.

> J. Graham Ballard who shares the first prize of £10 with D.S. Birley in the *Varsity* Crime Story Competition is now in his second year at King's and immersed in the less literary process of reading medicine.
>
> He admitted to our reporter yesterday that he had in fact entered the competition more for the prize than anything else, although he had been encouraged to go on writing because of his success.
>
> The idea for his short story which deals with the problem of Malayan terrorism, he informs us, he had been thinking over for some time before hearing of the competition.
>
> He has, in addition to writing short stories, also planned "mammoth novels" which "never get beyond the first page".
>
> —Profile accompanying "The Violent Noon", *Varsity,* 26th May 1951

I remember submitting one or two of my early short stories to *Horizon.* There weren't many places to be published then. There were very few magazines at all, and the experimental, impressionistic prose poetry I was writing—free-form—was the sort of thing that was just turned down without a second thought by people in charge. That very early story of mine, which won the Cambridge competition when I was 21, was done as almost a pastiche of a certain kind of Hemingwayesque short story. It certainly wasn't typical of the other material I was writing at the time. I wanted to win the competition, actually: that was my intention, but I knew that I wouldn't win unless I wrote a story of that kind.

I went to London University for a year after I left Cambridge and I read English. This

makes me sound like a medieval scholar, moving from bench to bench, but it wasn't like that. I'd won this story competition, and I thought I'd studied enough medicine for my purposes. The next phase was the clinical phase. I'd been in and out of clinical hospitals as part of the two years I did at Cambridge, and I knew that clinical medicine was enormously demanding in time and energy. Young doctors work long hours, and though they may over the years accumulate an enormous amount of fascinating material they have no time for anything else. In a way I felt I'd completed the interesting phase of studying medicine. The pre-clinical phase is almost pure science; it's anatomy, physiology, pathology. I felt I'd already stocked my vocabulary enough for me to move on. I wanted to write—I felt the power of imagination pushing at the door of my mind and I wanted to open it.

My father said, with a chemist's logic, "Well, if you want to be a writer you should study English". So I went to London University, read English, and they turfed me out at the end of the year, deciding I hadn't got what it took to be a student of English Literature. I was then about 22. I went to work for an advertising agency called Digby Wills Ltd., where I wrote copy, for lemon juice among other things. I was there for three of four months. Then I worked as an encylopaedia salesman. That was fascinating, one of the most interesting periods in my life. It lasted about six months, I think. Simply going into so many people's homes, I was conducting my own Gallup survey of English life. An encyclopaedia salesman has to start at No. 1—knock, knock—and then go on to No. 2. You must knock on every door and try to get in. You have to overcome the feeling that because the lace curtains look a little intimidating you won't knock here—you must go in. And it's quite extraordinary, the variety of human lives . . . It was fascinating.

My father certainly disapproved totally of my wanting to become a writer (in exactly the way I would if one of my children wanted to be a writer!). He regarded it as not really a profession at all, didn't think one could make a sustained career out of it. It would take years to discover whether one had the sort of talent the world would pay attention to. In many senses of course, he was absolutely right. But even with the benefit of hindsight I wouldn't change things. It would have been much easier for me if I had, say, graduated as a doctor. I then would have been financially secure, and given the sort of imaginative pressures I was feeling I think I probably would have written—though nowhere near as much as I did. But I'm glad I approached it the way I did. I was a late starter, but that may have been necessary.

My mother agreed with my father, but I don't think either of them had much influence on me. I don't think parents do have as much influence on their children as people imagine. I have three children, a son and two daughters, all of whom are in their 20s now. I don't think I have any influence on them whatever. In fact we agree about a great number of things, but where they disagree with me they follow their own paths.

My real problems began when I was thrown out of London University, because that had been a year's grace. I still wasn't ready to do anything remotely like becoming a professional writer. The opportunities didn't exist. My father gave me a small allowance, but it was *hard earned.* It was a tricky time. But the sort of pressures that make an imaginative writer, as opposed to say a naturalistic novelist, the pressures are so strong they must come from some source deep within the mind that's been forming itself since the very earliest days. It's part of one's fundamental apparatus for dealing with reality. It's not in any way the exercise of some social art. One might almost say it's part of some

neurological apparatus for coping with the experience of living—everything from the most humdrum event like crossing a room and opening a door to the most important and richest events in one's life, like being married and having children. The whole spectrum of one's experience is obviously integrated with something deep in the mind, and if somebody feels that sort of pressure—this is obvious if you read the biographies of Surrealist painters or imaginative writers in general—there's nothing really that's going to deflect him. It's like breathing . . .

There were periods, I suppose, when I just drifted. I was discovering London for the first time. I'd come down from Cambridge and had a year as a student. I lived in a very shabby cheap bedsitter in South Kensington. I spent a lot of time in Chelsea, a world that's vanished now. It wasn't a bohemian phase, though. I was writing a lot of short fiction of various kinds, but I was still waiting for that discovery of science fiction. I think I would have made it if I'd not gone to Canada in fact, because round about the mid-50s the sf magazines began to be distributed over here, and I'm sure I would have come across them.

I went into the Air Force on a strange sort of impulse, I think. I was suddenly keen to fly. I always have had a keenness to fly, all my life. It's a strange thing running through my mind, and I think it comes out in my writing. I've always been interested in aviation, and the 1950s was an exciting time. The first advanced postwar jets were appearing on the scene, supersonic travel was here to stay, the world was being changed by aviation. Also in the field of weapons technology there was a whole new world, huge bombers carrying atomic weapons everywhere. I suddenly felt "I want to be part of this"—I was very young. I'd had a great deal of experience as a child and also as a medical student, but I needed something more. I wanted that experience and it was a chance also to get out of England, because the RAF's flight training was done in Canada. I'd been to Canada and the United States on a trip with my parents in 1939, but I only had hazy memories. I wanted to get out of England desperately. So after my basic training I went. I was sent to the RCAF flight-training base at Moosejaw, Saskatchewan, which is quite a place to be! That's where I discovered science fiction, in the magazine racks of the airbase cafeteria, and I've never looked back since!!

> Already one can see that science fiction, far from being an unimportant minor off-shoot, in fact represents the main literary tradition of the 20th century—a tradition that runs in an intact line through Wells, Aldous Huxley, the writers of modern American sf, and such present day innovators as William Burroughs and Paolozzi.
>
> The main "fact" of the 20th century is the concept of the unlimited future. This predicate of science and technology enshrines the notion of a moratorium on the past . . .
>
> In the face of this immense continent of possibility, all literatures other than science fiction are doomed to irrelevance. None have the vocabulary of ideas and images to deal with the present, let alone the future . . .
>
> —J.G. Ballard, "Salvador Dali: The Innocent as Paranoid", *New Worlds* 187, February 1969

"Passport to Eternity" was the first sf story I ever wrote—again, written as a kind of pastiche. I think I slightly embroidered it when I came to sell it to one of the American magazines some years later. But I was still in the RAF when I wrote that story. I wrote it at RAF Booker, which was a base for cashiered air crew, for people being thrown out of the Air Force. We sat in this airfield, near High Wycombe, a sort of transit camp, straight out of Kafka in a way. There were great gloomy huts by the pines on the edge of these empty runways where we reject aircrew sat around, trying to keep warm by the one stove. They

didn't bother to keep us warm, and there was nothing to do. There were two squadron leaders who were in charge of processing us, and they had to wait for various documents to arrive. As mine had to come from Canada, I spent a long time there. Weeks went by, and I sat around waiting for my name to be called. Suddenly a name would be called out, the man in question would go to meet these squadron leaders, and five minutes later he would be a civilian and leave the base forever. One didn't know when this was going to happen, so with all this spare time on my hands I thought "I'll write a science fiction story!" Which I did. I'd been reading all this stuff in Canada. For some reason, I wrote "Passport to Eternity", which was a sort of summary of it all in a way.

It was influenced by a story by Jack Vance, which I remember vividly from a magazine, called "Meet Miss Universe". That was a biological fantasy about a beauty contest; it impressed me enormously with its wit and cleverness and inventiveness—the best of that sort of American science fiction. As I say, "Passport to Eternity" was a summary of all the American sf I'd been reading over the past year in Canada. It's a kind of spoof, indistinguishable really from the American sf. It didn't occur to me to submit it—I don't know why, I think I had other problems on my mind. I already knew that I wanted to write a different kind of sf—that story may have been my first, but it isn't in any way typical. A few years later I typed it out again from the original typescript, the basic story unchanged, and sent it to—Cele Goldsmith, I suppose.

I wanted to write for the American magazines. It didn't occur to me to write for British ones, I don't think I even *knew* about *New Worlds.* The American magazines of the day were much more widely distributed. I'd been reading them in Canada, and I was familiar with the writers—the level of professionalism was far higher in the American magazines. The magazine that I admired most (sadly, I never had a story in it) was *Galaxy.* I admired it tremendously, and read every issue for a couple of years. *Astounding* was terribly *heavy,* it seemed to be mostly planet yarns, and the stories had very little wit. Wit was the great strength of *Galaxy*—there were stories by Sheckley there, and other things which I relished at the time, like Leiber's "The Big Time". My ambition was to be published in *Galaxy.* I think I submitted some stories, but they all came back. When I wrote "Prima Belladonna" I knew that I couldn't adopt an American manner and tone of voice, and I didn't want to. I couldn't use an American location for Vermilion Sands, although nominally in some respects it is American . . . I was forced to invent a kind of international version of a decaying resort in the desert. Thank God I had to, because if I'd been able to use Palm Springs or wherever I would have slipped into a lot of clichés, all the conventional clichés of the American landscape. I had to invent my own landscape, and I invented something which was much truer to myself and also much closer to the Surrealists (who were my main inspiration). In fact, I had to invent my own America.

I got married in '55, I suppose. Time went by very rapidly, with the baby around . . . I worked in a couple of libraries for about six months—Richmond Borough Library, or Sheen Public Libraries, I can't really remember. But I spent a lot of time writing, and of course I had a young wife and child . . . The period of greatest financial stringency was after I got married, that *was* the difficult period.

After winning the annual short story competition at Cambridge in 1951 he wrote his first novel, a completely unreadable pastiche of *Finnegans Wake* and *The Adventures of Engelbrecht.* James Joyce still remains the wordmaster, but it wasn't until he turned to science fiction that he found a medium where he could exploit his imagination, being less concerned with the popular scientific approach than using it as a springboard into the surreal and fantastic.

> Outwardly, at any rate, he lives quietly in Chiswick with his wife and baby son Jimmie. He admits that though she doesn't actually write his stories his wife has as much to do with their final production as he has himself. She hopes to have his novel *You and Me and the Continuum* finished by the end of this year.
>
> . . . Of the genre in general he says "Writers who interest me are Poe, Wyndham Lewis and Bernard Wolfe, whose *Limbo 90* I think the most interesting science fiction novel so far published."
>
> —Profile in *New Worlds* 54, December 1956

I think I did write some pastiches of *The Adventures of Engelbrecht,* though I was gilding the lily a little to refer to it as my first novel. When you're 21 or 22 thirty consecutive pages feel like a novel! I'd accumulated a great mass of experimental prose, certainly heavily influenced by *Finnegans Wake* and *Engelbrecht.* Maurice Richardson's book was, I won't say a *big* influence on me, but I loved it. It's a marvellous book, with terrific panache and swing—very nicely illustrated in the published edition. Moorcock's a great admirer of it too, I'm glad to say. Richardson wrote a science fiction story in fact, which was published in *Horizon,* Connolly's magazine. A fine sf story. I met him for the one and only time about two weeks before he died, and I'm glad I did because I was able to tell him, for what it was worth, how much I admired his *Engelbrecht,* and that sf story he wrote in the 40s (the only one, he said).

As for this *You and Me and the Continuum*—I did write a sort of experimental novel, nothing like the subsequent story of that name or any of the *Atrocity Exhibition* stories. At the time I wrote the story "You and Me and the Continuum", in 1965, I'd completely forgotten this—ten years in your 20s and early 30s is a long time—but the phrase must have stuck in my mind. That was a long time ago, I can't really remember. I suppose it was fiction of an impressionistic nature, no attempt at straightforward narrative or story-telling—a highly stylized mixture of dramatic dialogue, in some ways rather like a film script, with interludes of prose poetry, a very hot steaming confection with bits and pieces from all quarters. The sort of thing you produce if you're a great devotee of *Ulysses* or *Finnegans Wake* when young . . . Of course, Joyce was a totally different sort of writer. I think I simply hadn't found the narrative conventions which would carry my real interests, and when I stumbled on science fiction I realized "Ah!—this is the right vehicle for my imagination." Remember, in the early 50s I was writing against a background of English and American fiction at the height of the naturalistic novel, in which I felt no sympathy whatsoever. I can't remember who the dominant English writers of the day were—most of them have vanished into oblivion. Not just the novel, but criticism and the English cinema—I had no interest in that whatever. I read on what I'd call the international menu, not the English menu.

I was as impressed by Wolfe's *Limbo 90* when I reread it a year or so ago as I was when I first read it in 1954 or '55. It certainly was one of the books that encouraged me to write sf. Much as I admired Ray Bradbury—he was almost alone among sf writers of the day—I didn't feel that my own sf would follow in Bradbury's direction at all. It was tremendously encouraging to read *Limbo 90* and to see a powerful imagination given full rein. I was impressed by the power of the central imaginative idea, and Wolfe's lucid intelligence at work. It stands head and shoulders above anything else, in a similar vein, by any science fiction writers I've read. To some extent it reminds me of the huge disservice which American writers of the old *Analog* school, Campbell chief among them, have rendered to the cause of sf. They virtually seized a monopoly interest in a social and political sf, which they reduced to a series of comic strips. Wolfe's novel is a sophisticated, anti-

utopian piece of fiction which stands comparison with anything written by mainstream writers of the mid-20th century. It may not be as great a book as *1984* or *Brave New World,* but it's certainly worth judging by the same yardstick.

I was about to start writing sf myself. *Limbo 90* was a great encouragement to me, because here was a writer who had the courage to follow his own imagination to the limit, without any concern for the commercial constraints and conventions that I felt severely handicapped the American and British writers of the early 50s (they only went so far and then stopped). Wolfe's novel has a literary and imaginative dimension that's explored for its own sake. I was struck by the huge vitality of the thing, and by his central image—self-amputation as a metaphor for the castration complex, with the whole apparatus of neurotic aggression, wars themselves, struggles for power and so on, flowing from that. I think he brilliantly sustained the idea both on the imaginative level and on the conscious and intellectual level. That's something that's very rare in anti-utopian fiction, where you tend to get one or the other. I think the book was above the heads of most sf readers of the 1950s. It's a shame that it's out of print.

> Jim Ballard sent me a story, 'Escapement", in the summer of 1956, when I was editing *New Worlds SF* and *Science Fantasy,* which I liked and offered to buy. He then followed it up with a personal visit to my office, bringing with him a fantasy story titled "Prima Belladonna", which I liked even better. The chemicals had begun to catalyze. In a very short time, stories were flowing steadily from the versatile mind of Jim Ballard . . .
> —from "Preface" by E.J. Carnell, *J.G. Ballard: A Bibliography,* compiled James Goddard, 1970

I remember submitting stories to Carnell's magazines only out of desperation. And of course he bought the very first one. I think "Prima Belladonna" was the first I wrote, although it may not have been the first I submitted. Whatever the case, it and "Escapement" went to him within weeks if not days . . . In fact, I'm certain it was "Prima Belladonna" because I remember getting a very, very encouraging letter from him, which he wouldn't have sent if it had been "Escapement" (that was rather a humdrum story). He wrote to me saying "Extraordinary story, with fascinating ideas—I'm going to publish it and will pay you £2 a thousand . . ." I was amazed. I was 25, married by then of course, and it was an extraordinary event. To have your first published work in a commercial magazine . . . I was overjoyed. I sent him the next story, which I'm almost certain was "Escapement", and he took that and I was well away. I never thought about submitting stories anywhere else for years, simply because Ted Carnell was sitting there. He never rejected a single story, ever. He must have taken 30 or 40 from me. In one or two cases he suggested alterations, that certain sections could be expanded, and I think I always took up his suggestions, expanded a particular scene or made something slightly clearer. But he never really wanted any rewriting. The only things he sometimes changed were the titles, but not too often. There was a little story called "Track 12"—that was his title, not mine. We had an argument over that, because he'd just taken "Manhole 69" without querying what *that* meant . . . I can't remember my original title in fact, but it contained the word "Atlantis", as the story is all about a drowning, and he said "we can't use this title that includes the word Atlantis because that suggests a different kind of story to our readers".

After I'd written about three or four stories he suggested "Why don't you come into the office—we can meet". I went along. He had offices somewhere near the agents A.P. Watt, just around the corner from the Strand. He had rather a big comfortable basement

office, full of sf posters and artwork for the magazine. I liked him enormously. He struck me as a very likeable, sensitive and intelligent man, whose mind was above all the pettiness in the sf world. I think he recognized what I was on about from a very early stage and he encouraged me to go on writing in my own way.

In 1957 Ted said "I can get you a job on one of the journals upstairs". In fact it was round the corner at McLaren's offices where all these technical and trade journals were published. I jumped at it. I worked there for six months, and then somehow I heard that there was a vacancy as assistant editor on *Chemistry and Industry,* at a much better salary, and I went there. That was a very good choice—apart from anything else, because of all the scientific journals which came into the offices and I devoured. And the hours were pretty lax. I was even able to do a bit of writing in the office, which was a big help. *Chemistry and Industry* was published by the Society of Chemical Industry, in Belgrave Square. I was there for three or four years as assistant editor. I did practically everything. The editor was a chemist but he was not a journalist, and he knew nothing about magazine production. This was a weekly journal, of about 50 pages, including a mass of formulae and tabular material. It was quite an enterprise, and I enjoyed it. I did all the basic subbing, marking copy up for the typesetter, dealing with the printers, doing make-up and paste-up, dealing with the artists who drew the scientific formulae. I used to go on works visits, visits to laboratories and research institutes. I wrote a few articles—scientific reporting—and I reviewed scientific books. But most of it was straight production. I enjoyed being at the centre of a huge information flow. A leading scientific journal like *Chemistry and Industry* is on the mailing list of every conceivable scientific body in the world. I think one of the reasons my fiction of the early 60s has a high science content is because I was immersed in scientific papers of all kinds continually.

> The exhibition "This is Tomorrow" was staged at the Whitechapel Art Gallery in 1956. The exhibition consisted of a dozen stands, on each of which a different team of architect/painter/sculptor had collaborated. Richard Hamilton was teamed with John McHale (now an associate of Buckminster Fuller) and John Voelker; together they produced an environment which has been called the first genuine work of Pop. It combined a large-scale use of popular imagery with an imaginative exploitation of perception techniques. Prominent were a 16-ft robot—with flashing eyes and teeth—making off with an unconscious starlet; a photo blow-up of Marilyn Monroe; a gigantic Guinness bottle. These large objects were placed at the rear of the exhibit . . . Another section of floor—part of a sci-fi capsule—was painted with fluorescent red paint . . . In a tall chamber some of Marcel Duchamp's rotor-reliefs spun in a setting which was itself compounded of optical illusion. Smells drifted about the whole exhibit; several movies were projected at once while a juke-box played in front of a huge collage of film posters which curved round like a cinerama screen.
>
> To a large extent this concept grew out of the activities of the ICA's Independent Group in which Hamilton had been a notable participant along with Eduardo Paolozzi, the architects Peter and Alison Smithson and the critics Peter Reyner Banham and Lawrence Alloway . . .
>
> —Christopher Finch, "A Fine/Pop Art Continuum", *New Worlds* 176, October 1967

I was always interested in the visual arts. I bought a lot of art magazines, and I used to go to all the new exhibitions on in London. I spent a lot of time haunting the National Gallery and the Tate Gallery—at times I used to go every day. I was interested in the old ICA. I wasn't a member, but I used to go to exhibitions there. That was a hothouse of ideas, and Pop Art was born there. Some people whom I subsequently got to know—Paolozzi, Reyner Banham, Hamilton and so on—formed the so-called Independent Group there. They were interested in a fresh look at the consumer goods and media landscape of the day, regarded it as a proper subject-matter for the painter. I felt that their

approach had a certain kinship with that of science fiction (in which they were all extremely interested) and I went along to the "This is Tomorrow" exhibition at the Whitechapel Gallery in '56. That was really the birth of Pop Art, the Americans hadn't started then. Richard Hamilton had on show his famous little painting, I can't remember the exact title—"What is it That Makes Today's Home So Exciting?" The first Pop painting, though in fact it's a collage. And there were a lot of other Pop artefacts there, which impressed me a great deal. It struck me that these were the sorts of concerns that the sf writer should be interested in. Science fiction should be concerned with the here and now, not with the far future but with the present, not with alien planets but with what was going on in the world in the mid-50s. I still feel this, of course, but it was even truer then than it is now, because the world we live in now was being *born* in the postwar period. Then, if you looked at sf magazines, both British and American, they were almost entirely concerned with intergalactic adventures which struck me as rather juvenile and irrelevant to the lives that most people were leading.

What was so exciting about Pop Art was the response it elicited from the public. People were amazed by it. Here for the first time was an art actually about what it was like to buy a new refrigerator, what it was like to be in a modern kitchen, what modern fabrics and clothes and mass advertising were about, the whole world of the communications landscape, TV, radio and movies. I mean, the Pop Artists (and Pop is an unfortunate term to describe them) were taking the world they lived in seriously, at its own terms. I thought the sf writer needed to do the same, to get away from interplanetary travel and time-travel and telepathy and all this nonsense.

I first met Eduardo Paolozzi with Michael Moorcock, much later. When Mike took over *New Worlds,* after a year or two and with my encouragement he adopted a large format and he wanted articles on the visual arts. I knew that Paolozzi was interested in sf, and I suggested that we have an article on him. So I got his number from somebody, rang him up, and we went along to his studio. This was in something like 1966. We all got on famously together, and he became a contributor to *New Worlds.* I've known him very well in the years since, and through him I've met people like Hamilton and Reyner Banham.

By the late 1950s Pop Art was well on its way. I don't think it was a big influence on the fiction I was writing—if you read my early stories and novels there are very few traces, if any at all. (The dominant influence, if there *is* an influence from the visual arts, was that of the Surrealists.) It wasn't really until I started writing the stories which made up *The Atrocity Exhibition* that I began to make direct references to the Pop Artists. What the Pop Artists did for me though was to encourage me in my determination to change things. This was more difficult to do than you might realize, because 1957 was the year of Sputnik 1, and this seemed to confirm all the age-old dreams of the old-guard sf writers, editors and readers. In the next two or three years there was Gagarin's first flight and the launch of the American space programme. But the Pop Artists and their interest in the present, all the excitements of the media landscape around us, helped convince me that the course I'd set myself was the right one—sf needed to be about the present day, so much more interesting than this invented realm millions of years in the future and on other planets . . . All that struck me as nothing to do with science fiction.

ZERO SYNTHESIS . . . COMA: THE MILLION YEAR GIRL . . . KLINE: RESCORING THE C.N.S. . . . MR F IS MR F . . . XERO: RUN HOT WITH A MILLION PROGRAMS . . . "I am 7000 years old" . . . T – 1: EMERGENCY MEGACHANNEL . . . THORACIC

DROP . . . PROGRAMMING THE PSYCHODRILL: CODED SLEEP AND INTER-TIME . . . AM: BEACH HAMLET . . . PM: IMAGO TAPES . . . THE EXISTENTIAL YES! . . . TIME ZONE . . . PRE-UTERINE CLAIMS: KLINE . . . THE A-GIRL: COMA . . . TIME PACK: MR F . . . COMA SLID OUT OF THE SOLAR RIG . . . T – 12 . . . TIME PROBE . . . VOLCANO JUNGLE: VISION OF A DYING STAR-MAN . . . "Coma," Kline murmured, "let's get out of time . . ."
—Phrases from a collage, *New Worlds* 213, Summer 1978 (described in the editorial as "J.G. Ballard material originally done in 1958 and published here for the first time")

Martin Bax has that now. It was a sort of collage of things; a lot of them were clipped from journals like *Chemical Engineering News,* the American Chemical Society's journal—I used them a lot because I liked the typeface. I wanted to publish a novel that looked like that, you see—hundreds of pages of that sort of thing. Get away from text altogether—just headlines! I was very proud of those pages. Moorcock published them in *New Worlds* three or four years ago. They were like chromosomes in a way, because so many of the subsequent ideas and themes of mine appeared in those pages. Kline, Coma, Xero—they're all there. I don't know. I used to make these things up!

I wasn't satisfied just by writing sf stories, you see. My imagination was eager to expand in all directions. The sf magazines only allowed me a limited amount of scope. Ted Carnell was tremendously generous, but as soon as I started writing for the American magazines, which I began to do in about 1961, '62, I started to get a lot of rejections. People like Cele Goldsmith and the man on *Fantasy and Science Fiction* accepted some of my stories and published them, but they rejected a lot too. It was obvious to me that the conventions of American sf were far tighter, far more prescriptive, than anything Carnell laid down. He was remarkably flexible . . . Some people think there always has been a new wave, there always has been total freedom to write anything you like in sf. What they don't realize is that this had to be *earned,* the breakthrough had to be made—and it didn't start in 1965.

In those days, when I started writing science fiction, I would like to have written stories such as I wrote later in *The Atrocity Exhibition*—not those stories in particular, but similar ones. I would like to have written those *long* before they finally began to appear, but I didn't have the freedom to do so. The kind of narrative breakthrough, or whatever you like to call it, that I launched myself on in the *Atrocity Exhibition* stories from '65 onward wasn't just a sudden event, a blinding light on my own little road to Damascus. I was interested in writing experimental fiction (though I hate the phrase, in fact) when I was still at *school.* But one has to work within the possibilities available. Ted was reluctant to publish "The Terminal Beach". I think he only published it, to be honest, because *The Drowned World* had just had a big success, and he knew that I had put "The Terminal Beach" into a Gollancz collection, under that title. I remember him saying to me: "Oh, Gollancz are publishing it, are they? Right, I'll do it." But up to that point I had to work within the possibilities. If I'd had the freedom to do so I'd have been publishing experimental sf long before the mid-60s.

But I think it was remarkable of Ted to publish "The Terminal Beach" in what was, after all, a commercial magazine. I remember sending that story to America. I think I sent it to *F & SF,* and certainly to Cele Goldsmith, who turned it down. My then agents, the Scott Meredith agency in New York, refused to handle the story. It was one of the very few stories of mine that they actually returned to me, saying there was no scope for it. Subsequently, of course, they've sold that story umpteen times to American anthologies. Very funny!

> The grand occasion in 1957 was the holding of the World Science Fiction Convention in London—the first time this annual event had been allowed to stray outside the North American continent . . .
>
> Was that nondescript year really 1957, and not 1947? The convention was held in a terrible hotel in the Queensway district. A distinctly post-war feeling lingered. Bomb damage was still apparent . . .
>
> I went to the bar and bought a drink. Standing next to me was a slim young man who told me that there were some extraordinary types at the convention, and that he was thinking of leaving pretty smartly. He introduced himself as J.G. Ballard.
>
> —Brian Aldiss, *The Shape of Further Things,* 1970, (Ch. 11)

I didn't really have that much to do with Ted, on a personal level. I would talk to him on the phone and write him letters but I didn't go to his offices very often. For one thing I was very busy, and for another a lot of the British sf writers of the time used to hang around there and I didn't like them very much. I don't mean to be offensive personally—I can't even remember their names—but to my young, arrogant mind they struck me as being hacks who were only interested in their two guineas a thousand, or whatever. They had no interest whatever in what they were writing, and regarded anybody who was trying to do anything different as just affected or wasting his time. I had brief discussions now and then with one or two of them, but I didn't have anything in common. I took sf seriously, I thought it had great possibilities . . .

I produced quite a lot of stuff in 1956, '57, and then I went to the Science Fiction Convention in London. That shattered me, and then I dried up for about a year. For over a year I didn't write any sf at all. I was disillusioned and demoralized. I only went to the Convention for one day, actually, or maybe I went on a couple of days. But I won't repeat all that. Carnell was the only person in the sf world I ever met, because I never went to any meetings or anything like that. The fact that I was writing and being published in *New Worlds* and *Science Fantasy* from '57 to '63 didn't alter my life in any way. It was just something I did: I wrote a story, put it in the post, got a small cheque, and the story in due course was published. Then I wrote another. It wasn't really until 1963, after *The Drowned World,* that I began to meet people in the sf world—Moorcock, Brunner, Aldiss and various other people (though I'd met Aldiss at the Convention in '57, and John Wyndham).

I've had problems since—not recently, but in subsequent years. I came across philistine attitudes in many of the American writers in the 60s when I began to meet them. Certainly at a place like the big sf conference at Rio that I went to in 1969 (I met practically all the American writers there) I came across the same attitudes, though by and large they were far more talented writers than the ones Carnell had around him in the late 50s.

We moved to Shepperton in 1960, and one drawback was the enormous journey, to and fro, from central London. It was difficult to help in bringing up a family of young children *and* to travel this distance to work *and* to secure enough time and energy for oneself to go on writing. Though I produced short stories at quite a steady rate, I think, in the late 50s and early 60s. By the time I was in my early 30s I was beginning to feel that I couldn't see any opportunity for a radical break—another ten years would go by and I'd still be churning out short stories. It was difficult to seize enough time to write, and I couldn't visualize myself being able to write a novel, given all this endless commuting. When I got home I had a tired young wife who wanted to go out for a drink, or round up a baby-sitter and see friends, or do whatever one did then. With three young children she was absolutely exhausted anyway, at the end of a long day. It was difficult to visualize

actually writing . . . When I think of the leisure I have now: it's beyond my wildest dreams! I couldn't conceive of myself writing a serious novel, so I wrote *The Wind from Nowhere* very quickly in my fortnight's annual holiday, simply to make that break and become a professional writer.

Which I managed to do. And of course *The Wind from Nowhere* opened a few little doors. It led to my tie-in with Berkley Books and to short-story collections. It was a convenient arrangement because they published almost everything I'd written, volumes of stories which were then republished all over the world and gave me the income to make the final break. But they were hectic times. My stories were written in snatched minutes, snatched half hours here and there, scribbled on the backs of envelopes . . . I'm not, for God's sake, inviting pity, but it was all done in a kind of spur-of-the-moment, knocked-out-rapidly fashion. This continued to be true until quite recently. My youngest child is now 22, but it wasn't *that* long ago that I had three teenagers at home and domestic life going at full blast!

> There can be no question now that J.G. Ballard has emerged as the greatest imaginative writer of his day. This latest collection of stories is profoundly stimulating and emotionally exciting. It shows us a writer whose intellectual control of his subject-matter is only matched by the literary giants of the past, and it shows us a writer who is developing so rapidly that almost every story he writes is better than the last. He is the first really important literary talent to come from the field of modern sf and it is to his credit that he is as popular with his magazine audience as he ever was. He has shown that sf need make no concessions to the commercial publisher's idea of what the public wants.
>
> . . . Buy this one—as an investment if nothing else, for there will come a time when a Ballard first edition will be valuable.
>
> —Michael Moorcock, reviewing *The Terminal Beach* in *New Worlds* 144, Sept./Oct. 1964

I have no feelings about first editions. I don't think there's anything magical about a first edition. Obviously, if you gave me a first edition of *The Ancient Mariner* I would look after it because it would have a sort of iconic value, but a first edition of *Our Lady of the Flowers* or *The Naked Lunch* would mean no more to me than a tenth edition. I was annoyed recently. Some of my own books are more valuable now than I realized. Somebody sent me a parcel of books, asking me if I'd sign them. There were a couple of the original Berkley paperbacks of *The Voices of Time* and *The Terminal Beach*. They were just paperbacks that retailed at 40 or 50 cents in the early 60s. And *The Voices of Time* was marked at £6 and *The Terminal Beach* at £4! It put me in a terrible temper for the whole of the day! I thought this was outrageous. I got a 5% royalty on those, so if it was a 50 cent paperback I got the princely sum of 2½ cents—which in those days was probably about a penny. Now somebody is getting £6 from these things, and that's extraordinary. I suppose one ought to be grateful; in a way it's a reflection of the continuing interest that people have in the stuff . . .

There's an illustrated edition of *The Drowned World* coming out soon. It's being done by those Dragon's World or Dragon's Dream people, the company started by Roger Dean. Two artists were commissioned. One did a whole mass of wonderful huge paintings, six feet by five feet, illustrating *The Terminal Beach* stories. I thought they were superb paintings. The other artist did *The Drowned World,* and they appear to be publishing this illustrated large-format version any time now. I've seen most of the artwork, and it seemed to me rather good. I assume that if they do all right with that they'll then issue *The Terminal Beach*. Roger Dean, when he was all excited about it three or four years ago, had a group of artists who were eager to do everything—*Crash:* there

was one man doing huge paintings of crashed cars . . . But commercial considerations tended to cool their ardour. Illustrated books are enormously expensive to produce.

My original idea for *The Atrocity Exhibition* was that I would do collage illustrations. I put that up to Cape. I originally wanted a large-format book, printed by photo-offset, in which I could prepare the artwork—a lot of collages, material taken from medical documents and medical photographs, crashing cars and all that sort of iconography. It wouldn't have been any more expensive for them to photograph the pages of collages than the pages of text. But to them illustrated books meant six pages of line drawings by some distinguished artist, Felix Topolski or somebody. So that fell through. I would still like to do it . . . Well, I don't know. My mind has moved on. Time goes by, one loses contact with one's previous incarnations, one's previous selves.

> The pain in this book is overwhelming, the impact devastating . . . Like "The Terminal Beach" it is absolutely cold, contained, final and *sui generis*. In short, it is a masterpiece . . . It is impossible not to realize confronting it that one is in the presence of perhaps the major figure in western literature of our time.
> —Barry Malzberg, reviewing *Love and Napalm: Export USA (The Atrocity Exhibition)* in *F & SF*, September 1976

My wife died in 1964, so I was a single parent as well as a full-time author. If I had not been a full-time writer I couldn't have brought up my children. Somebody else would have had to do it for me, at least during the daylight hours. Conversely, if I'd had to go out to work I couldn't conceivably have written. If I had not been here with the children all day long I would not have been able to write. When I think of the *Atrocity Exhibition* stories, written between 1965 and '70—that's 16 years ago. Bea, my youngest daughter, who is 22 now, was six when I started writing them—so Fay was seven and Jim was nine. Children of that age, I drove them to and from school, I did everything. We had an integrated rich family life blazing away 24 hours a day!

I wrote *Crash* with three children running around. It *was* worrying. I wrote that between 1970 and '72, when Bea was ten. And they were crossing the road about 20 times a day, on the way to wherever children go. I didn't want a knock on the door and see a bobby or a policewoman come to tell me some unpleasant news. That really would have been life's most bitter joke . . .

As recently as five or six years ago I had two teenage girls here doing 'A' levels, with all the fuss involved in exams and their school activities which I took part in. So most of my fiction has been produced out of the huge harum-scarum of domestic life! It's none the worse or better for that. But the domestic aspect of my life has been tremedously important.

My next book will be a short-story collection, *Myths of the Near Future*, which will contain two new novellas (nearly half the book is brand new), plus stories from the last three or four years which have appeared in *Ambit*, *Bananas* and *Time Out*—ten stories in all, and I think one of my best collections for a long time. I hope to write some more novellas, as I seem to have a lot of ideas in that sort of range.

I think a new science fiction magazine is needed now. There are very powerful political, economic and social currents flowing. You see them at work in this country—all these riots, the polarizing of political forces—and all over the world for that matter, between the haves and the have-nots. All these topics such as how do you run a society where a large proportion of people will never work, these are the sorts of themes that classic sf treated. I think a new sf magazine would do a marvellous job, and have a market

of concerned readers. If you read papers like *Time Out* or *The New Musical Express,* for example . . . A paper like *NME* is full of anguished concern with the great issues of the day—unemployment, science and technology, the nuclear arms race—a range of social and political issues moves through the pages. These are the sort of topics that sf writers should be working on. We now have all these political currents that are flowing ever more briskly, a clash of radically opposed ideologies. I don't just mean party political, but fundamentally opposed interest groups on the most basic of levels. I think this is an extremely interesting time. Western Europe—and Eastern Europe to some extent—is a huge cauldron that's coming up to the boil. (I don't think there's any politics at all in the United States. There's a scramble for power up the greasy pole, but there's no clash of political ideologies there.)

Overlaid on this are all the changes in advanced technologies, communications, the video revolution, which are going to change enormously the way people see everything. I think these are fascinating times, and just the times that demand a good sf magazine to comment on them.

Brian Stableford has an encyclopaedic knowledge of both the highways and the byways of sf, and his excursions down the byways are particularly fascinating—as in the following account of a writer of whom (one can safely bet) few of the readers of Foundation *will ever have heard mention.*

Another sf Ozymandias? And, in another century, which sf edifices of today—one wonders—will be disinterred, crumbling, from the desert sands by a future Stableford?

Or is the moral different? For the majority of Edgar Fawcett's work—"mainstream" fiction and drama—has lapsed into oblivion absolute. Yet here, now, he is resurrected in part because of his forays into what he termed "realistic romance" . . .

The Realistic Romances of Edgar Fawcett

BRIAN STABLEFORD

Edgar Fawcett was born in New York in 1847. His father was an Englishman who became a prosperous merchant in New York; his mother was of American descent. He graduated from Columbia College in 1867 and received his M.A. three years later. He then became a gentleman of leisure and a man of letters, writing poetry, essays, plays and novels. He was

a prolific writer, publishing more than forty novels, seven volumes of poetry and two verse dramas. One collection of his essays appeared, though others were published in periodicals, and five of his plays were produced in New York and Boston. In addition, he copyrighted many other manuscripts which were never actually published.

The public apparently remained indifferent to virtually all his work, and the reviewers frequently treated his work with contempt. As he was essentially a dilettante—he was never dependent upon such income as he received from his writing—his principal motivation was a desire for recognition and appreciation that was never fulfilled. He launched many bitter assaults against the critics, the reading public and the publishers. Of the three, he considered the critics the most guilty, and he made war upon them with a fervour that has rarely been equalled, and surpassed only by Marie Corelli. The alienation of their affections seems to have continued even after his death. Fawcett's entry in *The Dictionary of American Biography* (1931), written by Oral Sumner Coad, is icily uncharitable not only in its description of his work but also in its comments upon his life history:

> His chief volumes of verse . . . reveal but a slender talent. A strained mode of expression and echoes of the major Victorians too often usurped the place of inspiration . . .
>
> It was as a novelist that Fawcett made his bulkiest contribution to the literature of his day. His volumes of fiction number approximately thirty-five, and with wearisome uniformity they reiterate one main theme . . . the amateurishness of Fawcett's plots, the woodenness of his characters, the dreary earnestness of his manner, and the monotony of his subjects are sufficient to justify Henry Stoddard's plaint: 'Won't somebody please turn this Fawcett off?' . . .
>
> Whether from a sense of irritation at the contempt with which certain newspaper critics in New York treated his work, or from some other cause, Fawcett at the age of fifty left America and took up his residence abroad. London was his home during his last years, and here, in bachelor quarters in the Chelsea district, he died after less than a week's illness.

He was not entirely without supporters, and his poetry in particular was praised by other writers, including Julian Hawthorne, James Russell Lowell and—most effusively—William Dean Howells. Nor was the unpopularity of his prose works entirely attributable to literary shortcomings. It was his subject-matter as much as his style which tended to cause offence. The "one main theme" to which Coad refers (though it is far from being the *only* concern in his works) is the snobbery and artificiality of New York society and social life. By virtue of having money (and—slightly more important in some quarters—an English father) Fawcett was able to move in relatively elevated social circles and to compare what he saw there with the various European versions of the *haut monde* which he observed during his travels. In many of his novels—the early *A Gentleman of Leisure* (1881) may stand as a prototype—his heroes conduct a running commentary upon the ills and evils of New York society, deploring the rigidity of its stratification, the arrogance and affectation of its cliques, and the way in which it apes the fashions of Europe. Coad concedes that "The picture thus drawn, allowing for the necessary exaggeration of satire, is not unveracious, especially in its presentation of the struggle between the old Dutch patricians and the new plutocrats". The project, however, was hardly calculated to win influential friends.

As well as his criticism of the social élite—which led him on occasion to voice socialist opinions—Fawcett was an ardent champion of agnosticism, and frequently wrote in scathing terms about the dogmas of orthodox religion. His volume of essays, *Agnosticism and Other Essays* (1889), carried an introduction by the famous freethinker and opponent of Christianity Robert G. Ingersoll. The battle between religion and rationalism is another of his favourite themes, and forms the chief subject-matter of two long

philosophical novels, *A Demoralizing Marriage* (1889) and *Outrageous Fortune* (1894). His partisanship in this battle can hardly have helped him win favour with the majority.

If his own generation was ungenerous in its treatment of Fawcett, posterity can hardly be said to have redeemed his reputation. At least, in his own day, he was something of a celebrity; ten years after his death he was quite forgotten. His works were never reprinted, and all of them faded into obscurity. In the seventy-seven years that have elapsed since his death virtually no attention has been paid to the man or his work save for the efforts of Stanley R. Harrison, who produced a doctoral dissertation on Fawcett for the University of Michigan in 1964, to which was appended an edition of one of Fawcett's unpublished novels and a collection of his letters. The critical commentary was expanded and published as a monograph in 1972. Harrison claims for Fawcett no more than that he was an interesting minor writer of his period, who played an important role in "the literary movement that proved to be the breeding ground for the works of Hamlin Garland, Stephen Crane, Frank Norris, Jack London, and Theodore Dreiser"—i.e., the tradition of American Realism and Naturalism. Harrison states:

> Fawcett's novels, essays, poems, and plays offer an insight into the political corruption of his age, a commentary upon the existence of a plutocracy within a democratic nation, a feeling for the confusion created by new philosophical concepts, and a reaction to the consequences of scientific learning and progress. His works also provide a rare insight into the origin, philosophy, and esthetic development of literary Realism and Naturalism, and a significant view of the international theme in American literature, as well they might, since these literary movements were themselves outgrowths of the wider intellectual currents of the time.

Harrison's interest in Fawcett is primarily concerned with his attempts at narrative realism, but he does observe that there was another side to Fawcett's work, reflected in a number of romantic melodramas. Harrison regards these as minor works, and to judge by his descriptions most of them are indeed devoid of interest, but at the end of the chapter on "Fawcett and Romance" he observes that Fawcett wrote three other "non-realistic novels" which he says "were not of a piece with the standard fare of his romances." He adds that: "They were journeys into the mind, excursions into fantasy; each one is fresh, inventive, and certainly experimental for its time." Having said this, and dutifully summarized the plots of the three works to which he refers, Harrison passes on to matters which are of greater interest to him.

The group of works to which the three titles Harrison dubs "non-realistic" belong is, however, of considerable interest in its own right, for it reveals Fawcett's importance in connection with a literary tradition quite apart from the slowly-nourished growth of narrative realism. Like many European and American writers of the period who were interested in Realism, Fawcett retained an interest in a special kind of Romance: in a kind of Romantic writing which absorbed something of the outlook of Realism—a Romantic fiction transfigured by rationalism.

There are, in fact, five—perhaps six—published works by Fawcett which belong to the curious category set aside by Harrison. He names *Solarion* (1889), *The New Nero* (1893) and *The Ghost of Guy Thyrle* (1895). The other two confirmed titles are *Douglas Duane* (1887) and *A Romance of Two Brothers* (1891). Fawcett himself mentions in this connection a story called "The Great White Emerald", but this has so far proved elusive—it does not figure in Harrison's bibliography or any other that I have been able to check. It seems certain, however, that Fawcett wrote more works of this kind, for in the list of stories copyrighted by Fawcett but never published (which Harrison provides) are

two unambiguous titles: *The Man from Mars* (1891) and *The Destruction of the Moon* (1892). Some of the other titles listed might belong to the category; *Was it a Ghost?* (1885) seems a likely candidate. It is not known at present whether manuscripts of these works survive. What *is* certain, however, is that Fawcett recognized these stories as belonging not only to a *distinct* type, but also to a *new* type. To the last and best of them, *The Ghost of Guy Thyrle,* he added an "epistolary proem" which is a kind of manifesto in justification of the species. The name of the addressee is represented only by a row of asterisks, but the message runs as follows:

> Do you remember how you once called a few former tales of mine ("Douglas Duane," "Solarion," "The Romance of Two Brothers," and perhaps also "The Great White Emerald") ghost-stories pure and simple? I then declared to you that I had never written a positive ghost-story in my life; and now, when I send you my "Ghost of Guy Thyrle", I am obstinate in repeating this assertion. Here, as in those other works, you will discern no truly "superstitious" element . . . Perhaps I am only a poor pioneer, after all, in the direction of trying to write the modern wonder-tale. It seems to me that this will never die till what we once called the Supernatural and now (so many of us!) call the Unknowable, dies as well. Mankind loves the marvellous; but his intelligence now rejects, in great measure, the marvellous unallied with sanity of presentment. We may grant that final causes are still dark as of old, but we will not accept mere myth and fable clad in the guise of truth. Romance, pushed back from the grooves of exploitation in which it once so easily moved, seeks new paths, and persists in finding them. It must find them, if at all, among those dim regions which the torch of science has not yet bathed in full beams of discovery. Its visions and spectres and mysteries must there or nowhere abide. Whenever we have spoken together of realism, my friend, you will recall how I have always held that a few polemic writers are not decrying the romantic, but rather the artificial. Romance is a shadow cast by the unknown, and follows it with necessitous pursuit. It can only perish when human knowledge has reached omniscience. Till then it may alter with our mental progress in countless ways, but the two existences are really one. Books like "Zanoni" and "A Strange Story" thrilled us in earlier years. Nowadays we want a different kind of romanticism, a kind that accommodates itself more naturally to our intensified sceptic tastes. It is the actual, the tangible, the ordinary, the explained, that realism always respects. From the vague, the remote, the unusual, the problematic, it recoils. Yet frequently the two forces of realism and romanticism have met, as in Balzac's "Peau de Chagrin", which might be called a fairy-tale written by a materialist. To make our romances acceptable with the world of modern readers, we must clothe them in rationalistic raiment. So clothed, my friend, I should name them "realistic romances"—stories where the astonishing and peculiar are blent with the possible and accountable. They may be as wonderful as you will, but they must not touch on the mere flimsiness of miracle. They can be excessively improbable; but their improbability must be based upon scientific fact, and not upon fantastic, emotional, and purely imaginative groundwork. From this point of view I occasionally strive to prove my faith in the unperished charm and potency of romance . . .

What Fawcett produces here is a manifesto for a species of imaginative fiction specifically adapted to the world-view of committed agnostics; a prospectus for tales of wonder which will have no traffic with such superstitious ideas as agnosticism is dedicated to oppose. If the prospectus is taken as a prophecy, then it is a remarkably accurate one; since Fawcett's time there has indeed been a luxuriant growth of exactly such a genre as he describes. It is usually known as "science fiction", though the label carries various undesirable implications. H.G. Wells, who published his first important "realistic romance" in the same year that Fawcett published *The Ghost of Guy Thyrle,* referred to his efforts as "scientific romances"; some modern commentators favour the designation "speculative fiction". Whatever label is preferred, it is clear that all of them represent attempts to map out and establish the boundaries of the same imaginative territory.

The fact that Fawcett produced several examples of science fiction *avant la lettre* is not in itself remarkable. Many other writers of the period—and of earlier periods—had done the same; H. Bruce Franklin's annotated anthology *Future Perfect* (1966; rev. 1978) gives

some idea of the range of such work. Nor can it be said that his work influenced others, at least so far as the present-day historian can detect. Though several other writers acquainted with Fawcett also wrote imaginative fiction, their works which have most in common with Fawcett's realistic romances were written before he began, and any influence must have flowed the other way.

Nevertheless, Fawcett's realistic romances are of interest for precisely the same reason that his realistic novels are of interest: they offer a special insight into one aspect of the social and intellectual climate of his day. They are products of their time, and could not have been written at any other time, though this does not prevent their being highly individualistic works. They belong to a rather curious subspecies of science fiction which was developed almost entirely by American writers (many of whom were known to Fawcett and most of whom were sympathetic to the ideas which he held), but within this subspecies they have certain unique and interesting features.

This subspecies consists of stories of mental aberration, and its unifying characteristic is a strong interest in the proto-science of pre-Freudian psychology. The leading propagandist for this new science was Herbert Spencer, but the American literary community had a special reason to take an interest in it because the leading American scholar in the field was William James, brother of the novelist Henry James. It was William James who first realized the importance of mental aberrations and the contribution an understanding of such abnormalities might make to an understanding of the working of the ordinary mind. Imaginative fictions working with such themes include: *Elsie Venner* (1861) and *The Guardian Angel* (1867) by Oliver Wendell Holmes, *The Queen of Sheba* (1877) by Thomas Bailey Aldrich, *Archibald Malmaison* (1879) by Julian Hawthorne, *Dr Heidenhoff's Process* (1880) by Edward Bellamy, *The Mystery of Evelyn Delorme* (1894) by Albert Bigelow Paine and *The Mortgage on the Brain* (1905) by Vincent Harper. Some, though not all, of the stories in William Dean Howells' collections *Questionable Shapes* (1903) and *Between the Dark and the Daylight* (1907) might be added to the list. (Of the authors named here all are American. Aldrich and Hawthorne were Fawcett's friends and Howells praised his efforts. Harper was an arch-rationalist whose attacks on superstition and the doctrine of the immortality of the soul are similar to Fawcett's though rather more fierce. Holmes, of course, was in his own right an important pioneer in the practical science of psychiatry; Bellamy eventually became the chief prophet of American socialism.)

All but one of Fawcett's realistic romances carry a frame story which permits the main narrative to be interpreted as the history of a mental aberration. The exception carries an epilogue which serves the same function. In one story the mental aberration interpretation is forced upon the reader as the true one, and it is interesting that it is this story whose main narrative includes no fantastic incidents. In all the other cases the reader seems free to choose whether the enclosed narratives are "true" or the product of hallucinations, though the implication usually favours the former. The unique feature of Fawcett's work—and its most interesting aspect—is the way that he uses the logic of mental aberration as a literary device to open the way for more extravagant fantasies which are themselves internally rationalized by references to new scientific discoveries.

At its crudest, this strategy would amount to nothing more than a slightly sophisticated version of the cliché by which authors of wild fantasies always retained the option of a return to normality by having the protagonist wake up and declare everything that had

gone before to be a dream. Though Fawcett's fiction is in certain respects crude this is not one of them; even if the narratives are to be accepted as hallucinations this cannot simply dispose of their content, for it is implicit even in this interpretation that everything must be rational and accountable. Thus, if the fantastic narratives are to be deemed mental aberrations, they still must have causes, and they still must have an internal logic which explains their structure and psychological function.

The principal interest of the other writers named above is in mental aberration *per se:* in its logic, effects, and possible cures. The novels cited are mostly case-histories. Even the least fantastic of Fawcett's realistic romances, however, goes one step beyond this fascination with mental aberration for its own sake to further contemplation of the possibilities and possible costs of progress. How this is accomplished will be shown by detailed consideration of the works themselves.

Before summarizing Fawcett's realistic romances, it will be helpful to fill in a little more detail concerning his attitudes and his intellectual background. This will help to explain certain eccentricities and failures of imagination, as well as illuminating the single most important question around which his imaginative fictions revolve.

Firstly, it should be noted that Fawcett had no education in science itself, nor did he ever seem inclined to acquire any instruction in hard science. He was fascinated by the *philosophy* of science, and by the significance of the "scientific revelation", but of actual physics, chemistry and biology he knew very little. This was a severe handicap in constructing the jargon of apology by which his enclosed narratives made their claims to plausibility. This handicap ruined his chances of becoming a really influential or innovative writer of realistic romances—he lacked the kind of credentials which H.G. Wells brought to the task. It is entirely in keeping with his character that he was able to write such a clear and concise manifesto for a *genre* without really having the equipment to put it into practice. The imaginative scope of *The Ghost of Guy Thyrle* deserves praise, but it must be admitted that it betrays a very primitive understanding of science.

Secondly, it is helpful to specify a little more exactly just who his intellectual heroes were, because he inherits some of the peculiarities of their thought. Foremost among them appears to have been Herbert Spencer, from whom he borrowed his strong emphasis on hereditary factors in psychology and his preoccupation with intellectual evolution. Spencer is commemorated in one of the sonnets in Fawcett's first important collection of poems, *Fantasy and Passion* (1878), where he is to be found in rather odd company (there are nine other admiring sonnets, addressed to eight writers and one artist: Poe, Whittier, Thackeray, Dickens, Keats, Dumas *père,* Hans Christian Andersen, Doré and Baudelaire.) Spencer is there described as "A spacious-brained arch-enemy of lies" and it is said of him that "His intellect is a palace . . . where . . . Calm Science walks, like some majestic queen!"

Spencer is often named in the realistic romances as a paradigm of philosophical virtue. Usually the names of other philosophers are sprinkled about with a gay abandon which suggests slight acquaintance with their ideas—references to Kant and Hegel seem to be mere name-dropping—but Fawcett appears to have found a certain sympathy with Schopenhauer. Douglas Duane refers to him as "the great Schopenhauer" and approves of his conclusions while disapproving of his aprioristic method (comparing him unfavourably, in this respect, with Spencer). It is not difficult to see how Schopenhauer

managed to strike a resonant chord in Fawcett's imagination, for there is a determined pessimism about much of Fawcett's work—a kind of prideful brooding on the subject of death and the hopelessness of the myth of immortality. Fawcett, in his more philosophical moments, is much given to rhapsodies upon the futility of men's attempts to control their own destiny, and some of his plots are calculated to reveal the helplessness of individuals caught between the determinism of their heredity on the one hand, and the eccentric vicissitudes of chance on the other. Given this, it is not surprising that much of his realism and naturalism recalls the doctrines of Emile Zola rather than those of William Dean Howells. Again, his talents were not up to the task of putting the prospectus into operation in a convincing manner, but such novels as *A Man's Will* (1888) and *The Evil That Men Do* (1889) seem to be attempts to imitate Zola.

Thirdly, it should be noted that for Fawcett, the conflict of religion and science had as its focal point the issue of the immortality of the soul. This question fascinated him, and he could not let it alone. The idea of immortality, although rejected as a "revealed truth" continually drew his attention both as a force within human affairs with real social consequences and as a phenomenon to be accounted for in terms of psychology. Fawcett's preoccupation with mortality is particularly evident in his poetry—it haunts the better poems in *Fantasy and Passion* and has a curious pre-eminence in his one futuristic work, the poem "In the Year Ten Thousand" from *Songs of Doubt and Dream* (1891). This poem is a dialogue between two citizens of Manattia, who first look out upon their Utopian world and recall the horrors of its distant past and congratulate themselves on the awesome progress they have made; but their discussion takes a more sombre turn when the first speaker reminds the second that men must still die. Fawcett's own attitude, which seems covertly ambivalent behind the screen of his committed skepticism, is adequately displayed by the argument which follows:

SECOND MANATTIAN
Invariably; but death
Brings not the anguish it of old would bring
To those that died before us. Rest and peace
Attend it, no reluctance, tremor or pain.
Long heed of laws fed vitally from health
Has made our ends as pangless as our births.
The imperial gifts of science have prevailed
So splendidly with our mortality
That death is but a natural falling asleep,
Involuntary and tranquil.

FIRST MANATTIAN
True, but time
Has ever stained our heaven with its dark threat.
Not death, but life, contains the unwillingness
To pass from earth, and science in vain hath sought
An answer to the eternal questions—*Whence,*
Whither, and For What Purpose? All we gain
Still melts to loss; we build our hope from dream,
Our joy upon illusion, our victory
Upon defeat . . . Hark how those long winds flute
There in the dusky foliage of the park.
Such voices, murmuring large below the night,
Seem ever to my fancy as if they told
The inscrutability of destiny,
The blank futility of all search—perchance
The irony of that nothingness which lies
Beyond its hardiest effort.

SECOND MANATTIAN

Hush! these words
Are chaff that even the winds whereof you prate
Should whirl as dry leaves to the oblivion
Their levity doth tempt! Already in way
That might seem miracle if less firm through fact,
Hath science plucked from nature lore whose worth
Madness alone dares doubt. As yet, I allow,
With all her grandeur of accomplishment
She hath not pierced beyond matter; but who knows
The hour apocalyptic when her eyes
May flash with tidings from infinitude?

FIRST MANATTIAN

Then, if she solves the first enigma of the world
And steeps in sun all swathed in night till now,
Pushing that knowledge from whose gradual gain
Our thirst hath drunk so deeply, till she cleaves
Finality with it, and at last lays bare
The absolute, —then, brother and friend, I ask
May she not tell us that we merely die,
That immortality is a myth of sense,
That God . . . ?

SECOND MANATTIAN

Your voice breaks . . . let me clasp your hand!
Well, well, so be it, if so she tells. At least
We live our lives out duteously till death,
We on this one mean orb, whose radiant mates
Throb swarming in the heaven our glance may roam.
Whatever message may be brought to us,
Or to the generations following us,
Let this one thought burn rich with self-content:
We live our lives out duteously till death.

(A silence.)

FIRST MANATTIAN

'Tis a grand thought, but it is not enough!
In spite of all our world hath been and done,
Its glorious evolution from the low
Sheer to the lofty, I, individual, I,
An entity and a personality,
Desire, long, yearn . . .

SECOND MANATTIAN

Nay, brother, *you alone!*
Are there not millions like you!

FIRST MANATTIAN *(with self-reproach)*

Pardon me!

(After another long silence.)

What subtler music those winds whisper now! . . .
'Tis even as if they had forsworn to breathe
Despair, and dreamed, however dubiously,
Of some faint hope! . . (pp. 57-60)

In the final lines of the poem the reader learns that there may indeed be hope that the final mystery can be penetrated, for that very evening in Manattia there will be received the first message from the planet Mars. Having leaped ten thousand years into the future, though, Fawcett hesitates to venture one more day; his agnosticism would not permit him to beg that most crucial of questions by anticipating what the Martians might have to say upon the subject. When he could excuse himself with the possibility that his statement might be the result of a character's hallucination, however, he showed no such reluctance: Douglas Duane and Guy Thyrle are permitted to discover at least some solutions to the great mysteries.

Fawcett's first realistic romance, *Douglas Duane,* appeared in *Lippincott's Magazine* for April 1887. This magazine published a novel in every issue, including a separate title-page so that the novels might be extracted and bound up as independent entities. *Douglas Duane* is actually rather short for a novel, running approximately 30,000 words.

The story begins when an old woman runs on to a New York street crying "Murder!" She tells a detective, Ford Fairleigh, that a Mr Floyd Demotte has shot himself and his wife. Fairleigh discovers that Mrs Demotte is indeed dead, but that Demotte himself is still alive and might still be saved. While this matter hangs in the balance, Fairleigh attempts to investigate the crime, but is handicapped by a lack of evidence as to motivation. The old lady tells him that before the incident she heard Demotte mention the name of Douglas Duane, his friend of earlier days, but Duane has been missing for some time.

Fairleigh discusses the case with his friend Hiram Payne, who suggests that Duane must have been Mrs Demotte's lover. Fairleigh prefers the hypothesis that Demotte has gone mad, and that he shot his wife as a result of some delusion. (Much of the dialogue between Fairleigh and Payne consists of digressions which intrude social criticism into the story—there are bitter remarks about electoral justice and the life-chances of talented young men prevented from rising within the social hierarchy.)

Demotte recovers from his injuries, but goes from hospital into a mental asylum where he eventually dies, though not before writing a remarkable story in explanation of what he has done. In his manuscript the injured man claims that he is not Demotte at all, but is the *persona* of Douglas Duane transferred into Demotte's physical *corpus.*

Duane begins by recalling his youth, when he was taken to Europe in order to attend Heidelberg University, where his father—a committed rationalist—believed that he would receive a better education than any available in America. Of his father, Duane says: "Thanks to his influence, I faced the dogmas and platitudes of daily existence with a prepared antagonism." (p. 548)

This "prepared antagonism", however, has the effect of alienating him from his fellows and making him relentlessly cynical. In his intelligence and his realistic attitude to science he surpasses even his teachers:

> Demonstrative, exact thinking, the placid and patient search after physical law, the agnostic if not the atheistic way of regarding all final causes, and the fixed creed that mortal intelligence could never pierce beyond defiant boundaries of matter itself while very sensibly hoping for large realms of material enlightenment in the future—those considerations and assurances held a prodigious rule and influence over my daily life. (p.550)

When Duane's father dies, however, he returns to America to claim his inheritance and to enter society. He quickly falls into disfavour because of his unconventionality (he wears his hair long!) but continues to move in fashionable circles in a somewhat detached fashion. He makes one firm friendship, with Floyd Demotte, though the two men seem to have little in common. They debate metaphysical issues, with Duane taking a hard materialist line that Demotte cannot accept; Duane seems almot to despise Demotte for this weakness and for the fact that he is a book-collector who does not read. Duane, meanwhile, has his own laboratory, where he is pursuing research into the physical basis of mental phenomena—he is conducting an analysis of human will and action in terms of electromagnetic forces and impulses.

Demotte and Duane fall in love with the same girl, Millicent Hadley, but Duane's feelings are slightly confused. He prides himself on his own lack of emotionality, and he also knows that Demotte is a passionately jealous man. He determines to keep his own

feelings secret when he concludes that Millicent prefers Demotte, but cannot help being embittered by Demotte's insensitivity and becomes very miserable as his secret and hopeless passion grows. When Demotte and Millicent marry, Duane forces himself to attend the wedding and play the part of a true friend, but finds the effort agonizing. (He has already contemplated suicide, but has been held back by a visionary inspiration which promises him success in his work.) Demotte's jealousy, however, leads him to isolate Millicent from the society of others, so that she too becomes gradually miserable.

Meanwhile Duane's research yields up its fruits. He discovers that "identity" is reducible to a characteristic "charge" of electricity, and that if one *corpus* is deprived of its own charge another may be transmitted into it. Though his experiments are with plants he does not doubt that the process will work even with human beings, and he quickly sees the possibility that he might secretly take the place of the man who has everything he desires, by dislodging Demotte's personality and substituting his own. He sets this idea aside, however.

Millicent confesses her unhappiness to Duane, and asks him if he will come to live in Demotte's house. Duane dares not accept, but tries to persuade Demotte to allow Millicent more freedom. Demotte tries, but the compromise soon becomes intolerable to them both. Again they appeal to Duane to live with them, and he accepts, knowing that it will lead to disaster. He confesses his love to Millicent and immediately leaves for Washington. She forgives him, but this only intensifies his misery, and Demotte's continued unawareness of the true facts of the situation finally goads Duane to make a plan of action.

Duane disguises himself and stages his disappearance, returning secretly to New York. There he lures Demotte to his lodgings, electrocutes him, and uses his machine to project his own *persona* into the deactivated body.

While, as it were, in transit between bodies, Duane's soul experiences a crucial vision which penetrates beyond the material world that he had considered to be the limit of human knowledge:

> Strangely enough, after what seemed a short interval of frightful pain, I had no sensation of death. I seemed to be flying through infinite space, and yet my feeling of relief was exquisite. I had suffered untold tortures, but I was now entirely at peace. The driving and rending, the bursting and shattering of my brain had ended. Immeasurable visions, as of enormous planets swinging round enormous suns, and seen with an eye to which the eye of normal sight is contemptibly feeble, had rushed upon me. It was with me as though space had laid bare all her ethereal strongholds of glittering secrets. The feeling of disembodiment, of volatility, of splendid untrammelled liberty, was a rapture no language can portray. Time, as I now deduce, could no longer either measure or concern my transports. I had passed completely out of time. It did not occur to me (how should it?) that I was *still I*, and that the vital principle which I had so firmly believed an unconscious force when freed from material bonds could not only be and think but could be sublimely and think miraculously. And yet I was aware that I still lived, a naked soul, an essence of deathless intelligence and glorious capacity. The answers to a thousand mysteries of life, of nature, of science, of instinct, of religion, of even deity itself, shone before me in luminous and magnificent revelation. The problem of human suffering was no more a vexation; it had become lucidly solved. The whereas, the whither and the wherefore both of mankind and of all creation—those riddles which have tortured philosophy for so many futile centuries—were as plain to my comprehension as the radiant wheeling spheres which I gazed on were plain to my rarefied and emancipated vision. The universe had eloquently and irrefutably explained itself. My past scepticism, pessimism and negation had shrivelled to nothingness, as dry leaves could do if dropped into the white blinding fire of a furnace. But existence was not merely a divine expansion, possession and acceptance of the loftiest spiritual joy. It was more; it was a sacred fellowship with eternity—and eternity, like matter, beamed on me denuded of the least

conceivable vagueness. Every perished or sentient creed of the world stretched before me as links in one immense necessary chain of circumstance. I saw atheism as it had been and as it still was, and neither condemned nor approved it; I simply understood its cause, its use, its meaning. I saw the long passionate drama of inextinguishable faith enacted throughout mankind here on my own little planet (and what an atom our globe looked among the grandeurs of other millions of globes!) and neither pitied martyrdom nor regretted persecution; both were effects and events of a development whose origin and terminus transcended inquiry.

But abruptly, in the midst of this noble and seraphic exaltation, this piercing and triumphant omniscience, a shade, a chill, a blight, fell upon me. I cannot put in words what I felt. It was not so much a realization of my freed and immortal personality being unfit for the exquisite happiness I had thus far enjoyed as it was a burdening, horrifying conception of my having deliberately flung aside and even murdered impulses of right in my past life by conniving at the death of a fellow-creature. All the unutterable beauty and brilliancy of my encompassments took suddenly an accusative aspect. The lights of the great lovely stars yet burned all about me, and shapes of untold harmony and grace yet floated on every side of me, but a darkness—or something that I can call by no other name than darkness, though it was not what we mean on earth by that word—had crept with a fleet and fearful stealth between my perceptions and the enchanting prospects I observed . . . It seemed to me that a wild cry of supplication and of anguish now broke from my lips. *'My sin! my sin!* I moaned, or seemed to moan. And at the same instant the blackness of that sin grew a close encircling gloom and horror . . . The effulgence and majesty of my surroundings faded . . . The universality of knowledge which had in my mind died into an ignorance that left only a pathos of dim memory behind it, faint as the trail of a dying meteor in the dusky paths of heaven. And then came night, dense, weightsome, ineludible, befogging thought, that seemed to flicker and struggle like the blown flame of a candle before extinction leaps on it . . . (pp.615-6; the ellipses are all Fawcett's and do not represent unquoted phrases.)

This all takes two minutes, while the experiment succeeds and Duane finds himself "a murderer prisoned till death *within the shape of the being he had murdered!*"

It hardly needs pointing out that the revelation here vouchsafed to Douglas Duane would have delighted the First Manattian of ten thousand years hence. Here a man is discovering by means of scientific innovation exactly what the positivist philosophy declares to be unknowable. All that the march of intellect has obliterated from the reservoirs of religious faith is here restored as an aspect of future progress. The immortality of the soul is empirically demonstrated, perception is so wonderfully enhanced that nothing lies hidden from its curiosity, and even the moral order of things is carefully preserved as Duane's disembodied soul is soaked by universal conscience.

There is clear evidence here of a desperate desire which infected many 19th century rationalists, to have their intellectual cake and eat it too. On the one hand, they attacked believers for accepting without true warrant a host of comforting beliefs while at the same time hoping that the march of science might eventually provide a new and trustworthy warrant for an equally convenient set. Fawcett here reveals a certain imaginative kinship with the various scientists who were attracted by the supposed empirical evidence underlying spiritualist beliefs, and there is some evidence in this passage and others that he had read and had been impressed by Camille Flammarion's *Stories of Infinity,* which had appeared in an American edition in 1873. (I shall return to this point later.)

It is worth noting now that it is only in this first realistic romance that Fawcett offered to his protagonist a vision as complete and clear as this one. Even with the ambivalence conferred upon it by the possibility that it is a mere hallucination, it represents too definite a transgression of the basic principle of agnosticism—that the matters with which the revelation deals are in principle unknowable. Guy Thyrle embarks upon a much longer voyage into the unknown, but accomplishes far less in terms of an understanding of the nature and purpose of creation.

In the story, Duane's moment of terror and shame ebbs once he is again incarnate, and he sets off to Demotte's home, carrying a pistol with which he intends to kill himself should his loved one reject him. Millicent quickly realizes that he is not her husband, and she identifies him in spite of the apparent impossibility of her realization. Her terror overwhelms him as he realizes that the situation is hopeless; he shoots her and then himself in the hope that their souls may set out together into the eternity which he has glimpsed.

Neither Fairleigh nor Payne can accept the truth of what they read in this manuscript, and the conclusion of *their* story deals with Fairleigh's attempt to find corroborative evidence. Fairleigh has tried to find the apartment where Duane claims to have committed his crime, but has failed. A building destroyed by fire, however, *may* have been the one, so the failure is not conclusive evidence of the falseness of the story; and the fact remains, of course, that Douglas Duane's body—tenanted or untenanted—is still missing.

Solarion, which appeared in *Lippincott's Magazine* in September 1889, is even shorter than *Douglas Duane,* being hardly above 20,000 words, but it is by no means the least of the realistic romances. In terms of literary quality, it stands a clear second in the hierarchy, behind *The Ghost of Guy Thyrle,* and is a remarkably original work.

The frame-narrative of *Solarion* is of no importance in itself, but simply exists in order to cast doubt on the authenticity of the main story, which is told by Kenneth Stafford to Hugh Brookstayne. Brookstayne is a neurophysiologist who encounters Stafford—a man whose face has been half-destroyed by a dog—while in retreat in Switzerland. Brookstayne believes that Stafford's story is the result of a mental aberration brought on by his terrible experience.

Stafford seems to be in many ways another, but more moderate, version of Douglas Duane. As a youth he is rather effeminate, but harbours strong positivist leanings. He proves the fakery employed by a medium at a séance arranged by his mother and his Aunt Aurelia. Aurelia marries a man named Effingham, whose daughter Celia attracts Stafford considerably, but Stafford cannot spark off a romance between them. It is little consolation that his rival for her love, Caryl Drayton, fares no better.

Following his mother's death, Stafford goes, as Douglas Duane did, to Germany, where he studies science in the same devoted and hard-headed fashion. Brookstayne, who is relaying Stafford's story to the reader, observes that:

> He had a rooted and inherent distrust of eloquence, and it gradually grew upon him that oratory as an art was one of the most harmful enemies of civilization. The deeper he plunged into science the more potently he was convinced of how its lustral waters cleansed the mind from every form of parasitic and clogging impediment. 'I live,' he once announced to a throng of intimates, 'in search of nothing except the actual. Progress has for centuries lost untold opportunities through her hospitality toward imagination. All dreams are a disease; the really healthful sleep has none. It has often occurred to me that mankind now suffers from an immense and distracting toothache, called religion.' (pp.320-321)

Like Duane, Stafford is courageous in the face of the uncertainties which the positivist outlook necessitates, and is unworried by the thought that death might be final. He argues that death is not to be feared: "the dark slaves of oblivion wait upon us there; they are better than the loveliest houries; they can never be corrupted, for the simple reason that they are corruption itself." There follow the usual token references to various philosophers, including "the incomparable Spencer" and "the great Buckle", and Stafford goes so far as to quote a long section from Darwin's *Origin of Species* concerning the origin of life, expressing a special admiration for it. (Interestingly, Fawcett never

mentions Ernst Mach, the German father of the positivist crusade.)

On leaving Berlin, Stafford travels to Strasbourg to see Conrad Klotz, the author of a treatise on electricity which was recalled because Klotz feared the consequences of its publication. Stafford impresses the old man, who is dying, and Klotz entrusts his manuscript to Stafford after accepting his word that he will destory it. Stafford, of course, breaks his word and carries the treatise home with him to the U.S.A., determined to further the cause of science with its aid.

Back home, he renews his acquaintance with Celia and with Caryl Drayton, now an Oxford-educated gentleman of leisure. He falls in love with Celia again, but she remains indifferent to him and eventually embarks on a trip to Europe with her father and Stafford's aunt. Stafford then throws himself wholeheartedly—even obsessively— into his work.

Klotz's treatise concerns the subject of accelerated evolution by electrical stimulation, and Stafford begins his work with a bitch called Elsa, who soon produces a remarkably handsome puppy which Stafford calls Solarion. Taking his notion of evolution from Spencer, Fawcett construes the term mainly as growth in intelligence, and Solarion does indeed turn out to have remarkably-augmented intelligence. Stafford has doubts about his work—Brookstayne observes that his researches "were overshadowed by a terrible sarcasm of incompleteness"—but carries on regardless. Six years pass without a glimpse of Celia, but he consoles himself with the thought that at least Solarion is loyal and always close by.

Stafford feels that the crucial moment in his endeavour will be the experiment that will give Solarion speech, and he approaches this moment with great trepidation:

> As he entered his laboratory on the particular day in question, Kenneth felt as though he were indeed about to call spirits from the vasty deep. And well might he so have felt. Superstition is fading from the earth, but while men live and awe is an emotion that may be quickened, some adequate substitute will not prove wanting. The Unknowable, as an element in science, will continually supply this; for until all final causes are comprehended, mystery must ever hide at the base of both human knowledge and endeavour. Here will lie all the ghosts of our future "Hamlets", the witches of our future "Macbeths". Electricity is not the only nimble and fiery demon to be summoned by unknown sorcerers from nature's unexplored and shadowy gulfs. Light, heat, optics, chemistry, physics, mineralogy, will all have their weird and perchance blood-curdling messages to deliver, and it may well be that aeronautics will surpass even these in grandeur and suggestiveness of tidings. People with 'nerves' will possibly be as much afraid to look through one of our coming telescopes as if they were now requested to walk at midnight through a graveyard. The mysterious will go on holding its own, precisely as before. Though fable will have perished, a sense of the vague, the mighty, the occult, even the diabolic, will yet remain. (pp.338-339)

This passage is interesting for several reasons. It is, of course, an earlier version of the statement issued in the proem to *The Ghost of Guy Thyrle,* but here it is not a prospectus for Romantic literature so much as an attitude to science itself. It is important to remember that this is not Stafford speaking but Brookstayne, and the statement thus has a weight which one could not attribute to any statement made by Douglas Duane or to the narrative voices of *The New Hero* or *The Ghost of Guy Thyrle,* all of whom are specifically called in question as "reliable" informants. There is no question of Brookstayne's reliability, and though he is still a character in a story the close alliance between his statement and one later made by Fawcett on his own behalf suggests that his attitude is one which Fawcett could at least take seriously.

What is remarkable about such a statement, issuing as it does from a supposed neurophysiologist and man of science, in a story written by a professed agnostic and

champion of science, is its dreadful anxiety. The "messages" to be revealed by the developing sciences are to be "weird", even "blood-curdling". What we see through telescopes will frighten us if we are predisposed to fear. The as-yet-unfolded possibilities of science carry a sense of the occult and the diabolic.

The attitude is not new, of course—we find it in the direful fantasies of Hoffman when "mechanicians" construct doom-laden automata, and we find it most conspicuously of all in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*—but it is a remarkable attitude to find in the work of an anti-religious agnostic and a militant disciple of progress. It is noticeable that no good ever comes from any of the discoveries made by scientists in Fawcett's realistic romances—no matter how beneficial they may seem in potential, their role within the stories is to bring disaster.

Solarion continues with the development of a most curious "eternal triangle". The experiment which is to give Solarion speech succeeds, and marks the beginning of a new phase in the relationship between Stafford and his dog:

> From that moment his feeling toward Solarion altered; it became in a manner parental, and yet touched by a spell still more solemn and august. Mere ordinary birth, like every other mysterious matter which constantly goes on occurring, has become a triteness to us all. But Solarion appeared as one who has been born in some way that is appallingly new, and Kenneth soon had the sense of standing toward him in terms of miraculous fatherhood. (p.340)

Solarion quickly learns that to Stafford he is only an experiment—though the previously-quoted passage suggests that Stafford is not being entirely honest in saying so—but Solarion has no hesitation in replying to this revelation that to him Stafford is everything: his one ward against loneliness, his one chance of happiness. Stafford's reaction to this is peculiar: he charges Solarion with being the ghost of Conrad Klotz and faints, but later repents his weakness. Subsequently, when Solarion again declares his love for Stafford, Stafford reciprocates:

> I return that love with all my heart! A cold ambition, a fatal selfishness, may at first have begotten you, but now the feeling I bear toward you is full of tenderness, of sanctity! You shall always be to me the strongest and dearest link between myself and life. Indeed, I shall live only *for* you, and in the marvels of this mind that I have unlocked it will be my happiness to find the most vivid and unfailing interest!" (p.344)

Despite this new relationship, however, Solarion remains unconvinced of the propriety of his own existence. He begs Stafford to keep Klotz's secret, lest hundreds more beings like him should be created.

The plot quickly takes another turn as Celia returns to America following the drowning of her father and step-mother. The moment Stafford sees her his love for her is revived, but it still seems hopeless. Celia has now been twice engaged, once to an Italian prince and once to Drayton, but both engagements were broken off—Drayton has told Celia that she is incapable of love, and she relays this judgment to Stafford.

Stafford explains to Solarion that he loves Celia, and there follows a curious debate concerning the foundations of morality. Stafford argues (as a devout Spencerian would be likely to) that the evolution of intelligence has been parallelled by an "evolution of conduct"—i.e., that there is a moral as well as an intellectual progress. Solarion disputes this by pointing out that Stafford is a contradiction of his own beliefs, easy prey to vulgar ambition.

Celia rejects Stafford, but on seeing Solarion she seems to fall in love with *him*. Solarion never speaks to Celia (or to anyone else save Stafford, confirming Brookstayne's

belief that Solarion's supposed abilities were all a delusion of Stafford's), but she eventually begins to suspect that there is something unusual about him. Stafford gives Solarion to Celia, partly in order that Solarion may spy on Celia and Drayton on his behalf, but when Drayton reports that he will marry Celia in spite of the fact that Celia does not love him Stafford demands Solarion's return. Solarion refuses to return to Stafford, charging him with being "the merest self-loving tyrant", and Stafford seems set to lose everything.

In the end, Stafford decides that Solarion must die for the hurt he has inflicted upon his maker, and tries to shoot the dog. Solarion, however, succeeds in mutilating Stafford before he dies, tearing out one eye and destroying that side of his face. With Caryl and Celia married, Stafford has no option but to become an anguished recluse, and it is thus that Brookstayne has found him. Brookstayne's own narrative ends on a false and rather disappointing note, as he tries to draw a moral from the tale in alleging that Conrad Klotz has been avenged, and that Stafford has paid with his insane hallucination the price of his broken word.

A Romance of Two Brothers is the least of Fawcett's realistic romances. Though it was published as a book it is again only a novella, running approximately 36,000 words. A note at the end reveals that it was written in London and Paris between August and October 1890.

This is the one story in the group which has no frame narrative, and it begins directly with a description of the circumstances of one Egbert Maynard, who lives in England near Cambridge. Maynard is unhappily married to Georgina, the reason for their unhappiness being a philosophical incompatibility: Maynard is an atheist, Georgina is devoutly religious. Georgina is the daughter of a parson, and considers that she was wooed under false pretences as Maynard did not tell her of his lack of faith until after the wedding. They have two sons, Sylvan and Gerald.

One day, Maynard responds to his wife's despair at their poverty by telling her that he has made "an immense discovery" in the laboratory which will enrich the family and prove a great boon to mankind. It is "a new kind of electricity"—the liquefaction of "the eternal principle of life" which spreads through the universe. Effectively, it is the elixir of life, and will make men immune to death by disease or old age.

Georgina Maynard's response to this news is one of horror; she describes it as "a shameful revolt . . . against the sacred laws of God."

Maynard's health is not good: he is tubercular and fears that he might die before his work is complete. Though he has the elixir, it is highly unstable and he has great difficulty in controlling its volatility. He will not rest until he has stablilized the fluid and has conducted an experiment in which it revives a wilting rose-bush. Unfortunately, the effect is only temporary.

Maynard suffers a haemorrhage soon after his partly-successful experiment, and lies on the brink of death for some time. Though he does not recover his power of speech he eventually manages to control his hand well enough to write, and directs his doctor, Ross Thorndyke, to bring him the fluid from his laboratory. Thorndyke finds it gone. By means of a great effort, Maynard writes out the formula of the elixir and the means by which it may be stabilized, couching it within a letter to his elder son. This he gives to Thorndyke, insisting that Thorndyke must pass it on to Sylvan on the boy's twenty-fifth

birthday. He confronts his wife and charges her with stealing the fluid; this she admits, and he dies accusing her of murder.

Georgina Maynard, much embittered, soon follows her husband to the grave. Before doing so, however, she exerts a powerful influence on the ideas and attitudes of her elder son. Sylvan has health problems like his father, and decides not to enter the Church, but studies instead for the law, eventually being taken to New York by a patron in order to attend Columbia College. Gerald, meanwhile, falls more under the influence of Ross Thorndyke, and studies in England with a view to entering the medical profession.

Sylvan sends Gerald money to support him through his education, but cuts off this support when he increases his own responsibility in marrying a girl named Lucia Fythian. Thorndyke, however, takes over the responsibility before sailing to New York in order to deliver Egbert Maynard's letter at the appropriate time. Sylvan seems to Thorndyke very like his mother, and Thorndyke pities his wife, who is growing dissatisfied with their somewhat ascetic and reclusive life-style. When the doctor visits the family again, Lucia tells him what Sylvan found in the letter. Thorndyke cannot believe that Maynard actually found the secret of immortality, but Lucia seems fascinated by the idea—though Sylvan, of course, adopts the same attitude as his mother, and refrains from destroying the paper only because of a promise he has made.

The formula eventually becomes the cause of much strife between Sylvan and Lucia. She wants him to show it to Gerald, but he refuses. It becomes the focal point of her dissatisfaction with her marriage, and the breaking-point of the relationship is reached when— after she has tried to steal the letter—Sylvan appears to burn the formula before her eyes. In fact, he has tricked her, but this seems of little consequence as she leaves the house, swearing never to return.

Gerald comes to America in order to study with a Chicago doctor, Cranford Clyde, though he hopes eventually to practise in New York. He visits Sylvan, and finds him in a sadly depressed state because of his wife's desertion. Repenting too late of his obstinacy, Sylvan shows the letter to Gerald, who is sceptical but interested. Gerald takes it back with him to Chicago, and shows it to Clyde, who tells him to test the process.

Gerald perfects the fluid, apparently overcoming the problem which had faced his father. He decides to test the elixir on a human subject, and asks Clyde to secure the corpse of a drowned man in order to test its revivifying powers to the full. The corpse which Clyde obtains is, in fact, a young and beautiful woman, and Gerald falls in love with her even while she still lies inert. The elixir restores her to life, but she is suffering from total amnesia. Gerald names her Perdita, and fascination with her leads him to set aside his experiments for a while. He is even untroubled when Clyde accidentally breaks the flask containing the elixir.

Clyde becomes anxious about Gerald's new obsession, and asks Thorndyke to come to New York, where they are now working. Thorndyke, however, is compelled to remain in Chicago to tend the victims of a great fire. In the meantime, Sylvan asks Gerald to surrender the formula, intending to destroy it, but Gerald refuses and the two brothers quarrel bitterly.

Perdita eventually agrees to marry Gerald, but as the clergyman is about to perform the ceremony Sylvan arrives at the house, claiming that detectives have seen his missing wife there. Perdita, of course, is Lucia, and on seeing Sylvan she remembers everything. She suffers a heart attack and dies (though the possibility exists that Gerald, like his

father, had not truly overcome the temporariness of the elixir's revivifying effect). Gerald, grief-stricken and humiliated, finally hands the formula over to his brother, who carries through his intention of burning it.

In an epilogue to the story Thorndyke and Clyde discuss the strange affair. Thorndyke believes that the elixir never did work, and that Perdita/Lucia was never truly dead; Clyde is not so sure but there remains no way to settle the issue as Gerald cannot re-create the formula. The tragedy has brought the two brothers together again, and they are now very devoted to one another, but their amity is soon to be interrupted, for Sylvan's poor health is giving way inexorably, and there is nothing in the world that can save him.

The story is slight by comparison with the two earlier realistic romances, and the later chapters seem rather hurried and clipped. Because the whole story is told from an author-omniscient viewpoint rather than through the medium of a narrator, it is much more difficult for Fawcett to create the essential atmosphere of ambiguity surrounding the discovery and its effects. It is all very well for Thorndyke to express his scepticism at the end, and had the reader had an account of the various important experiments second-hand it would have been possible to share his opinion, but it does seem as if the reader has been told explicitly that the elixir *does* work, even if less powerfully than intended. It appears that Fawcett set out to write an unambiguous science fiction story for once, but gradually became dissatisfied with the project. This may provide a partial explanation for the fact that his next realistic romance was quite unambiguous in the other direction: it is a straightforward tale of hallucination.

The New Nero is in some ways a bad book. The plot of its main narrative is woefully unconvincing, and the fact that it is revealed as an invention of its fictional narrator hardly excuses the fact. It is, indeed, conceivable that Fawcett wrote the enclosed narrative first as a kind of philosophical romance, realised its deficiencies, and then adapted it to enclosure within the frame as a method of side-stepping its inadequacies. It is noticeable that the economy of the earlier works is quite absent; if anything the story seems rather heavily padded (it is a full-length novel of some 80,000 words plus).

The frame narrative deals with a visit by a man named Fanshawe to his uncle, Dr Theobald, at the latter's place of work—a lunatic asylum. Fanshawe has previously argued with his uncle about the possibility of sane men being committed to asylums (possibly by unscrupulous relatives), and Theobald has dismissed such anxieties as unworthy of consideration. "Sanity," says the doctor at one point, "is just as hard to conceal as insanity."

At first Fanshawe is struck by the apparent normality and placidity of the patients he sees, but Theobald explains that not all patients are so obliging; he leads Fanshawe into the "remoter regions" of his hospital, where Fanshawe is horrified by stereotyped mad-men writhing in their strait-jackets like wild beasts.

Fanshawe inquires after a famous writer who has been confined to the asylum, one Fleming Lancewood. Lancewood is described as an author of imaginative fiction to rival Poe: "a master magician in the way of all weirdly imaginative fiction." Theobald says that Lancewood's fantasies were the result of addiction to morphine, though Fanshawe seems to prefer the more romantic hypothesis that the writer was crazed by grief following the death of his fiancée.

Theobald has to leave Fanshawe in order to attend to a patient, and the young man is

approached by a stranger, "his haggard features cut in lines of poetic beauty," implying "both despondence and distress". This man tells him that he is a patient, but that he has no hope of recovery and release because he is not really mad. Nor does he seek release, for what he really wants is to be punished for his crimes. He begs Fanshawe to save him from his too-kindly imprisonment, and gives Fanshawe a manuscript which comprises his confession.

In the manuscript the stranger introduces himself as Harold Mountstuart, an Englishman born in Devon of a good family, one of whose scions once demonstrated his worthiness by declining an earldom. Mountstuart claims to have killed seven people for the sake of gaining the family fortune—all of them his uncles and cousins (the plot is strongly reminiscent, in fact, of the famous Ealing comedy film *Kind Hearts and Coronets,* but is in deadly earnest). Mountstuart is quick to insist that his is "no merely lurid tale of vulgar assassination. It is rather one which exhibits crime, I should say, in the light of a subtle and picturesque art, like that of the lapidary, the silversmith, or the painter of ivory." (p.17)

Mountstuart, in the tradition of Douglas Duane, Kenneth Stafford and Gerald Maynard, is converted to the cause of rationalism at an early age, upon picking up a volume of Euclid:

> Some sort of door seemed to have been opened in my mind. Reason, for the first time, vividly woke within my brain, and by the light it shed I seemed to gaze with new eyes upon all other forms of intellectual pursuit. (pp.18-19)

Mountstuart is sent to Eton, but recalled temporarily when his sister Gladys dies of heart failure. He finds himself unable to weep at the sight of the body, and realises that he has never felt the least sentiment or affection for anyone. He discovers himself to be "an abnormal creature, a flesh-and-blood monster" and reflects that "If the world knew me as I knew myself, it would shrink from me as one, in a psychic sense, leprous. For, co-existent with this coldness, I discovered that my nature abounded in what I can best define as ethical torpor." (p.20) Other people, however, do not shrink from him, and he finds it easy enough to be popular with almost everyone.

Naturally, Mountstuart has no faith in God, and professes to regard life as "the most empty and aimless of travesties", and he becomes fascinated by the paradoxicality of his own existential situation. Rationalism, he is firmly convinced, represents a great advance in human affairs—a vital stage in intellectual evolution—but in him it has produced a monster: clever, clinical and conscienceless. The accusation which Solarion threw at Kenneth Stafford Mountstuart hurls at himself again and again: he is a product of intellectual progress without moral progress. Because of his lack of feeling agnosticism has produced in him not a sage but a killer.

Mountstuart is a great success at Cambridge, being both brilliant and popular. He considers making an advantageous marriage, but finds the thought of union with a woman nauseating. His mother at one point suggests to him that in a marriage it is not actually necessary for both partners to be in love, and he retorts by asking her whether this was true of her own marriage. She replies that in fact she *was* fond of his father (now deceased), but has to admit that she was not uninfluenced by the fact that at the time he seemed the likely heir to half a million pounds. Her husband had two elder brothers, but both seemed then to be confirmed bachelors and it seemed likely that Harold's father would be made the heir as head of the one branch of the family likely to continue. Unfor-

tunately, both elder brothers had married late in life and produced children, so that now no less than seven people stand between Harold and the half-million. Harold immediately forgets the thought of marriage which provoked the discussion, and becomes fascinated instead with the idea of murdering his way to the fortune.

At first he sets aside this notion as an absurdity, but his love of luxury goes beyond his rather limited means, and after inheriting the small Devon estate of Dyandotte following his mother's death he soon begins to make plans. He makes his first move when he goes to stay for a while with the present holder of the fortune, his uncle Malcolm. Malcolm has a habit of reading in bed by candlelight, and it is not too difficult to drug him one night and set his bedchamber aflame, rigging the whole matter to look like an accident.

The success of the first murder fills Mountstuart with a sense of destiny, and once his initial exaltation has faded he sets about his next step with calm resolve. His main problem is to avoid suspicion, and so he determines to have someone else hanged for his next murder. Egerton, Malcolm's son, provides him with his opportunity when he impregnates the daughter of his gamekeeper. Mountstuart, disguised as an Indian, eavesdrops on a meeting between Egerton and the girl's brother, and shoots Egerton while a quarrel is in progress, putting the gamekeeper's son very firmly in the frame.

Mountstuart comforts Egerton's sister Blanche, and it soon becomes apparent that if he wished to, he could marry her. He contemplates this course of action, but in the end rejects it. She has a dog of whom she is very fond, and one day the dog goes mad. It bites her, and the wound has to be cauterised. Mountstuart, discovering that the dog has rabies, makes a salve from its saliva, and gives this to Blanche to soothe the burn. Soon afterwards, he is summoned back to her bedside to watch her die an agonizing death. Everyone else, of course, assumes that she was infected by the initial bite—the reader is left to wonder how Mountstuart can possibly have known that she was not.

The second uncle and his family are very different from the first, being with one exception monstrously unpleasant. Cecil, the next inheritor of the cursed half-million, is simply coarse and anti-social, but his two elder children are loathsome. The boy, Angus, is physically deformed and inordinately fond of reptiles, while his sister Edna is jealous and malicious almost to the point of insanity—she persecutes her innocent sister Olive to the point where Olive must be sent to a relative in Canada to protect her.

Cecil is addicted to tobacco and already suffering severe physical symptoms as a result—it is an easy matter for Mountstuart to poison him with pure nicotine. Unfortunately, Edna witnesses the crime and denounces him for it, but her known maliciousness and the fact that the autopsy reveals no suspicious substances in the body result in her evidence being discounted. Nevertheless, Mountstuart decides that she must be next to go, and he persuades her long-suffering governess to take revenge upon her with prussic acid, poisoning herself immediately afterwards. After this, Mountstuart makes a close friend of Angus, whose only other friend is a large anaconda named Caligula. Mountstuart commits the most bizarre of all his murders by intoxicating the snake with pure alcohol so that it crushes Angus within its coils. Mountstuart then tries to kill the snake, but is unfortunate enough to fracture his own skull when the chamber of his pistol explodes.

Once recovered from this injury, Mountstuart sets off for Canada to carry news to Olive of the tragic fate of her kindred. His intention to murder her, and thus come into possession of the half-million, dies quickly once he has seen her; for the first time feeling is

awakened within him, and he falls in love. He plans to marry her, but is unexpectedly confounded by her jealous friend Roberta Stirling. Olive rejects Roberta when she slanders Mountstuart, but Roberta swears that she will prove that Mountstuart is evil in order to reclaim her friend. Mountstuart, knowing only too well how much there is that might be proved, resolves to murder her in order to secure his happiness. He steals up on her one evening as she stands on a cliff close to Niagara Falls, and prepares to push her to her doom, but while he moves to take up his position her place is taken by Olive, and he does not realize until too late that he has made an appalling error.

To his surprise, however, when grief leads him to confess everything, no one will believe him. It is said that all his murders are the figments of a deranged mind, and that even his identity is in question. Thus, though he longs only for due punishment, he finds himself confined to Dr Theobald's asylum as a result of an imaginary delusion.

The story Mountstuart tells is so preposterous that the reader has great difficulty in sympathizing with Fanshawe, who believes that the manuscript does indeed prove the sanity of its author. Most people would reach the opposite conclusion, and the verdict of common sense is for once confirmed when Dr Theobald (surely to no one's surprise) explains that "Mountstuart" is actually the writer Fleming Lancewood.

What is interesting about the story—and what really qualifies it as a realistic romance—is primarily Harold Mountstuart's commitment to explaining himself. He seems obsessed with the business of analyzing his own character, explaining himself as the product of an unfortunate combination of defective heredity and the intellectual environment into which chance delivered him:

> Often I would seek to analyze the cold depth of a disposition and temperament so different from all with which I came into contact. Repeatedly, at these times, the answer addressed *me*: I was the unhappy and unholy result of modern skepticism. I believed in nothing and comprehended that morality was only a utilitarian selection, a product of expediency, which had worked itself out into our present system of right and wrong after millions of centuries—from that shadowy period, indeed, when man had just ceased to be an ape until his slow progression had at last developed intellects of the finest and sturdiest fiber. This recognition, which to so many would have been a revolution of new and wholesome mental life, was for me a damning influence. Religion might have saved me, for I was one of those beings to whom hereditary potencies had made religion a necessary buoy and guide. Convinced that all such faith was foundationless and vain, I saw in life merely a farce, and chose to play my part there with an equal contempt for the performance itself and the fellow actors among whom I strutted my little hour. (p.58)

Such soliloquies as this recur throughout the manuscript, as Mountstuart constructs the logic which makes him into a *new* Nero—not merely one among a crowd of individuals who, throughout history, have perpetrated atrocities, but a genuine innovation. In an age dominated by faith, as he observes, his lack of feeling would not have been a problem, because external constraints on his behaviour would have made that defect irrelevant. Once rationalism and atheism became available to him, however, the hereditary fault which made him incapable of love and sympathy had to prove fatal to his personal morality.

Even Fanshawe realises this in the end. After Theobald's revelation concerning the true authorship of the manuscript, the doctor suggests that Fanshawe should become Lancewood's literary executor. Fanshawe is quick to observe that the manuscript ought to be published: "It's very horrible; but it's not a mere ghostliness and boogabooism. There's a meaning behind it?" When Theobald asks him to clarify, he goes on: "The bitter and terrible one that all great popular spiritual and intellectual advancement neces-

sitates ruin and death to a certain minority. Harold Mountstuart is a voice that speaks for the minority, and with language of mighty despair!" (p.288)

Although Mountstuart uses his private laboratory for nothing more exotic than cooking up poisons, he is—like Douglas Duane and Kenneth Stafford—one of the casualties of progress. Fawcett, in fact, shows us only the casualties; he never—in spite of his championship of progress—shows us its beneficiaries.

The frame-narrative enclosing the story of *The Ghost of Guy Thyrle* concerns a rather highly-strung student named Raymond Savernay, who has come down from Oxford to spend the summer with his married brother Cecil. While at Oxford he has become fascinated by the work of the Society for Psychical Research and the possibility of finding rational explanatory accounts for "psychic phenomena". In pursuit of this interest he visits a house owned by Cecil, and which is supposed to be haunted by the ghost of one Guy Thyrle. At first he fails to see anything odd, but returning one day to recover an ornamental matchbox left in the house he finds himself confronted by the nebulous spectre of a young man.

Raymond now follows Cecil to London to tell him the whole story which the ghost imparts to him, and Cecil in his turn relays the tale to the family doctor. Cecil is panic-stricken because Raymond has said that the ghost is condemned to a terrible fate from which it can only be released throught the voluntary self-sacrifice of another human being, and Cecil fears that this terrible delusion may be the prelude to a suicide attempt.

When it comes to be time for the reader to be told the story of Guy Thyrle, Fawcett is cautious about how it is to be told, and the auctorial voice of the frame-narrative observes that:

> The story was given (by Cecil to Dr Leverett) in a far more broken and hesitant way than when he had heard it from Raymond's lips. At times, too, he even stumbled or halted outright in the telling of it. What he said will therefore not be recorded in his own language. It has indeed been thought best to borrow neither his nor the more convincing voice of his brother, but to unfold in coming pages an impersonal chronicle, as though rearranged by one closely aware of all the leading facts, mindful that each of these shall secure due saliency of presentation, and conscientious in retaining whatever drama, poetry, or spiritual suggestion the original record may have disclosed. (pp.62-63)

The inevitable result of this strategy is to imply that the story of Guy Thyrle is to be taken literally—like the story told in *A Romance of Two Brothers*—but Fawcett had already declared adamantly in the proem that "If certain readers choose to decide that Guy Thyrle's weird experiences were other than the coinage of Raymond Savernay's hallucination, it is not because I have failed to give them full liberty to form an opposite belief." This is, of course, further testimony to the difficulty Fawcett had in maintaining the ambiguity of his story, and to the strength of the conviction of necessity which led him to do so.

Thyrle's story is by now a familiar one. He begins life as a lonely and introverted child, but when he eventually goes to Cambridge he proves to be brilliant in the field of chemistry. He is not popular with his peers, but forms a friendship with Vincent Ardilange. Ardilange is merely using Thyrle because he knows that the latter's income will set them both up in a house in London, whereas his own means are inadequate to secure this end. Thyrle does not suspect Ardilange of hypocrisy, though, and is glad to provide the financial backing for his friend's forays into London society.

Thyrle secludes himself in his laboratory, working upon the isolation of a drug named Onarline. He expects its effects to be psychotropic, and probably hallucinogenic, but

finds instead that it liberates the mind from the body, allowing the *persona* to roam where it will while the body lies inert, as if dead. With the laboratory work complete he decides to take time off to consider the implications of his discovery, and begins to accompany Ardilange on his social excursions. Ardilange resents what he sees as an intrusion, but can hardly object. His resentment grows when many of his acquaintances take more readily to Thyrle than to him, and he becomes passionately jealous when a girl he admires, Violet Fythian, becomes enamoured of Thyrle. Thyrle also falls in love with her.

Thyrle tests his drug by locking himself in a hotel room and wandering about London in an invisible and incorporeal form. Matter is no barrier to him, and he learns that by an effort of will he can read the "psychic spectra" of others, obtaining insight into their moral character. Unfortunately, his inert body is discovered by a chambermaid, and he is only just in time to reclaim it before he is declared dead. As a precaution against similar problems, he takes Ardilange into his confidence and asks him to stand guard over the deserted body during the next experiment. Ardilange is at this time the benefactor of Thyrle's will, though this situation will inevitably change when Thyrle marries Violet, and Ardilange is so embittered against his friend that the opportunity to benefit from an undetectable murder is too good to miss.

Thyrle widens the scope of his researches to examine the whole state of human civilization. His second odyssey takes him all over the world. He examines the secret dealings of emperors and the squalid circumstances of their subjects. He sees human suffering and misery on a terrible scale, but finds hope for the future in the developing tendencies of altruism and charity—a moral evolution which seems to point the way to salvation. He visits the bowels of the Earth, tracking the fossil record within the rocks that tells the story of the evolution of life and of mankind. He visits the ocean depths, and then soars outward into space. He finds the moon to be a long-dead world that was once Earthlike, and he explores the ruins of its extinct civilization. When he returns to Earth, however, he finds that he has been betrayed. Ardilange has had him declared dead, and his body has been cremated. His spirit is homeless.

Thyrle finds himself quite alone; though he has proved that the spirit exists independently of the body, and is at least potentially immortal, he can find no other spirits. They, it is clear, have some other destiny to which they may proceed, and are not confined as he is to the material cosmos. He sets off on a journey across the universe, determined to seek out this further world, craving an interview with God. God proves to be inaccessible, but Thyrle eventually manages to establish communication—albeit of a rather enigmatic character—with other beings of pure spirit. They tell him that he may cross the threshold into the world beyond only if he can persuade another human being to surrender his life and allow Thyrle's spirit to share the moment of his death. He returns to Earth and finds that he can, under exceptional circumstances, make himself manifest to the living. Alas, such manifestations cause extreme alarm, and when he appears to Violet Fythian—immediately before her marriage to Ardilange—the shock kills her. He is extremely upset by this, and he takes his revenge for all the evil done to him by appearing to Ardilange and prompting his suicide. This done, he waits patiently with the hope that his strange imprisonment may one day end—as, indeed, it does when he convinces Raymond Savernay of the truth of his story. Cecil and the doctor are, of course, too late to save Raymond: they find him dying, and the last words uttered by his lips purport to come from the soul of Guy Thyrle.

Such is the plot of Fawcett's last realistic romance. It is not particularly convincing, and *as a plot* represents little advance over *Douglas Duane*. What sets the work in an entirely different class, however, is the fact that for the first time Fawcett really took advantage of the possibilities opened up by his hypothesis. Thyrle's revenge on Ardilange is really a matter of very little significance within the book by comparison with the wonders which the disembodied spirit beholds as it journeys across the universe. It presents not only an overview of the empire of man, but a vision of the whole of creation.

In all his previous realistic romances Fawcett had been concerned with individuals. The discoveries made in the stories are evaluated in terms of the effects which they have on their makers and others intimately connected with their makers. The great issues of the war between scepticism and belief are examined in terms of their effect on the psychology of individuals. Such consequences as there might be within the ideas raised by the stories for mankind as a whole are barely touched, even in Douglas Duane's moment of total revelation. Guy Thyrle's ghost sees less than Duane, and his experience has not the same quality of revelatory omniscience, but there is some *detail* in what he sees, and thus there is considerable substance in what he has to tell us about the greater world beyond our limited horizons of perception. It is this substance which was conspicuously lacking in Douglas Duane's account of what befell him in the wilderness of infinity.

Thyrle's journey has several distinct stages, each one offering a new expansion of perspective. It thus bears a structural similarity to the two most important cosmic voyage stories of the 19th and 20th centuries: Camille Flammarion's *Lumen* and Olaf Stapledon's *Star Maker*. The first phase of his adventure allows him to survey the human world from the standpoint of a new objectivity. He can eavesdrop on world leaders and count the full cost of human misery, and can offer a summary opinion on the entire human condition:

> In this squalor, breeding pestilence as it does, I behold the soil from which that baleful flower of Anarchy has bloomed. Every red petal of it means the blood of countless accursed lives. Cholera itself, and all scourges like it, are indeed a sort of anarchy. Surely there must be some answer to this awful inequality between the rich and poor. Massacre and rapine are but a ridiculous answer. The men who dream that they can better the world by killing kings forget that they merely fortify with martyrs the cause they would crush. The men who dream of great co-operative commonwealths forget that in thousands of their own race lie greeds, egotisms, and evil passions, which would soon make life for the masses more burdensome still . . . The only hope, through millions of coming years, is in science. Some mighty force may be discovered amid the unexplored mysteries of Nature that will enable mankind to live without labour—as, for example, the wondrous turning of the common, inexhaustible air into food and raiment. If there be another hope, its name is fraternity, human love. Not merely the love that gives, but the love that abdicates and renounces. (p.180-181)

The second stage of the journey, into the rocks of the Earth's crust and the ocean depths, sets mankind into an environmental and evolutionary context. The third, which takes him to the moon, offers him a glimpse of a standard by which human civilization might be judged—an echo of a lunar culture which passed through the stage which human history has reached to achieve a kind of Utopia. (It is significant that this lunar race is now long-extinct, for the calm acceptance of its own mortality is one of the key elements of its maturity.)

The fourth stage of the journey sets the world of man in its cosmic context; in the space of a few pages it attempts to convey something of the awesome diversity of the universe and its millions of inhabited worlds. He finds many worlds where life has never developed, and many where it has perished. He finds, too, that the "men" of other worlds are

frequently unhuman in form, intelligent life having many different ancestors. He describes people descended from Lizards and Lions whose cultural achievements are superior to man's, "splendid winged beings", giants and pygmies, and people intoxicated by the love of death. All the time, his perceptions are accelerating:

> He swept onwards, past systems and systems of unrecorded stars. Here it was the same as among those astral cohorts which the sky-gazers of earth had science visually to observe and count. Suns, moons, planets, asteroids, in numbers incalculable! Worlds that yet were floating coils and wreaths and ragged drifts of vapour; worlds that yet were prodigious heavenly bonfires, fed by showers of attracted meteors and even by occasional vast nomadic comets; worlds that teemed with a beauty eclipsing the conception of man; worlds hideous beyond all human belief; worlds just born, youthful, matured, dying, or dead; worlds of sin, degradation and debauchery; worlds of chastity, idealism and peace; worlds in which not a single animal or vegetable shape bore the faintest likeness to those we meet on earth; worlds in which trees thought and spoke and saw; worlds that were earth in miniature or a thousand-fold magnified; worlds in which wolves, serpents, tigers, birds, and countless other creatures of indescribable sort, had won mastery, and risen by inflexible laws of evolution to that same superiority over their primary conditions which marks the ascendancy of earthly man over his ancestral ape. (p.252)

This passage then becomes the prelude to the final phase of the journey, wherein Thyrle attempts to transcend the material universe altogether, to enter the world of spirits and hold conversation with God. In this project he attains only incomplete success, but he does indeed obtain some testimony as to the nature and concerns of God.

This unfolding cosmic vision is extremely crude by comparison with Stapledon's *Star Maker*—only partly by necessity. Nevertheless, it is an achievement to be applauded. Most earlier accounts of the cosmos had been written from a religious standpoint; perhaps the most famous cosmic voyage previously undertaken was that of Emmanuel Swedenborg, who gave his own account of life on many worlds in one section of the *Arcana Coelestia.* Whether Fawcett knew of this work, or of any of its imitations, is not clear. There is a stronger likelihood that he had seen the early version of Flammarion's *Lumen* that was published in *Stories of Infinity:* there are several points of similarity between Thyrle's account of life on other worlds and Flammarion's. These might easily be coincidental, even when one counts in the more fragile echoes to be found in *Douglas Duane,* but a much closer parallel can be found between one of the other *Stories of Infinity,* "History of a Comet", and a poem by Fawcett called "The Comet" which was published in *Fantasy and Passion.*

Even if Fawcett *had* read *Lumen,* however, there is a greater significance in the differences between Lumen's voyage and Guy Thyrle's than in the similarities. *Lumen* is an imaginative *tour de force* of great power, but it sits squarely astride the gulf between the religious imagination and the scientific imagination: it is the ultimate fantasy of spiritualism, in which the revelations of science and the primary dogmas of religious faith are harmonized into a peculiar syncretic amalgam. We have already seen that Fawcett was attracted by such a prospect, and how he attempted a similar binding in *Douglas Duane.* In *The Ghost of Guy Thyrle,* however—despite the invocation of the Society for Psychical Research in the frame narrative and the frank acceptance both of the existence of God and the immortality of the soul, Fawcett is content to set the material and spiritual worlds apart. God's relationship with his creation here is much less intimate than the spiritualists wanted to believe. The ghost of Guy Thyrle is real enough, but a corollary of its explanation is that *there are no others.* Thyrle exists, for a brief span of time, in an intermediate dimension between the material and the spiritual, but once his situation is

resolved the link is broken. Fawcett will have none of the notion of serial reincarnation that was so vital to Flammarion's image of the cosmic scheme—it is entirely alien to his viewpoint. Fawcett's God resembles the gods of the early Greek atomists, who may or may not exist but are in any case remote from their creation and uninvolved with it, leaving the material world to be understood in its own terms, by reference to its own principles of construction and regulation. Despite its glimpses of the nature of deity, *The Ghost of Guy Thyrle* is a thoroughly agnostic work. In this respect it looks forward to *Star Maker* rather than backward to *Lumen*.

There is easily enough that is of interest in Fawcett's realistic romances to establish him as an important figure in the "prehistory" of science fiction. He demands attention from the archaeologist of the imagination, if from no one else. His long-time absence from historical studies of the genre is puzzling, but this injustice is being slowly set to rights: *The Ghost of Guy Thyrle* is annotated in the Salem Press *Survey of Science Fiction Literature* (1979), while that work and *Solarion* are both annotated in the second edition of Bowker's *Anatomy of Wonder* (1981).

In conclusion, however, it is perhaps appropriate to set aside questions of Fawcett's relevance within the history of literary traditions, and to look instead at one or two unique features of his work in terms of their psychological significance. The most one can hope to derive from such an exercise is an account of certain personal idiosyncrasies, but it is worth noting that even a man's personal idiosyncrasies may be the products of the time in which he lives.

The most striking feature characteristic of Fawcett's realistic romances is his insistence on retaining the ambiguity of the main narrative. One might be tempted to regard this simply as an insurance against implausibility, but in certain instances Fawcett's attempts to sustain the ambiguity themselves become implausible. Admirers of the structuralist Tzvetan Todorov might interpret it differently; for Todorov the definitive characteristic of "the Fantastic" (as opposed to "the Marvellous") is precisely this kind of ambiguity, and he would presumably see Fawcett's overemphasis on ambiguity as an essential corollary of his declared intention to characterize with his writings a new genre.

In fact, it seems more likely that the determination of the author to make his speculative fictions ambiguous is a corollary of his committed agnosticism. The realistic romances deal, *by definition,* with the unknowable, and it is essential according to Fawcett's positivistic way of thinking that the unknowable cannot be made known. It therefore has to be handled in a very special way: the speculative element in fantastic fiction must somehow be distanced from the reader so that it makes no direct claim upon his beliefs in the way that a mundane fictional narrative is entitled to do.

Outside of this technical concern, however, one cannot help feeling that the determined ambiguity of the realistic romances—and, indeed, Fawcett's agnosticism itself—overlies a deep-seated ambivalence in his own attitude. While feeling that reason forced him to reject such ideas as the immortality of the soul, Fawcett seems to have felt their loss very deeply indeed. Though his own committed faith forbade him ever to recapture a naive belief in the certainty of an afterlife, the notion itself continued to attract his attention and to draw heavily upon the resources of his imagination.

The protagonists of Fawcett's realistic romances are always more extreme in their beliefs than he was. They become too easily cold and derelict of feeling; lack of religious

faith tempts them frequently towards lack of conscience. The stories in which they suffer, sometimes terribly, in consequence of their own brilliance, are stories of awful warning and promises of punishment for careless sin. Fawcett presumably never felt himself guilty of the sins which these characters commit, but his preoccupation with them nevertheless suggests a sense of personal hazard.

It seems probable that Edgar Fawcett's agnosticism was hard-won and that while he maintained it staunchly he was well aware of its costs. He regarded his own views as a necessary advancement of human knowledge and intelligence; as a gain in evolutionary *fitness* (for Spencer, who coined the phrase, "the survival of the fittest" meant the survival of the most intellectually advanced). In his romantic fiction, however, it was Fawcett's fears rather than his hopes which rose to the surface; the pessimistic spirit of Schopenhauer proved more demanding of his inspiration than the optimism of Spencer. This should not surprise us; anyone familiar with the history of imaginative fiction will know that it has very often been the case.

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Until the publication of his well-received first sf novel, Beloved Son, *in 1978, Australian George Turner was best known in the sf field for his astute, hard-hitting, individualistic criticism of books, and the genre.* Beloved Son, *a complex and mature work, was followed in the Autumn of 1981 by* Vaneglory—*with a third sf novel,* Yesterday's Men, *due from Faber in the middle of 1982. Mr Turner's career is fairly unique, in that he came to sf quite late in life, in the role of critic, and then—once having firmly and publicly established his sense of what is good sf, and what isn't—he set out to put his principles into practice. So he emerges as a professional fully formed, and armed, like Athena from the brow of Zeus—an editorial simile which the scrupulous Mr Turner may well greet with the derision it deserves . . .*

The Profession of Science Fiction, 27: Not Taking it All Too Seriously

GEORGE TURNER

In his lovable essay in nostalgia, "The Lost Childhood", Graham Greene declares that early reading may influence the course of a life and that it influenced his. I'm sure it is true. The books, swallowed whole as only a child can swallow them, needn't be "good" in the sense that *David Copperfield* and *Treasure Island* are approvedly literate and suitable for the young; they have only to create an impact. Marjorie Bowen's almost forgotten *The Viper of Milan* (of sumptuous memory) was Greene's crucial encounter in his fourteenth year, but I look back to age three and *Alice in Wonderland* as the source of my present activities and contentments.

Sixty-two years ago my father read me a chapter of *Alice* each night, month after month until, I suspect, his temper and the book fell to pieces and I could recite the entire work by heart, even (says family legend) to knowing at which word the page should be turned. Well, *Alice* is powerful stuff but family legend is only legend. As the renegade product of five generations of theatre folk (chorus lines and walk-ons with the occasional bit part—nothing fancy) I know them for fantasists who decorated scraps of incident until with repetition they hardened into unassailable history. Assisted by *Alice,* it was a promising environment for a science fiction writer *in posse.*

Renegade status was recognized when at age 12 I decided to become a novelist rather than an actor. The family, knowing our proneness to hardheaded idiocies, wasted no time on "he'll grow out of it" routines but mounted a massive attack spearheaded by Shakespeare, Ben Travers and W.S. Gilbert. It failed but made not a bad beginning for any kind of writer.

By then I had gulped down most of the available Jules Verne (par for the youth of the period) and the science fictional Wells (which was not par, and I doubt I understood more

than every second sentence) and was writing a vastly improved version of *A Princess Of Mars* entitled "The Prince Of Mars". This and a later epic, "Skylark Of The Universe", have not survived.

Science fiction on a regular basis had entered Australia only a year earlier when the first issue of *Amazing Stories* appeared in 1927 (the state of the mails in those days decreed that we got most things a year after the rest of the world) and, magnetized by the gaudy cover, I stole the one-and-ninepence needed to buy it. As with all my criminal ventures the theft was discovered amid scenes of high family drama, but the seed of enchantment was sown.

It did not germinate until much later, for there was to be a greater shock to the system than even Doc Smith could provide.

At age 14, neatly paralleling Greene (though he is a dozen years older) I met my fate in a birthday copy of Sabatini's *Scaramouche*—and fell at once and forever in love with its opening line: "He was born with the gift of laughter and a sense that the world was mad." At once, needing no physical description, I knew André-Louis whole and complete; in a *coup d'esprit* I had discovered characterization and the evocative power of language. (W. Shakespeare, where did you fail me?) The charm of far planets never again caught me with their old power; I had discovered humanity in all its charm and variety. Or thought I had, which at 14 is certainty.

Between 18 and 23 (years larded with the usual physical and emotional excitements and blunderings), being marvellously ill-educated in everything but English Composition, I wrote dramatic thrillers—Sabatini and Talbot Mundy with a dash of Leslie Charteris. None were published or submitted for publication. It is probable that my self-critical faculty worked better then than now; I knew then that the stuff was irredeemably bad whereas now I only hope it isn't. I had enough sense to realize that the road to authorship was long and all of it ahead of me.

Life was broken in two by the outbreak of war, which initiated a messy, noisy, occasionally terrifying but mostly dull six years. Sufficient that I was an infantryman, which is to say, a beast of burden. There is no ASC to transport loads in the New Guinea mountains; we even carried twenty-five pounders, in suitably stripped-down portions, up and over and down the winding, glutinous, near-vertical Big Dipper purgatories called "native tracks". We lived a day at a time.

End of an era.

Came peace—if that is the word for the last thirty-five years—and leisure again for reading and writing. And for science fiction? Yes, in a small way. I had never deserted the genre completely and had been thoroughly excited by the eruption of Heinlein and Asimov, Sturgeon and Kuttner—but was now much more excited by the discovery of Patrick White and Graham Greene and Henry Handel Richardson. A great gap opened between brief exhilarations in imaginary universes and the lifelong satisfactions of the literary world I wanted to join.

The gap remains; the satisfactions have had to be cut to fit the wearer.

It took me ten years to write my first novel to the point where I was satisfied with it (as a work of art, my masters—heigh-ho!) and it was accepted on its first submission. Which may have been for me a literary disaster; it encouraged a grubby talent to think itself a great one.

At this point a brief account of my time in what science-fictionists so snottily call "the mainstream" may point the way to later entanglements.

The writer's life is classically complained of as lonely, a complaint which literary history shows to be true mostly in the cases of those who sought loneliness deliberately, at least in the great centres. Out here among the Rim Worlds it can be catastrophically true. If the writer lives and works in a small Australian country town, as I did through the years of apprenticeship and failure, it can be lonely to the point of paranoid fancy. In those dozen years I met two other writers, one as obscure as myself, the other a drunk who was a very fine writer indeed but impossible to bear with. And I believe I was every whit as drunken and impossible as he. Both were transient acquaintances. My only real contacts were an agent and a publisher, both half a world away in London, both intent on shoring up my confidence by commending my small virtues, neither saying what might have seeped through to me in a community of literary contacts—that the market was overstocked with competent novelists who could write me blind.

I know now how bad that first novel was (though both Damien Broderick and Bruce Gillespie trouble me with claims that it is better than I think—and I, viewing it from the inside, disagree with them) and that the second was pretentiously worse.

Both novels received good local notices—too good for their author's good—and died of commercial anemia almost in the moment of birth, but they gained me some honour in my own country and I completed a tetralogy on the social mores of regional Victoria. One of them earned—"obtained" might be more like it—a prestigious literary prize of great import in our Rim World and none at all in the International Empire at Galactic Centre. Only one of my first five novels earned a little money; the rest barely escaped remaindering.

By then I knew where I stood as a writer: nowhere that mattered. One more novel was to be the last fling—and it won me the new experience of a flat rejection. Nor did any other publisher want it. (Strangely, my agent and his wife never lost faith in that poor orphan and tried for years to place it, and it did in fact surface again in its own good time.)

With a number of small critical successes and financial failures on the trophy wall I decided that ambition was no substitute for talent and, so to speak, hung up my typewriter. I was sufficiently aware of hard fact to decide without rancour that there was little point in adding further fictions to the world's waste-baskets.

I had ceased to take myself over-seriously, which made a good end to another personal era.

Little did I know, as the Goons might have put it, that science fiction, in the person of John Bangsund, was at last ready to pounce.

John Bangsund circa 1967 was a youngish gent, a little higher than wide, possessed of a soft voice disguising a whim of carbon steel and earning a precarious living as a sales representative for the firm (Cassell Australia) which was in process of putting paid to my literary career. He is much the same today, plus a beard, and earns an even more precarious living from various employers who seem to be sampled and discarded before I can memorize their names. He is also one of our better known fans, having been immortalized via Tuckerization (why does Tucker get the credit for that ancient practice?) by James Blish in "We All Die Naked", and the writer/publisher of a variety of highly idiosyncratic fanzines which seem to reach only a restricted circle. A belletrist, no less,

and choosy with it.

He was at that time publishing *Australian Science Fiction Review* and scouting for exotic talent for its pages. He stopped me—a perfect stranger to him—in a corridor at Cassell's and announced in that gentle, steel-lined voice that he was aware that I read science fiction. In something under a minute (I swear that the Ancient Mariner figures in his genealogy) I was committed to writing "some little thing" for *ASFR,* without fully understanding what or why.

It was, you might say, a beginning. It was probably little Alice Liddell springing her revenge after half a century.

One thing led to another, by way of shared claret bottles and the Bangsund tenacity, and I found myself contributing also to Bruce Gillespie's fledgling *SF Commentary.* Then John became, fleetingly, a journalist with the Melbourne *Age* (and there won fame by authoring a scissors-and-paste cookery book) and nepotised me into the position of sf reviewer for the feature pages. So, in 1969, without lifting a finger in anything but late-night claret orgies, I became a science fiction critic.

"Wow, but wow!" cry envious fans, "Think of all that new hard cover sf you get for free!" Yes, indeed—think of all that bloody junk you get and are expected to read and comment on without benefit of obscenities.

In my first year's cuttings I find Le Guin's *The Left Hand Of Darkness,* Dick's *Ubik,* Abe's *Inter-Ice Age 4,* Lem's *Solaris* and a handful of short stories from various anthologies—Aldiss's "Far From Prague", Spinrad's "The Big Flash", Harding's "Dancing Gerontius", Vonnegut's "Harrison Bergeron"—as all that remain in memory. The rest of the year's work is titles, representing stories already fallen to forgotten dust. Two notable novels, two enjoyable ones and four excellent short stories is a poor harvest from sixty-odd titles reviewed. What, I wonder, were all those anthologies fleshed out with?

And that was a *good* year. Regular reviewing is a torment for the damned, but I needed the money. My job had collapsed along with some other fundamental pillars of my existence—but that's another story, sometimes funny and often absurd but mostly plain dull. However, I found I could stand the torrents of bilge no longer and asked that the column be discontinued. I wanted to review only the half dozen or so sf books each year that warranted critical attention (also, of course, the "big name" products that had to be mentioned, if only destructively) and set them in the same column with the "mainstream" novels which I was also handling. It was, I thought, a move towards getting regular reader attention from those who might not bother with the sf column. My amiable editor, who knows nothing about sf and cares less, merely nodded and smiled and let the turbulent reviewer have his way without even a symbolic squaring off for administrative combat.

(Digression: I find that word, "mainstream", offensive in its intimation that sf is something apart from the great flow of creative writing. I used to point out, in fanzines, the tendency of major sf novels to hark back to "mainstream" origins until one day the obvious hit me in the critical eye: sf has never left the main stream, merely played a few creative variations—and not so many, at that. *Apartheid* was a creation of the self-immured ghetto-dwellers of the '30s and '40s and is preserved today by those who protest idiotically about the 'intellectual freedom' of the SF approach. I was to discover for myself that the SF approach can be an intellectual straitjacket.)

Nearly all the worthwhile sf between 1969 and 1981 has passed through my hands as well as much of the junk (reviewers develop a sixth sense about what will or will not repay

sampling, and it rarely fails them) so I have had a continuing overview of the state of the art.

One man's view is no more reliable than another's, but I cannot see that much of importance has happened since *Left Hand Of Darkness* and *Solaris* made their impact on the more thoughtful writers and readers. There have been sports, like Tom Disch's *334* or Cecilia Holland's *Floating Worlds,* one-off works of great talent whose very individuality made linear development unlikely, but no significant advances on the genre front. Moorcock's brave and ultimately effective revolution ran its course and added valuable resources of technique and intellection (once the pretention and obscurantism and textual acrobatics had died of dystrophy), but its foremost exponents—Ballard, Disch, Lafferty, Sladek and a few more—have created for themselves genres which have little to do with sf. (Nice to see that the sf ghetto-dwellers now have their very own sf mainstream which the better writers are turning their backs on.) Otherwise the mixture-as-before syndrome persists.

Among British writers one still waits on the books of a few—Roberts, Priest, Compton, Watson—hoping that the next will herald the new breakthrough but knowing in one's heart that the British sf of today is well written, whimsically odd, intellectually thorough-to-formidable—and lifeless.

Turning to America, there's life enough in the sense of furious activity but it is allied to the standards of the TV commercial (apologies to Le Guin, Bishop and a few more who still know what writing is about) and a mind-blowing, star-busting attitude little changed since Kim Kinnison let the galaxy know who runs things around here. As for the endless sagas, so dispiritingly uninventive . . . who cares?

There still seems to be hope in Eastern Europe. The fiction at last coming through to us in a reasonable spate is refreshing in its unexpected, almost alien points of view—but even there Lem has retired into playing intellectual games and treating the area with unproductive snobbery, while the still delightful Strugatskis have hardened into twin knots of anger and bitter jokiness.

Sf, is, I think, marking time. There's nothing hopeless about that; it's just reorganising and regrouping after the shakeup administered by the "new wave". Somewhere a new breakthrough will be gathering strength.

I seem to have wandered, so—back to 1967, when my fanzine writings quickly brought me cheers, catcalls, fanfares, furies, staunch supporters and others who would have had me turning over a slow fire.

One of the advantages of ceasing to take yourself too seriously is that you lose concern for what others think of your performance; you can concentrate on the job in hand and do it as you feel you should do it with little thought (though one has to admit the occasional snide chuckle) for the disapproval of intellectual friends, the offended reactions of dispraised writers or the abuse of their fans. Writers who choose to be offended will sometimes be hysterically offensive in return (which serves only to provide delighted readers with a taste of undignified literary blood) and their outraged fans will scorch good paper with incandescent rage. It's all clean, harmless fun, serving to separate bleating sheep from red-eyed goats.

But these entertainments are only froth on the serious critical responsibilities of giving honestly of your best, locating your own prejudices and striving to bypass them,

recognising intellectual shortcomings and staying within them, seeking out the subtly good as fervently as the camouflaged bad and being always aware that gut-ripping is easy but that perceiving what in a given work has value is not necessarily as simple. The price of freedom of critical expression is your literary soul.

Add to this that the temptation to fence-sitting or timid gentleness should be resisted; it is necessary never to be afraid of being wrong when you think you have a case to put. Sooner or later you will be wrong, so then accept and admit it. I have printed a few withdrawals and admissions over the years—not many, but a few.

All this being so, my attitude towards fan criticism in Australia in the '60s was that despite valiant efforts by John Foyster and John Bangsund it scarcely existed. Think of the worst of fanzine gush swinging between "magnificent" and "absolute hogwash" (most reviews seemed to include one or the other) and there you have it. However, since I had let myself be conned into this *samizdat* world, I decided to enjoy it; so, with malice aforethought I chose a target and let fly with a standard-bearer of an article which damned me for ever as a poisoner of wells. I took Bester's *The Demolished Man* to pieces, not to denigrate Bester, for *TDM* remains one of the most accomplished thrillers yet produced in sf, but to light a fire under the starry-eyed who were striving to make a major artwork of it by praising it for virtues it simply does not possess—the non-existent "realism" of its presentation of telepathy (riddled with inconsistencies), the quality of the presented cultural background (close to non-existent) and the "depth of characterization" which was no more than the skin-depth required by the plot.

You don't light fires with impunity but the vehemence of the fan reaction, for and against, shook me to the point where I wondered if I had stirred up more than I could readily handle. I hadn't then learned that fandom operates only at the top of its voice. Then an appreciative letter from Robert Bloch stiffened my spine and I began to think of operating at something higher than firebug level.

(Digression for a fantale: Bob Bloch and I met at last when he visited Melbourne in 1981 for a SF Film Convention. On our being introduced he fixed me with a steely eye and said, "I am most surprised to meet you; I had always thought you were a pseudonym." I never did work out an intelligent reply to that, but we spent some pleasant hours playing do-you-remember about silent films we both saw when we were in kneepants. That sort of thing is one of the sweeter fringe benefits of the profession of science fiction.)

I felt—and still feel—that sf had a foolishly false image of itself, a pose of self-importance which would flicker out at the snap of a reality-switch. Damon Knight and James Blish had tried, with little result, to take the mickey of pretension by establishing standards of *technical* criticism but it had been left to Kingsley Amis's *New Maps Of Hell* to seek a grip on themes, philosophies and trends. Whether or not one agreed with his conclusions, he had opened a fine can of worms—and the great defensive battle was immediately on.

It is still on. With academic (and, all too often, pseudo-academic) criticism spreading like soft butter across the more serious sf journals, the genre's assumption of its own inherent rightness of stance and self-approval goes unchallenged. Students, dons and all forms of literary intelligentsia burrow into the works of even the blandest authors to surface like Jack Horners with plums of minute observation impaled on their thumbs. These plums are perhaps not unimportant in the sense of adding to the total of available information (though I feel there must be a limit to the accumulation of trivia) but their

gatherers seem so often lacking in discrimination and even of any suspicion that the bland commercialism of the works of many of those examined renders them scarcely worth reading for light entertainment, let alone studying. Critical study of a work should be something of an accolade or at least an indication of unusual qualities requiring attention, yet many of the studies amount to little more than *curiosa* telling more about the ferreting abilities of the researcher than about the mediocrities of the researched.

A few obscure critics in Australia weren't likely to hole the great gasbag of fannish adulation or the round-robin puffery of authors reviewing each other, but the target was so big that only the wildest shots could fail to bring a hiss of deflation.

A few rules of warfare were to be observed: Only firmly established targets should be assailed, i.e. those big enough to sell nonsense to an undiscriminating readership and influential enough to leave criticism helpless. The aim must be not mere destruction but to point out where undue praise had been given or proper praise withheld; the ultimate target must be critical standards rather than individuals. (If the occasional individual must bleed, let it be one whose blood was little loss to the genre.) New authors should be tacitly exempt; every writer needs a settling-in period for regrettable errors and suckering by over-enthusiastic admirers.

It all amounted to an attack on the deficiencies of a genre lulled into self-admiration by writers who whined against ghettoisation while themselves providing the reasons for its continuance—the sanctification of the secondrate.

(Sad digression on the ghetto mentality: There is an awful temptation to dismiss in-group sf opinions out of hand. Quite recently an American writer of great genre repute announced to a crowded room in Melbourne that **a** James Clavell's *Shogun* is science fiction because it deals with the clash of cultures, **b** it is a greater novel than *War and Peace* and **c** that *Lucifer's Hammer* demonstrates that science fiction can challenge the 'mainstream' on its own ground. John Bangsund, who was also present, later commended my restraint in not assaulting an overseas guest and said he had feared I might succumb to a stroke. This is admittedly an outrageous example, but it can be matched among reviewers without much research.)

As a programme mine sounds destructive, but destructive criticism exists only in the minds of those unable to learn from it. (*Dishonest* criticism, ignoring virtues in favour of mayhem, should not need to concern us.) And when I count up my articles over the years I find more offering admiration and praise than otherwise, but fanzine readers prefer spilt blood to the awarding of laurels so that efforts to drum up readership for such fine books as *334, Floating Worlds* or *Snail On The Slope* have been regarded as aberrations and achieved nothing. However, Peter Nicholls (in *Foundation 7/8*) called me "one of the voices of sanity", so perhaps not all was wasted effort.

Indeed I was only one of the voices. John Foyster, John Bangsund and Bruce Gillespie (and later Damien Broderick) were also in the business of examining and by example raising local standards. It was the effort of a group (not always in harmony, and rightly so) of whom I happened to be the noisiest.

Planned outrage was not docilely accepted by Australian fandom. Opposition was immediate and vociferous, often personally vengeful and far too often represented by "Who does this mainstream soandso think he is and what science fiction did *he* ever write?" This variation of "If you're so clever why ain't you rich?" is one that no one should take to heart, but repetition over a period of years has a cumulative effect and the

victim begins to wonder if the only way to demonstrate his capacity to his own uncertainties might not be—to write a science fiction novel. And that, as Peter Nicholls hinted in his *Encylcopedia* entry under my name, could be a perilous enterprise.

What deterred me was in part the sloth engendered by having written no fiction for ten years and in part the lack of an attractive theme. Everything seemed to have been done before, however badly, and I have never claimed to be much of an original thinker. *Beloved Son* would not have been written if John Bangsund hadn't poisoned my rest with reminders of the opinions of others who denied my credentials. (Nor would it matter to fandom, science fiction or literature if it had not been written, but one has to begin somewhere.) John did not doubt my credentials, bless him; he was merely determined to get a book out of me and unscrupulous in his methods. (Tribal Old Man Wisdom, probably secondhand: Never fear your enemies, for you know what to expect of them, but be for ever alert against the good intentions of your friends.)

I began to dabble with a group of characters in a star ship, letting them bounce off each other to see what might emerge. It was my usual "mainstream" method, but here more doodling than composing, because I had no theme. Finally I saw the obvious: that the return to Earth with new knowledge was more pertinent than their voyaging. That reversed itself into their return with old knowledge to a new world. And one thing led to another.

As a set of character studies the book didn't work too well; I think I gave more in that direction than is asked in the usual run of sf duty, but it wasn't enough. I wanted to write a novel about people rather than events and only found what dozens must have discovered before me, that in science fiction that is a damned difficult proposition. Hunting back through our century I find only two sf novels which left me feeling that the theme had been properly explored while at the same time I had moved among characters recognizable as people with human depth—J.D. Beresford's *The Hampdenshire Wonder* and Tom Disch's *334*. It is this working *through* characters instead of *on* them that makes Beresford's novel so much more satisfactory than Stapledon's better known *Odd John,* with its similar theme, and *334* a titan beside Wells's otherwise appealing *Story Of The Days To Come*. Like Beresford's wonder child I look along the sf library shelves and ask, "Is this *all*?" And by God it is.

A definition of science fiction could be: "the fiction of altered conditions treated as reality rather than fantasy, by extension of known fact instead of simple postulation of arbitrary change". (You don't like it? Too bad. Nobody ever likes the other bloke's definition. At least mine removes fantasy from the stew.) But the wise man who said, 'Plot is character in action' hadn't read any science fiction; there, plot is environment in action on representative specimens. Examination of character becomes almost irrelevant when the emphasis is on environmental difference.

It isn't hard to see how Beresford and Disch managed the trick of balancing character against theme, each in a different way, but theirs were one-out solutions without a general application; Disch, indeed, hasn't managed it so successfully before or since *334*. Nor, I think, has anyone else. *(1984* nearly brought it off but not quite; the preachment finally held centre stage—as it was designed to do—and the characters danced to its necessities. H.G. Wells did some neat sleight of pen by presenting his marvels through the eyes of the little, average man and gained some warmth and intimacy thereby, but in the end it was always the same little man; the reader began to catch him at it.)

There's difficulty in writing the novel you want to write; the finished article is always so much less than the dream. You learn your limitations. Later you learn the ability of reviewers to stagger you across the spectrum of disagreement, from "brilliant" to "abysmal" in discussion of the same unfortunate work. In the past I had seen what could be done in rapturous welcome and minatory dismissal but the reception of *Beloved Son* opened fresh vistas. The most crushing report arrived before the book was even offered to a publisher. An American agent said it bored him stiff and refused to offer it anywhere. My trusty English agent said that he liked it but didn't quite know what to do with it. How would it look, he asked plaintively, on a sale rack between Asimov and Heinlein? I replied, "Much the same as between Tolstoy and Beatrix Potter," but felt privately that at last I had strained a small talent to self-destruction. Very saddening.

At which point I saw that I had fallen back into the evil habit of taking myself—and others—too seriously. So, with a 'wotthehell Archie wotthehell' attitude I sent it to Charles Monteith at Faber & Faber, feeling that I might as well aim high on the publishing heap, and he accepted it. (At the same time I found a publisher for poor old *Transit Of Cassidy,* which had sulked ten years in the Pending tray. It bombed disgracefully; we'll hear no more of it.)

So things were looking up—until the reviews came in. The British sf reviewers were to a man patronising, deprecating and unsure what it was about. The British non-sf reviewers were to a man enthusiastic, treating it as a novel *per se* rather than as genre work. Australian sf reviewers were cautious, deciding that it was about **a** biology, **b** politics, **c** telepathy or **d** the adventures of a returned starman. My protest that the epigraphs at the beginning said that it was about something else cut no ice with anybody. (After all, they'd heard me say often enough that the writer is the last person to understand what he has written. My own petard.) One alone—Van Ikin of the University of Western Australia—read the epigraphs, got the point and wrote the most joyous review of my career. Much better than it deserved. As in Britain the non-sf reviewers were quicker to observe the actual theme and were in general happy with it. Make what you will of that.

The Americans, almost without exception, thought it was either an adventure story or a moral tract—slow but nice if you go for that sort of thing.

Oscar Wilde decided that when critics disagree the artist is at peace with himself. Good for Oscar, but this "artist" was merely bewildered. It seemed that the book was a flop in sf circles and a success outside them, with fence-sitters in each camp. Rather like an author running a dead heat in a one-man race. There was little to be learned from such a result.

Why continue? That answered itself. To throw off the writing bug once is possible, to beat it after re-infection is out of the question. Besides, there are all manner of technical problems to be explored. Characterization, for instance. There's no shortage of excuses for doing what you want to do.

Sam Johnson said, "No man but a blockhead ever wrote, except for money." Hey, there, fellow blockheads!

And so, two more novels. Having, as I have confessed, no very original cast of mind, themes have been confined to old science fiction standbys and an attempt to present them from fresh points of view. So *Vaneglory* looks at that old chestnut, extended lifespan, from the standpoint of biological, evolutionary and psychological possibility instead of

falling for the old fantasy trap of using immortality without further comment. There is much to be said about science fiction's 'received conventions' which writers use like stage props but rarely examine.

Another conception too familiar in popular literature, and blatant in science fiction, is of the soldier as either a do-or-die hero of the "somehow he found the added strength" school or a brainwashed robot programmed for slaughter on the command, "Kill!" It was worth writing *Yesterday's Men* (scheduled for mid-1982) as an attempt, however minor, to present him as he is—the boy next door doing his best to stay human under conditions the rational mind rejects. It is worth remembering that war and soldiers are the creation of the people who recoil from both. So what is aggression really about? It was worth a novel.

Such novels are, I suppose, part of my critical protest against science fiction's too long unchallenged view of itself and its conventions—to borrow a phrase, a continuation of criticism by other means. That the protest is unlikely to cause any ripples on the great pond of fan-feeding mixture-as-before hardly matters. I am in retirement. I don't need to make more than an adequate living—and if I did, would find a way other than boring myself stiff by writing conventional junk. So I can write what I like how I like.

It is pleasant to be as free as one can reasonably be without abandoning the world altogether; it is a condition wherein you needn't take the world seriously, or yourself. You can follow your bent without collapsing into trauma every time you discover you have been wrong again.

Next? It's a little late to start planning far ahead, but it would be interesting to do something on future development of the drama. Nobody has yet produced a really imaginative idea of the future of that most ancient of man's overt attempts to contemplate himself as saint and devil . . .

Gregory Feeley, currently resident in New Haven, Connecticut, grew up resolved to become a serious sf writer, and sold his first story—a fragment of a novel still in progress—when he was seventeen, though the story took five years to appear, coinciding with his graduation from college in 1977. Since then he has worked on translations, essays and a contemporary novel, and is now concentrating on sf again.

The following essay was originally written as an introduction to The Seedling Stars, *though the hardcover reprint house for which it was intended has decided not to reprint this particular Blish title in the near or middle future, unfortunately.*

As an interesting aside to this essay on Blish's career, Mr Feeley comments that "Blish left two unfinished novels when he died, King Log *and* A Cage of Birds, *the latter a contemporary novel. The titles alone are suggestive of the path Blish's late work was taking: one suspects the eponymous cage would prove a container for more than just the literally avian, as Blish had used flight as a metaphor for consciousness many times . . . As for* King Log, *it is difficult to imagine the title as referring to anything but Aesop's fable of the frogs who wanted a god; as pessimistic a totem to choose for a central metaphor, however Blish meant to use it, as I can think of."*

Cages of Conscience from Seedling Stories: The Development of Blish's Novels

GREGORY FEELEY

James Blish's *The Seedling Stars* was published in 1957 in a small edition by the Gnome Press. Like most of Blish's other books, it was the product of several years' pondering and gradual development: most of the material comprising the four parts of the novel had appeared in various American science fiction magazines between 1952 and 1955, but "Surface Tension," the centerpiece of the novel and Blish's most famous story, had its origins even earlier, as a short story entitled "Sunken Universe" published in 1942 when its author was twenty-one. The novel published fifteen years later represents more than an expansion of the first, fragmentary story of microscopic humans battling for survival in a puddle of water, it shows a characteristic rethinking and elaboration of the underlying tenets of the story—a broadening of scope and ambition similar to the creative processes that turned other brief, individual stories by Blish into his eventual tetralogies *Cities in Flight* and *After Such Knowledge.*[1] Although the single volume of *The Seedling Stars* seems a much more modest oak than the multifoliate works that eventually grew from "Okie" and "A Case of Conscience" (like the great majority of Blish's novels, including most of the eight volumes comprising the two tetralogies, *The Seedling Stars* is less than 60,000 words long), the novel possesses an aura that fills the interstices of its widely-spaced time-settings, suggesting a scope comparable to that of *Cities in Flight;* and traces in its elliptical account of Man's possession of the galaxy and dispossession of Earth the intellectual outlines of a melancholy and movement-toward-isolation often said to reside exclusively in Blish's later writings. The book is notable both as one of Blish's most successful novels and as an exemplar in miniature of Blish's creative process: unresting, accretionary, cerebral, exacting. As the critic John Clute has noted, the stories recounting the spread of pantropy "get too brief a run but live beyond their text."[2]

The notion of pantropy, tailoring human genetic material to produce Adapted Men capable of living in the hostile environments of other worlds, is the formal conceit to the novel, but the philosophical tenet underlying the work's development is slightly different: "You cannot totally change the form without totally changing the thought processes. If you give a man the form of a cockroach . . . he will wind up thinking like a cockroach, not like a human being." None of the examples of pantropy presented in the novel's four sections constitutes a break with the humanoid form and consequently with recognizable human thought; Blish is rather interested in the subtle gradations by which modification of form and environment alter some contours of human thought, leave others unchanged. In a similar manner, the conceit of *Cities in Flight,* known while in progress as "the Okie series," is just that—cities that fly like spaceships, moving between worlds as

migratory workers—while the series' more fundamental organizing concept is the application of Oswald Spengler's theories of history to a large -scale future tableau. Both works have been enjoyed by a generation of magazine readers more interested in the formal manipulation of such classically science-fictional ideas, as well as such incidental nuggets of intellectual *discours* as the discussion of soil abuse and the presentation of simulated war tactics in *The Seedling Stars,* or the speculations in anti-matter physics at the end of *Cities in Flight* or the ingenious argument for Manicheanism in *A Case of Conscience,* than they are concerned with Blish's far deeper preoccupations with consciousness and the isolation of the individual. I have called these situational schemes "conceits" but no opprobrium should be inferred; Blish was quite serious about the scientific and cultural-historical expositions and speculations his work contained or were based in part upon, bringing all his learning as a trained biologist and his erudition in music and literature to bear upon them. Nevertheless, the real centers of these books cannot be located by triangulation of their ostensible themes and intellectual concerns. Blish's real theme, which did not change much from his artistic coming of age in the early Fifties to the end of his career, is evident in *The Seedling Stars* as it is in all his mature work: fitfully, as though developed unconciously against psychic resistance, but none the less powerful for all that.

The Seedling Stars' publication in 1957 came during the most productive period of Blish's career, when he was both writing his best-remembered works and producing them more rapidly than at any time before or since. His immediately preceding novels, *Jack of Eagles* (1952) and *Earthman, Come Home* (1955) were his first, qualified successes with the novel form, uncertain in tone at crucial points and undercut by occasional reliance upon pulp-fiction conventions, but extravagant and ambitious. 1957 was Blish's *annus mirabilis,* after which point the scholarly ex-Futurian, who began publishing sf in the early 1940s at the same tender age as most of the luminaries of the field but served a decade-long apprenticeship before producing work of real prominence, could incontestably be accounted a peer of Asimov, Leiber, Sturgeon, and Heinlein. That year Blish also published *They Shall Have Stars,* the opening novel of the *Cities in Flight* sequence, and a contemporary novel, *The Frozen Year* (which falls back upon a familiar sf stance at a crucial juncture just as the above-cited novels resort to pulp contrivances). In 1958 Blish published *A Case of Conscience, VOR,* and *The Triumph of Time.*

Most of these works were like *The Seedling Stars* in having their origins in novelettes published years earlier and subjected to further consideration and development. *The Triumph of Time* was among Blish's first novels conceived and initially composed in its definitive form, which along with the equally brief and focused *They Shall Have Stars* framed the jumbled series of novelettes comprising *Earthman, Come Home* to form a finished sequence. *(A Life for the Stars* (1962), which eventually became the second volume of the tetralogy, is essentially a young adult novel that does not detract from or bear upon the form created by the other works in any significant way.) *The Seedling Stars* is divided into temporally disjunct sections corresponding to those of its piecemeal composition, but its contrast to more seamless works such as *The Triumph of Time* was deliberate, and is characteristic of many of Blish's novels in a way that the circumstances of their composition does not suffice to explain. John Clute has remarked upon the persistent lack of temporal continuity, symmetry of form and narrative equipoise to be found in Blish's fiction, and has attributed Blish's relative lack of popularity to the

tendency of our culture to identify (wrongly) all Western fiction as belonging to the tale-telling and essentially mimetic tradition of the European *roman,* by which standards imaginative works of a fundamentally different order, called the *recit* by Paul Hernandi and the "Menippean satire" by Northrop Frye, will simply be judged as deficient, instead of being recognized as belonging to a different genus.[3] Blish's works, so often lacking in outward action, or focusing perversely upon introspective or discursive moments of stasis while the story's action takes place offstage or is dispensed with swiftly as though the author's real attention were elsewhere (such as in the corridor riots in *A Case of Conscience),* certainly seem to be uncraftsmanlike when compared to the novels of Heinlein, Clifford Simak, or Poul Anderson, if it is their virtues *as stories* that is considered. Certainly none of these authors would end a novel, as Blish does *The Seedling Stars,* with a last section composed wholly of a pair of conversations between unfamiliar characters that concern purely intellectual matters. Only when these works are judged as examples of something other than the *roman*—i.e. other than as a story that could be made into a movie—can the dislocations and lacunae punctuating Blish's stories be seen as something other than formal flaws: seen rather as varying expressions of profound skepticism toward—most immediately—the comfortable precepts and assumptions of then-contemporary science fiction; and more broadly to the accepted wisdom of present-day (i.e. late Fifties) America with its bomb-shelter strategies, security checks, convictions as to the nation of progress (*pace* Spengler), and popularization of the arts; to, finally, a deep, abiding pessimism regarding the viability of the individual as a genuine participant of society, or the verity of love, or the compatibility of happiness with knowledge—concerns (baldly stated here) that were to grow more salient and stark toward the end of his career, but which had their intellectual origins and first successful enunciations in Blish's own small "Golden Age" of the late Fifties, including *The Seedling Stars.*

2

Pantropy does not figure in any other work by Blish, and although he was inclined to make brief references to the events or background of one story in the text of another—an evidently playful and rather bewildering practice, which he carried to excessive lengths in the late "A Style in Treason" and *The Quincunx of Time*—Blish was not a creator of future histories like Heinlein before him or Niven after him, and except for such explicit cases of causally-joined sequences as *Cities in Flight* and *Black Easter/The Day After Judgment,* no story by Blish should be read as seriously bearing upon any other, not excluding those containing references to the Haertel Drive or the Heart Stars.[4] Pantropy, spindizzies, polyploidy (from *Titans' Daughter),* and juganity (from *Midsummer Century*) remain peculiar to the stories in which they were created, for Blish followed for the most part the speculative technique that H.G. Wells developed and advocated for science fiction: of making one major assumption per story, and developing it against a background that is as nearly a simple extrapolation of presently discernible trends as is practicable, in order that the major theme may be worked out against a plain and unobtrusive backdrop. If one is interested in dramatizing the effects of the invention of an anti-gravity substance that will allow men to travel to the Moon, it is technically simpler not to have to worry about including various other advances that a technology sophisticated enough to produce the substance will likely also have developed. (The easiest solution, which Wells often took, was to have his inventors of Cavorite and the

Time Machine live in the present day.) Thus *The War in the Air* (1908), though it depicts with impressive plausibility the development of massive air strike tactics in a mid-twentieth century world war, is set in a society in which the British class structure, international relations, and most other scientific advances are not recognizably different from those of the Edwardian era.

Thus *The Seedling Stars* resembles a laboratory culture of the theme of pantropy, with other elements of future technological development as might prove a distraction from the charted curve of the novel's primary concern rendered as blandly standard as possible, as a homing receiver will tune out unwanted wavelengths. The development of an interstellar drive, which Blish far better than most sf writers knew to be a major scientific and philosophical element in any story, is summarily introduced as a problem that had been resolved decades earlier: easy interstellar flight has been widely available; no one knew about it because, as one character unconvincingly explains, "Port couldn't see any profit emerging out of interstellar flight (!) . . . But all the Port ships have the Overdrive, just in case. Even our ship has it." Thus when the exigencies of plot demand it, the Adapted Men, fugitives from a culture that makes sense only if restricted to the unsophisticated interplanetary travel it has shown itself to have, can escape to the stars in a twenty-year-old craft they had in storage.

Similarly, the exiled protagonists of Book II, "The Thing in the Attic", are told by the Earthmen that the "Seeding Program" has been going on for thousands of years. As Blish is interested here in dramatizing the points of view of various Adapted Men, it is understandable that he would not wish to get concerned with the political evolution on Earth of such a long-term program. Yet it is incredible that such a vastly expensive undertaking, derived as it must be from a distinctive political philosophy, should be steadily supported by a culture for millenia. (It should be remembered as well that the Earthmen's purpose on returning to Tellura is to drive the Adapted Men out of their homes and force them to live on the forest floor, a kind of high aggressive social imperialism not likely to flourish unmodified for long). These anomalies, as well as others such as the surprising absence of any alien intelligencies encountered as of Book IV after much of the galaxy has been seeded, represent a *smoothing out* of other complex developments in the tangled skein of an sf novel's fictional history so that the primary one may be clearly delineated. Blish was never, in my opinion, to concentrate all the plausible scientific and social developments a posited culture might be expected to have made in a single book (*A Torrent of Faces* probably comes closest), but very few sf writers seriously make the effort; those who do usually distribute the fruits of such labor over several books.

What Blish did set out to do in *The Seedling Stars*—to dramatize the circumstantially altered but essentially unchanging nature of human response under stress—is presented to good effect in the novel. One may regret that Blish did not press his precept beyond its stated boundaries and attempt to show us an example of pantropy that *did* discard humanoid form and result in a species that is other than human in nature (rather as Joanna Russ, reviewing the slim text of *Midsummer Century,* lamented that Blish did not take up the point of view of one of his non-human denizens and pursue it for 400 pages),[5] but his actual achievement is interesting enough. That he declined the opportunity to explore more wide-ranging, ambitious psychic grounds, even those actually brought into the text, is undeniable. What would seem the most interesting characteristic of Donald

Sweeney in Book I—that he was raised, as an Adapted Man capable of living unprotected only on the surface of a world such as Ganymede, in hermetic isolation, never able to touch another person, know any relatives or loved ones, or conceive of others like himself except as enemies—is really given little attention by Blish, who dutifully states that upon Sweeney's arrival on Ganymede he is made physically nervous by the proximity of others, and bemused by the presence of an attractive woman; but emphatically declines to dramatize the psychological devastation that such a repatriate would experience. Similarly, the greatly intriguing situation presented in the prologue to Book III, "Surface Tension"—that the creation of pantropes from the germ plasm of the seed-ship's crew members would result in Adapted Men whose psyches would retain ancestral memories from their donors, like Jungian archetypes—is cursorily handled, with the major characters of the story proper bearing only obvious and schematic resemblances (Lavon from La Ventura; Shar from Chatvieux) to their presumed genetic donors. That Blish so thoroughly refused to personify his Altererd Men as anthing other than *unqualifiedly human* beings in extreme circumstances should not, I think, be considered so much an imaginative failure as a resolute focusing of purpose; which gives an indication of Blish's real intent.

Donald Sweeney is an orphan, a foundling—albeit by methodical design—as fully so as any character out of Dickens or Grimm's fairy tales. Honath in "The Thing in the Attic" is a persecuted free-thinker, an example of the idealized Galileo-figure as dear to science fiction as the orphan is to children's stories. Lavon and Shar in "Surface Tension" are types of the heroic questers for understanding so familiar as to appear unmodified in almost every 1950s science fiction film about expeditions to other planets or lost continents—the young leader of the expedition and the older Professor. One does not have to look to other irrefutable signs of Blish's reliance upon figurations from folklore and popular culture (such as the really lamentable presence in Blish's fiction of professors with beautiful daughters, or the cinematic course of action in "The Thing in the Attic" whereby the treacherous and hypocritical member of the party gets his gratifyingly just deserts, and the winnowing of protagonists brings Honath and the single female in the party together) to dispel any ideas that plausibility of plot, any more than plausibility of projected future, is in these stories a virtue or even a concern for Blish. His ready adoption of such familiar tropes and formulae, whether a deliberate tactic or not—and I suspect that Blish was not aware of how closely his scenarios imitated those of popular fictions—may be read as an attempt to make the less crucial elements of his imaginative construct most immediately accessible to the reader's comprehension and identification, so that the real kernel of his concern not go unfelt beneath estranging layers of thoroughgoing extrapolation.

The orphan struggles against oppression, the free-thinker against oppression and then against a hostile world, and the questers against a hostile world; a sequence aptly concluded by the envoi in which the now-dominant Adapted Men, ascendant yet still subtly oppressed, achieve a final triumph in seeding the hostile world the "primary" men have made of their own Earth. This fictive ontogeny of the sf children's story aggregate hero, which traces the decreasingly justified stages of reader self-identification toward pure wish-fulfillment like the Lithians in *A Case of Conscience* recapitulating their full evolutionary heritage *in vivo,* cannot be defended as a conscious enumeration of the various stereotypes by which popular sf caters to infantile reader fantasies, albeit Blish

comments obliquely on such figures in other works and was publishing his essays eventually collected in *The Issue at Hand* on the subject at this time. Blish uncritically incarnated these popular figurations in *The Seedling Stars* just as he presented them for what they were four years earlier in "Testament of Andros". What distinguishes the characterizations here from those of the trash that partakes most fully of these templates is the peculiarly *muted* quality of their employment; a skepticism or silence concerning those matters of conviction usually appended like pennants to such heroic idealizations, *viz.* patriotism, indomitability, confidence regarding the future, assurance around women, piety; and the nature of Blish's own temperament as present in this book, which is uncongenial—one cannot go so far as to say subversive—toward the entire ethos of the adventure story, to say nothing of its disreputable pulp offspring.

The presence of women in *The Seedling Stars* illustrates the point. All three major characters—excluding once more the postscriptural conversants in Book IV—have enough to do without worrying about their sedentary personal lives, but women obtrude themselves into their concerns just as the subject of sexuality does into the text itself: by indirection, in a manner the principal did nothing to encourage and about which he retains, despite his welcome, equivocal feelings. No reader can miss the peculiar way in which Michaela Leverault *edges into* Donald Sweeney's life, or Mathild into Honath's, as though appearing on each man's horizon in accordance with an inevitability indifferent to desire—for neither woman is man-hunting—and ineluctable as a natural law. (The corresponding appearance of a woman in "Surface Tension" is delayed till near the very end and then accelerated as if in compensation, but is not otherwise different.) This sidelong interjection of the romance element is deeply characteristic of Blish—there is throughout all his fiction *no case* in which the hero in any way pursues the woman he does or does not end up with by story's end—and bespeaks a profoundly uneasy and saturnine attitude toward romantic love, an attitude that does not derive from Blish's (sometime) misogyny but is rather more consistently present and more affectingly dramatized than that fitfully enunciated distaste. The only answer, finally, to this irresoluble conviction of the preposterousness of enduring love is that of withdrawal toward isolation; and in Blish's later fiction all dramatic movement traces a straight line away from society toward the condition of being "alone with his God and his grief" that Father Ruis Sanchez had already achieved—"A Style in Treason", "Darkside Crossing", *Midsummer Century* (despite its valedictory bravado), the slight "Statistician's Day", *The Day After Judgement*. In his early maturity, however, Blish had not yet reached this conclusion, and his ambivalence charges *The Seedling Stars* with its undeclared sexual reserve, which emanates finally not from the characters but from the text itself.

Although each of the four sections of *The Seedling Stars* is a beginning and the structure of the book describes a series of historical commencements anticipating new eras which Blish leaves implied rather than detailed, there is an odd emotional undertow in the novel running in the opposite direction, toward conclusion, that is much more in keeping with Blish's usual concerns. The poignant prologue to "Surface Tension", as the crew of the wrecked seed-ship look forward to the gestation of Adapted Men following their own imminent deaths, offers a telling correspondence with the scene in *The Triumph of Time* where the young lovers Web and Estelle (whose names weirdly echo that of the stellar Web of Hercules that alone will survive the imminent cosmic apocalypse) discuss their future at a time near the end of all time. Because the Adapted Men shall be haploidal, taking genetic

material from only one donor rather than in zygote, the doomed lovers cannot jointly contribute their germ plasm, "so that even that consolation was denied them; in death they would have no children, but be instead as alone as ever." Similarly, Web and Estelle, by virtue of standing in the eye of the universal cataclysm at the moment between cosmic destruction and recreation, can individually be the agents of creation for entire discrete continua that will take their natures from those of the volitional beings then present—to leave an imprint, essential in some metaphysical sense, upon the creation of an entire universe. So again humans can project an aspect of their solitary selves into perpetuity; but Web and Estelle cannot share in this act of creation, any more than they could have a child together in the last year of the life of the universe. The failure to parent a child works effectively in both instances as a cruelly stark metaphor for the insurmountable solitude of the reflecting man's future days; and highlights the only other situational constant I know in Blish's work: no protagonist in any of Blish's sf is a parent.[6] Some few, like Danny Caiden in *Jack of Eagles,* are left at story's end with new-found loves and an undefined future that in no way precludes an eventual family; but elsewhere in Blish's canon can be found a full spectrum of confirmed non-parents: priests, sterile polyploids, celibate magicians, homosexuals, Amalfi with his irradiated germ-plasm, men marrying in middle age, lady scientists (the assumptions implicit therein needn't be explicated), and couples in spaceship societies with no room for growth. This repeated metaphor for the end of things is too consistent to be accorded minor weight, and too much in keeping with Blish's other obsessive returns to the subject of volition's end—such as his wrenching-about of the story-line in *Cities in Flight,* which supposedly concerned flying cities and was more essentially dramatizing Spengler, to introduce the entirely unprepared-for phenomenon, brought *deus ex machina* by a flying planet and wholly un-Spenglerian, of the imminent end of the universe.

So the triumphant beginnings of each of the stories in *The Seedling Stars* contains seeds of a more disquieting set of absolute circumscriptions, as Rullman in "Seeding Program", fleeing with the new generation of Adapted Men to seed the stars, shall not live to see the end of the journey, which in any event would entail the adaption of *new* Adapted Men to live in an environment Rullman could not survive; as Honath and Mathild shall be returned in triumph to their tribe, but only to preside over its dispersal into Hell at the hands of Earthling Giants that Honath's heroic free-thinking had denied the existence of; as Lavon's understandable but finally pathetic delusion that they have "crossed space" is rendered unimportant to him by the appearance of Women, which however is just as well for he shall never learn the real truth, as the record-plate restored to the humans at that moment is *not* the one that explains the Adapted Men's origin, as readers who check the text carefully can determine. These undercutting revelations, each of which is made on the last page of its respective story, are understated and will not be taken in on a first, uncritical reading; yet are there and cannot be denied except by a willful misreading of the book as exactly the kind of sf paean to infantile adventurism that Blish's painstakingly built and rebuilt canon so insistently renounces. Rullman, evident in the end as the real Blish figure of that story, becomes a Moses who will not live to see the Promised Land; Honath finds his truth as it arrives as an eternal expulsion from the garden; and Lavon achieves a real triumph over adversity to discover Woman (there were of course women in the puddle Lavon and his party had left, but after being told at the beginning of the story of their presence we never hear more of them; Lavon's signal

encounter with one in the first seconds of reaching the new puddle clearly suggests on an archetypal level the discovery of sexuality) as an object reminder of the limits and distractions Man's physical nature constrains upon his vaunting mind. The three cases of wish-fulfillment heroes in victorious strife are undermined by the implicit posings of three genuine dilemmas attendant upon the seeking of knowledge. Seeding the universe with the occupying progeny of comprehension brings real endings with every seeming beginning, and Blish's text evokes here as elsewhere, albeit in an unusually elliptical manner, the intellectual cage that the reflective man creates for himself.

3

Blish's sustained burst of creativity between 1957 and 1962, when he called in the debts of all the stories he had begun and never relinquished and exerted his major influence on science fiction, produced 11 novels, two collections and a volume of criticism. In a sense Blish was using the capital he had accumulated in the ten years following his return to science fiction after World War II, for he was never to produce work at that rate again, and even those works produced during the latter half of this period show a change in tone—a diminishing of the density and energy informing those works of the late fifties—and are not so highly regarded today. Blish's major efforts of the early and middle 1960s are *Doctor Mirabilis* (1964), a brilliant historical novel often regarded as his finest work, and *A Torrent of Faces* (with Norman L. Knight, 1967): the author's longest and most exhaustively thought-out books. During this period Blish published five brief and unimpressive juvenile novels, of which *A Life for the Stars* is probably the best. One assumes that Blish's major attentions were directed to his researches and labors on the longer works; but a look at *The Star Dwellers* (1961) shows how little Blish's temperament and talents were fitted to the teenage coming-to-maturity novel that Heinlein wrote so masterfully, and the paucity of result from the efforts of forcing his talents against the grain.

The publication of *Black Easter* in 1968 inaugurated the final period of Blish's career, when he began producing gnomic and highly dense novellas at the rate of about one slim volume a year until the onset of his final illness. These last works have received nothing like the acclaim greeting Blish's output of the late Fifties, and most are now out of print in the United States. That readers who continue to find pleasure in *The Seedling Stars* and *Cities in Flight* have not welcomed *The Day After Judgment* or *Anywhen* suggests less a waning of Blish's powers in his last years than the likelihood that readers have responded to the genre exuberance and vestigial pulp elements still present in these middle works, which are not to be found in the uncompromising, distilled stories that followed. *The Seedling Stars* remains, among other things, and enjoyable and suspenseful adventure story, which can hardly be said for the relentless intellectualism and muted external action that make up these final works.

In *The Confusion of Realms* Richard Gilman discusses the late plays of Ibsen, arguing that these so-called symbolic works represented a liberation from the constraints of causal underpinning, the apparatus of actuality that made the "social plays" seem to be *concerned* with venereal disease, censorship, women's suffrage, and their other topical trappings as essential themes. Far from being symbolical—"nothing in them stands for anything else"—the manifestly non-naturalistic tone of these works represents a purer, more direct engagement of those elemental, metaphysical themes that had always

concerned the poet of *Brand* and *Peer Gynt*. Each of these plays "thus expands the space available to its protagonist for the discovery and assumption of his destiny by converting much of the machinery of plot from the order of physical contingency and necessity to that of ontological urgency and spiritual choices . . . For these final testaments he reached a condition of lyric expressiveness that sharply reduced the plays' reliance on linear movements, on the progression of causally related events."[7]

So Blish, as readers of the extent of his canon know, forsook the twists and contrivances of formal genre plot conventions, leaving the way open for a clearer dramatization of his sobering vision of thought impinging upon the universe that may seem tensionless or slack to those acclimated to look elsewhere for dramatic tension. Amalfi in *Earthman, Come Home* must bull his way through a succession of perils and conflicts so that the progression of plot resembles a broken-field run through an obstacle course, while the sinuous form of *The Seedling Stars* already shows a restriction of plot-adventure to those actions which inform or effectively correlate to the more essential subtext of the book; and the external action of the late works are pared still further. There *is* a framework of conventional action to *Midsummer Century*, about enough to fill an average science fiction novelette; but it is transitional, albeit containing incidental pleasures, and serves mainly to transport the protagonist between two loci of unexternalized—indeed physically discorporate—fields of action. The author who was able to invest the beautiful opening paragraph of *The Triumph of Time* with the austere melancholy of a Romantic lyric was still compelled in 1958 to create an objective correlative to Amalfi's extremity of isolation and self-imposed quandary in the physical destruction of the universe; yet would by *Midsummer Century* simply present Martel's encounter with the conceptual principle of the computer to which he is linked: a "model for sentient consciousness" containing a core of sheer passivity as irresistable to those contemplating it as a candle to moths.

If these late works are too extreme in their rarefication—or their attributes too fitted to their specific strategies—to have had much influence upon the science fiction of its time, *The Seedling Stars* was not. Accessible in its modulation between overt intellectual optimism and covert Stoicism, provocative in its displacing of our culture's heroic (male) self-images into situations altered in frame of reference, and pleasing in the intelligence with which the individual adventure stories are told, *The Seedling Stars* served with *A Case of Conscience* and Blish's successful short fiction of the Fifties as a model of the first several steps science fiction must take in becoming an adult fiction that aspires to artistry. So Blish was more influential in the virtuosity of his discovery of his own voice than in his period of true maturity, as Heinlein had made his own enormous impact upon modern science fiction in the early Forties yet began producing his best work a decade later. For a field that is only a few steps closer to true maturity than the milestone Blish left in *The Seedling Stars,* not necessarily farther than Blish himself finally got, this salutary point on the accessibility of influence remains valuable, and yet to be appreciated. The same can be said for much of the work of James Blish.

Notes

1 Properly speaking *After Such Knowledge* is a trilogy, with *Black Easter* and *The Day After Judgment* composing one leg of the triad. The author's widow has spoken of "short stories that grew up and became tetralogies," meaning these works. The point to draw about the fourth volume of Blish's trilogy is the degree to which once-completed works could be subjected to renewed thought (the idea of a trilogy itself followed publication of the first book) before achieving their most final forms.

2 In *New Worlds # 5*, ed. Michael Moorcock and Charles Platt, Equinox Books (Avon), 1974, p. 121. This volume is almost unobtainable and Clute's essay is too little-known.

3 *Ibid.*, pp. 123-126.

4 For example, the central event in *The Star Dwellers* is alluded to in "A Dusk of Idols" (both 1961), but the former is a slight juvenile while the latter is one of Blish's finest stories, and no significant affinity between the two is to be inferred. Other trace elements to be found in unrelated stories are the Dirac, Nernst generators, and the post-War city of Novoe Washingtongrad. Passing reference is made in Book IV of *The Seedling Stars*, set thousands of years in the future, to the planet Lithia of *A Case of Conscience*, which readers of that novel know was destroyed in 2050.

5 *Fantasy and Science Fiction*, Feb. 1973, p. 29.

6 The closest example to an exception would be Aidregh in the little-known novella "Get Out of My Sky" (1957), a widower with a grown son; who however is so deeply into the middle-aged solitariness of all mature Blish heroes, with his son—who serves as his aide-de-camp—present only to be betrothed to the already-mentioned Professor's daughter in a joining-of-the-bloodlines configuration like that in *The Triumph of Time*, that any reverberations of parenthood are effectively evaded. Mark Hazleton has children (never shown), but Mark is not the protagonist of either novel in which he appears, precisely because of those qualities that allowed him to become a family man.

7 *The Confusion of Realms*, Random House and Vintage Books, New York, 1969, pp. 181, 192, 193.

Foundation Forum

An sf novelist of the 1950s, George Hay's most recent publications in the field have been the original anthologies Pulsar 1 *and* Pulsar 2 *(from Penguin Books, 1978 & 1979), subtitled "Science Fiction and Science Futures"—a subtitle which points to Mr Hay's intense concern with the practicalities of the future, and his firm belief in the practical uses and applications of sf. To which end, Mr Hay was the guiding spirit behind the setting up of the SF Foundation; and he has since campaigned tirelessly to promote the Foundation as a significant national resource. A free-lance campaigner on many fronts, Mr Hay is deeply involved in promoting the educational-technological revolution (while the British Government is busily demoting it), as well as on the space colonization front— not to mention busying himself with editing the letters of John W. Campbell.*

This journal would hardly exist without George Hay's original intitiative. Who better, then, to step into Foundation Forum to tell us what should be done?

Sleep No More

GEORGE HAY

There is a familiar archetype in science fiction: the Sleeper Superman. Somewhere in the expedition, on the ship, in the team, is a being, identity unknown, of supernal powers.

Good? Evil? Either/neither—who knows? The dénoument reveals him: often, as in Van Vogt's "Asylum", or Frank Robinson's *The Power,* he turns out to be the protagonist. There is a sub-version in which the hero, through stress of events, acquires, not superhuman, but simply moral stature. In L. Ron Hubbard's *Astounding* serial, "Return to Tomorrow" the death of the ship's captain, an overpowering father-figure, reveals to his successor, as he comes into the bridge, that responsibility now rests on his own shoulders.

Here is another, a private metaphor:

I am the sole waker on the Long Flight. Endlessly pacing the dimly-lit corridors, I pass the frozen sleepers, row after row. The impression comes to me that they are dreaming, restless, but when I bend down to peer at them they are as still as ever. Moving onwards to the bridge, I observe a plaque that I do not recall having noticed before, and which bears the words: THE SLEEP OF REASON PRODUCES MONSTERS.

Unease gathers in me. Faster and faster I walk. I have the feeling that I am no longer alone in my wakefulness, but the telltales reveal nothing. On and on I go till I am stopped by a voice—voices? Some sort of anguished argument seems to be going on, but, strain as I may, I cannot distinguish the words. I break into a run. As I reach the bridge, I see that the console is alight with signals. The voices are getting louder; in a moment I shall be able to understand them. And now I know whence they came.

The ship is talking to itself.

This article started out as a review of the "book of the film" *Inseminoid,* chosen as an example of what the media have been doing to sf of late. I had thought it might be instructive to trace the decline from A.E. Van Vogt's story, "Black Destroyer", published in *Astounding* in 1939, the onlie begetter of this particular plotline, to contemporary garbage such as *Inseminoid.* A study in decadence, in fact.

It happened, however, that at the time I was brooding over this. I was also going over recent trends in academic, fan and professional writing, as exemplified by Barry Malzberg's *The Engines of the Night* and a recent letter by Christopher Priest in *SF Commentary* in which he expresses the view that sf has abandoned all pretence at being truly literate. Also, I had been coping with certain problems of the Science Fiction Foundation, and of T.E.A.C.H. (Technology, Education and Change), a voluntary body set up at my instigation to help educationalists interested in the social effects of microtechnology, robotics and so forth. Quite suddenly it clicked with me—yes, I *am* slow—that all these were not disparate issues, but varying facets of one mounting wave that has been operative throughout our society but displayed particularly in sf, the bellwether, since the end of the alleged "Golden Age" and which has now reached what catastrophe theory would call a cusp point. If I am right, understanding should bring action, as it always does: I therefore set out my thesis as simply as I can.

First though, let's deal with *Inseminoid.* This loathsome item was written by Larry Miller, from the screenplay by Nick and Gloria Malley, and published in paperback in the United Kingdom by NEL/TIMES MIRROR at £1.25. Copyright is ascribed to Juniper Films Production Ltd.

The plot revolves round that golden oldie invented, as I have said, by Van Vogt, about the discovery of a dormant monster by an expedition to an abandoned planet. Revivified, monster rapes girl crew-member, who proceeds to kill off the rest of the crew and then in double-quick time gives birth to monster twins. Twins, glutted on dead flesh lying about,

mature equally quickly, and in time to knock off crew of visiting relief craft. Story ends with twins returning on relief craft to unsuspecting space station. En passant, we have been treated to numerous variations on cannibalism, lesbianism, and plain honest slaughter—blood and fangs everywhere. Here's a sample of the style: "With unrestrained fervour the creature inserted one of its sexual organs into her womanhood, pushing the long thin member deeper and deeper, and ejaculated into her. Then the second organ penetrated, and ejaculated in the same way." With prose like that, who needs monsters?

You may recall that Van Vogt successfully sued the makers of the film *Alien* for plagiarism of his original plot in "Black Destroyer" and "Discord in Scarlet". Whether he will repeat the exercise in this case I know not. In any event, I only mention this to make the point that, while "Black Destroyer" was in its time quite revolutionary, not only in plot but in treatment—it was, for example, the first story in the genre to make overt use of Oswald Spengler's historical theories—*Inseminoid* merely uses the bones of a plotline now old, though still workable, upon which to drape the all-too-familiar lineaments of porno-horror. The real horror, of course, lies in the degradation of Van Vogt's original theme. To make my point clear, it will be worth dwelling on that original story. Here, a team of scientists investigating the remains of a lost culture on a planet apparently barren of anything but animal life, come across a large catlike creature which, while suspicious, appears not to be actually hostile. In fact this creature—Coeurl—is one of the few survivors of a race produced via biological engineering by the late masters of the planet, themselves wiped out by some stellar catastrophe. Highly intelligent, Coeurl fools the men into letting him aboard the ship, kills a number of them and then, when the ship has put back into space, escapes in a life-boat, heading back, as he imagines, to his planet. In fact, as the ship has been on anti-acceleration drive, he is heading away from it, and is soon overtaken by the earth ship and at the mercy of its weapons. Realizing this, he commits suicide.

The story has a sub-plot: the account of Grosvenor, representative on the ship of the Nexial Foundation—Nexialism being "the science of joining in an orderly fashion the knowledge of one field of learning with that of other fields." It is in fact Grosvenor who manages to persuade the other specialist crew members—often antagonistic to each other and to him—to combine together to allow Coeurl to effect the "escape" which will result in his death. In the other stories that deal with Grosvenor's problems with his colleagues—stories now published template fashion in *The Voyage of the Space Beagle*—Van Vogt further dwells on the need for humanity to develop disciplines which will enable them to make their various specialities mesh. "Nexialism", in fact, is an early sf attempt at formulating something like General Systems Theory. Whether the latter can be said to have lived up to its promise is a disputable matter—I suspect there is a basic flaw in the whole theory of systems—but, in a world splitting apart at the seams, can anyone deny that Van Vogt was way ahead of his peers in pointing up the possibilities here?

The difference, then, between "Black Destroyer" and *Inseminoid,* is that while the former was intelligent, well-plotted, tense, heroic, and predicated on the basis of a new technique of problem-solving, the latter simply uses the bones of the plot as an excuse for deploying sadism and debased sex. My point is that the contrast between these two fictions is a perfect example of what has been happening to sf under the pressure of commercially-dominated media. It has been perverted—and I use the word advisedly, in a technical sense, and not simply as a term of abuse.

From the time of Gernsback onward, through Campbell, Asimov et al., the so-called "hardline" writers consistently used the problem-solving approach within the framework of stories with a heroic/romantic motif. There was a common baseline of values, and a Faustian, if not Promethean attitude. A stance, in fact, which has become classical. Often, of course, it tended to become routine and reach-me-down, though occasionally it could approach real tragedy—something concommitant with the heroic. Few can have read "Black Destroyer", for example, without feeling a twinge of sympathy for Coeurl, a highly intelligent being reduced to a killing-machine through force of circumstances. To take a more recent case, a friend remarked to me lately that Darth Vader, in the *Star Wars* series, showed possibilities of developing into a real tragic figure.

For two decades and more this writing stance, and the values it embodies, have seemed sadly dated—by which I mean that they failed, or are said to have failed, to reflect the full range of existential reality. "The world," we are told, "just isn't like that." The way it actually is like is far more accurately reflected in the works of, say, Wolfe, Disch, Malzberg or Vonnegut, who are more in touch with the current zeitgeist. They in turn may be seen as reflecting the thoughts and feelings of observers such as Ivan Illich and Alvin Toffler—observers who, while differing in many respects in their prognoses, share a common perception of the sea-change that has come over Planet Earth since the ending of World War II. A passage from Ivan Illich may serve to illustrate this perception. Illich is here speaking of the use, or rather abuse, of foreign—i.e., American—missionaries in South America.

> Foreign missionaries increasingly realize that they heeded a call to plug the holes in a sinking ship because the officers did not dare launch the life rafts. Unless this is clearly seen, men who obediently offer the best years of their lives will find themselves tricked into a useless struggle to keep a doomed liner afloat as it limps through uncharted seas.

In the same way, writers such as Asimov, Anderson and Heinlein may be seen as betraying, wittingly or unwittingly, the true interests of those present and future generations they see themselves as serving.

How true is this thesis?

Well, in the first place, it is clear that the world in which we live *can* be perceived as some sort of long-running abortion. Whatever happened to the Boat People? What was that about Korea, Viet-Nam, Hungary? What about drugs, M.A.D., and the rest of the products of the world's Great Leaders' passions for over-simplified answers and Stands on Principles (principles, we would well do to remember, have been described with some justice as the lazy man's substitute for thought). Surely, if we look at things from such a perspective, tomorrow's Brave New World must provoke as sick a reaction in us as it did in Aldous Huxley.

But no, I'm sorry—this won't wash. The fact is that all this is misdirection. It may be intended misdirection, or it may be simply the effect of several decades' unreflective receipt of the doctrines of Logical Positivism via the Western education system—but misdirection it is. In the first place, it is only very partially the role of the writer to reflect the world "as it is". He should, of course, deal with that world, but only as a secondary world—which it is—while in the main he deals, as Aristotle had it, with the world in which we could and should live. If he depicts tragic reality, it is only in the context of an ideal scene. The reason for this, very practically, is that it is bad practice, whether in business, politics or one's private life, to reward a down statistic. Or, to put it another way, if you reward good results, you'll get more good results, and vice-versa. There is nowt Pollyanna

about this—one does not and should not ignore bad results or abuses, or pretend they don't exist. One notes them, deals with them, and passes on to the next issue. Of *course* the contingent world is imperfect; as I said, it is a secondary world, the result, and not the cause, of the common denominator of all our private worlds. How else could it come about that a handful of megalomaniac newspaper owners, trade union bosses or drug-manufacturers could come to dominate whole nations of apathetic tv-viewers?

This takes us, of course, into metaphysics (sorry about that), and indeed, what we are discussing is the use of bad metaphysics, whereby the group or class is stated to be more important than the individual. Now, the writer, locked up alone, poor sod, with his typewriter, is the prime case of the individual. To the degree that he is writing for the public, he is dealing with groups, but he is dealing with them *alone*—and it is worth noting that, by and large, the best writers are those who in fact write for their own pleasure, and the worst those who work by rote formula to "please the public". I say again, one is not *ignoring* the public. Who could have cared more about the public than Dickens or Victor Hugo?—yet both of these giants, having taken the greatest care to elicit the truth about the public and its real needs, dealt with them out of their own love of justice and rage against its violation.

How does this work?

Progress, in the contingent world, consists of improved perception, understanding and control. Such improvements cannot be initiated by any group; they must of their nature originate with individuals—after which, of course, they can, and indeed must, be mediated at a group level. Whether we look at science or at fiction, we are looking at the work of individuals. (It is no accident that the recently-documented decline in the rate of new American inventions parallels the rise of the "teamwork" regime). To say this is not to argue against teamwork, or to deny that a team given their heads can certainly produce improved results. In sf, writing workshops, for example, have certainly proved their worth. But it seems to have been overlooked that the benefits conferred by this method are simply those attendant upon a situation where the writer—or scientist—knows that he will get a fair hearing from his peers. This is a very different situation from that of a man toiling alone deprived of sympathetic and accurate advice and encouragement, and the benefits that derive therefrom can be attributed to the fact that such setups allow the individual to expand in freedom. The individual, then, is still the key to the situation; it is only that in these cases said individual has been supported by the group, instead of being oppressed by or divorced from it. Nothing I am saying here is intended to denigrate group work, only to insist on the correct placing of the group vis-à-vis the individual in the hierarchy of creative work.

Since science fiction has among its many functions that of bellwether of social movement, it is natural that its response to social evils should be early and intense. To be sensitive is not always to be correct, and panic responses are generally erroneous ones. The post-World War II flood of apocalyptic stories about atomic doom may well have done far more harm than good, inasmuch as many of them simply read as moral, "Solution Unsatisfactory"—a good diagnosis, but one calculated only to shove the reader further down into apathy. A serious methodological fault of writers in the genre has been to assume that if they shouted "Wolf!" hard enough, someone else would come up with a solution. A worse fault still has been to dwell with a fine irony upon these matters, not realizing, apparently, that for readers going through life in a semi-hypnotic

trance—the condition, I fear, of most of us at most times, and some of us at all times—such irony is simply misread as literal instruction. I once put this to James Ballard in the general context of the New Wave writers: he did not disagree. It is of interest, too, that the film of *Clockwork Orange* has been withdrawn from circulation after several copycat assaults based on incidents in the film. The writer indulging in cynicism or irony tends to be writing for his peers; he forgets that in the Age of Admass, other people, of less refined sensibilities, may be listening in. Tom Disch may well be the best writer in the whole western sf canon, but there are moments when, reading such works as *On Wings of Song,* I could weep—and not for his characters, but for his readers . . .

It might be inferred from what I have set out so far that my case rests on the belief that all that is needed to get us into another Golden Age is a return to a concentration on the hard sciences and a simple belief in the technological fix. Would that it were, would that it were! However, it is precisely the blind faith in the technological fix that has got us into the present fix, just as Illich and Co. are saying. To state this is not in any way to contradict what I have set out up to now. The fact is that all but a few of those Golden Age "Greats" seem to have misunderstood the basic strengths underlying their own case, imagining that these strengths did indeed rest on the bedrock of scientific method. But science is not the bedrock of the House of Man; it may well not even be the ground floor. Beneath science lie thought and curiosity, and beneath these lies metaphysics. Perhaps the simplest way to get this across is to point out that no less a Founding Father than John W. Campbell is on record as saying that, though many of his readers believed him to be fundamentally a protagonist of the scientific method, his interest lay in fact in thought *pur sang:* it simply happened that, in his view, science was now the only subject-area in western society where real thought was allowed to flourish unchecked, and where it was even encouraged. I feel sure that, had he believed that mens' minds could be stimulated by the study of market-gardening, he would have edited a magazine on that subject. One suspects that his latter-day insistence on forcing on authors such items as ESP and dowsing—to the groans of authors and readers alike—was due less to his "belief" in the objective existence of such phenomena than in a rather desperate attempt to get his audience to "think it new". Desperation and success, alas, generally lie in opposite vectors: they certainly did in this case . . .

One result of a simplistic approach to science has been that far too much sf writing has been, and indeed still is, predicated more on Newton than on Einstein. If these writers choose to ignore the benign God of the latter for the Old Testament Jehovah of the former, they paid a high price for it. Newton's God reigned over a dualistic universe: Einstein's did not, favouring such divines as Meister Eckhart, who got himself in dutch with the ecclesiastical authorities for such statements as, "The eye with which I see God is the same eye with which God sees me." The result of such institutionalized fictional schizophrenia was an abandonment, first of spiritual values—if you don't like the term "spiritual", simply read "abstract"—and then—inevitably of humanistic ones, so that whole generations grew up with projections such as "conquering the universe", "galactic empires", "sinister aliens" and the like. As strutting players, these could of course be turned by master playwrights to good ends. As depictions of "how the real world is" they ended of course in . . . well, Viet-Nam, for starters.

The disease—better spelled dis-ease—affecting sf today is not fundamentally different from that gnawing away at the rest of society, as much in the east as in the west. It is just

more visible to us in "the field". It is their sensitivity to this that gives moral force to the writings of such as Disch, Moorcock, Ballard, Watson and Le Guin, and not simply the improved quality of their writing—though indeed, impoverished writing goes with a one-track mind, *vide* the sad case of the latest Heinlein offerings. The increasing shrillness in the writings of the school of Niven and Pournelle is not, I believe, due only to their resentment—absolutely justified—of the betrayal of the Space Programme, but to a seeping awareness that the moral initiative has been wrested from them. Wrested? They let it fall—

One thing remains—in contemporary sf these issues are at least being aired and discussed. Your are, factually, reading this article, and, whatever your reactions, the issues will be being weighed in your mind. In the upper echelons of the world's establishments, these issues have long since gone by default. All that remains for debate is whether to inflate or deflate, to buy in or sell out, to invade directly or fall back on economic warfare, to release the prisoners or liquidate them, to cut down on education or to abolish it (step by step, to be sure)—or, in final mental bankruptcy, to push the red button.

I write no jeremiad. When I took the initial steps leading to the creation of the Science Fiction Foundation, I did it on a very long-term view, and that view has in no way altered. Was that the act of a pessimist? I believed at the time that it might take fifty or more years for what the Marxists call "the inevitable contradictions"—and they are quite right on that, at least—to show up to a degree where the need for the use of the resources of the Foundation's library might become overwhelmingly clear. There I was wrong; only a decade was needed. The "overwhelmingly" bit is not as yet with us, but it is of interest that recent correspondence with education and the establishment has shown that interest in these resources is as much to do with science-as-solution as with literary values (as I had long maintained would be the case). Last week I took delivery of sixty-odd pages of Mss covering a school project on the physics and biology of a Space Satellite world *à la* O'Neill, and with the linkup now being effected with the schools of the Inner London Education Authority, one can look forward to many more of the same type. Thus far, Niven and Pournelle are more than justified. To this I can add—putting on my hat of President of the Free Space Society—that that body is now receiving letters of strong interest from all the main political parties in Great Britain (well, all right, not the Scots Nats). Ever since, that is, the light dawned, and it became clear that Mother Arthur C. Clarke's chickens are homing back, and that with the upcoming reign of the Direct Broadcasting Satellite all national control over tv was a goner . . . mining concessions on the moon may not mean much to members of Parliament, but tell them that viewers facing a Party Political Broadcast on all channels will now have the option of switching to a blue movie from Hong-Kong and . . . zowie!

"Hold on," you may be saying, "didn't you just say that it was precisely the prospect of an unlimited technological fix as the proposed solution to all our problems that was making serious sf readers take to the hills? What was that about *Inseminoid* being degrading?" Certainly, and I don't go back on that. Last night I saw the film *Outland,* which was *High Noon* set on a mining station on Io: all the sweetness and light of an oil-rig, with Big Company corruption thrown in. Or, as Ballard has it, the dust-bowling of Outer Space. Do we really want to corrupt the rest of the universe?

Let's run that back again.

We seem to have a real black-and-white one here. Stick to Small-is-Beautiful, and

cope—could we?—with the world rioting as de-industrialization sets in. Few seem to have contemplated the scale those riots could be on, as accountancy decrees—as it surely must—that robotization be embraced to the degree that class privilege will consist of having a job—*any* job. Of course, total use of automation would enable us to produce a living—of a sort—for the vast majority of the population, if you'll go along with the sort of scenario that Fred Pohl sets out in his darker moments. But the result? Would you like to spend your life on handouts? It was freeloading that degraded the Roman empire to the point that it became unmanageable. And remember, by the time this really sets in, your rioters will come with portable tv transmitting stations and suitcase A-bombs. At least the Praetorian Guard had the technological edge . . .

Or—can you envisage Coca-Cola signs on the moon? Or the hammer and sickle, maybe? Of course, by that time the U.S./Soviet Condominium might be established—all the bosses united against all the workers—and the Lord knows what that thousand-mile neon sign would look like. Whatever it was, it would make you throw up.

There, there now—relax. You've been conned. Once again, let's run it back.

I said, it's a dichotomy. And all dichotomies are con-artists' tools, Ayn Rand notwithstanding. (I'm sorry: the lady did a fine job: she just had it all wrong.) They are always loaded, just like the have-you-left-off-beating-your-wife-yet question. The object is to hold you paralyzed with indecision and stop you actually using your brains. The fact is, you don't have to accept either of these unpleasant alternatives. What is being presented as a conflict between science and humanity is a conflict between technology and humanity—a very different matter. Just as they say, a choice between the former pair can lead only to catastrophe. Let me offer you another option: a society run by philosophy and utilizing science.

"Dream away," you may counter. "Neither capitalism nor communism cares a hoot about science, other than for the technology they can extract. As for philosophy, we got rid of most of that during the Reformation, and what was left was destroyed by Kant. Logical Positivism was just a late mopping-up operation. Who do you think you're kidding?"

Not so fast, not so fast. First off, capitalism and communism are not a dichotomy, but a continuum. As Curzo Malaparte put it, the Volga rises in Europe. Or you might put it that communism is capitalism continued by other means. In fact, we don't have to buy either end of that particular piece of string. As for philosophy—well, I'm always amazed at the way the hardliners in sf, who are the first to balk at born-again Christianity, Creationism, the Islamic revival and so forth, fail to apply their beloved scientific method to human behaviour. Have they forgotten the old saw that nature, driven out by pitchfork, will yet return? The sad fact that men by ordinary use their gods to beat their neighbours over the head still does not deny the fact that this planet has yet to see a successful society without a religion—call it a myth if you like—to back it. As Spengler said, societies and classes succeed by *style*. And style depends on knowing you are right. And that cannot be achieved, for more than brief moments, by any bluff. Knowing, in any real sense, depends on a philosophy that reaches out from the heart. *The lust for eternity is inextinguishable in man.* In secular societies, which must nominally reject formal religions, this lust is projected elsewhere—onto Humanity, Egalitarianism, Money, Progress, whatever. If truth were told, even the urge into space is religious at base. The fact that the west spawns cults as a dying body spawns cancers speaks for itself.

The sleep of reason produces monsters—and have we got them! There can be, I repeat, no lasting and workable solution which does not embrace science through philosophy—real philosophy, not just word-spinning. In my terms, a real philosophy is one which accounts for and ennobles all the factors of existence, not just a few of them. Anyone with two brain cells to bang together can dream up a system based on worshipping birds, or Love of the Family, or the Sacred Nature of the Individual, or whatever—and it will last about ten minutes, because it won't be workable. A true philosophy must satisfy on all counts. You can't keep the boys down on the farm once they've seen Jupiter clear—but neither can you turn them over to the robots and expect them to remain human in anything but name. You've got to account for the robots and the men, both. To say nothing of the Milky Way and the Lesser Spotted Woodpecker . . .

Now there is of course only one true philosophy—the *philosophia perennis,* that wisdom which underlies all religions and metaphysical systems. There is no "one true religion". Naturally not, in a contingent world. The belief in such has shed more blood than any other single factor on earth. God defend us from it. The wise understand this, which is why, unless they are very wise indeed, they tend to end up persecuted, like Eckhart, or dead, like Socrates. The wise, however, are not unduly dismayed; they know that after the first death, there is no other. That's not just a gnomic saying; it is very practicable, on many levels. Or you might put it as did Ron Hubbard, the only sf writer to have created a highly viable religion: "This universe is a major expanding trap of finite dimensions and rather idiotic simplicity."

Somme tout: science fiction now has the chance—aye, and the duty—to outline the process whereby either technology will destroy mankind or philosophy will remount in the saddle and oblige science to operate under the aegis of ethics. Don't tell me it can't be done; it *has* been done. If you doubt this, let me give you a quote from a master in this subject-area. Here is James Blish, writing, in *Doctor Mirabilis,* about Roger Bacon:

> . . . there is really no way . . . to convey the flamboyancy of this logical jump, which spans seven centuries without the slightest sign of effort. The most astonishing thing about it, perhaps, is its casualness; what Roger begins to talk about is the continuum of action, an Aristotelian commonplace in its own time, but within a few sentences he has invented—purely for the sake of the argument—the luminiferous ether which so embroiled the physics of the nineteenth century, and only a moment later throws the notion out in favour of the Einsteinian metrical frame, having in the process completely skipped over Galilean relativity and the inertialess frames of Newton. Nothing in the time of the discussion entitles the reader to imagine that Roger was here aware that he was making a revolution—or in fact creating a series of them; the whole performance is even-handed and sober, just one more logical outcome of the way he customarily thought. It was that way of thinking, not any specific theory, that he invented; the theory of theories as tools.

Follow that!—but, yes, you can, you can. What has been done once, can be done again . . . and yet again. From Tsiolkovsky's dreams came the moon landings, from Arthur C. Clarke's the communications satellite: the whole of a world-wide religion can be found prefigured in Hubbard's "The End is Not Yet". Any of these can be corrupted in their use: should we then reproach their creators? Rather, let us go and do likewise. I have said it before: the Buddha was right, and there is in the last analysis only one crime, nescience—to pretend ignorance, and do nothing.

Forget the Golden Age: forget the New Wave. It is safe now to do so, for today—like all days—is a new day. The Long Flight is ending: sleep no more.

Letters

Dear David Pringle August 1981

Roz Kaveney's summary of the 70s *(Foundation 22)* is fascinating, and illustrates well the limitations of viewing fiction primarily for its moral content. She is led into seeing *A Scanner Darkly* as Dick's most moving work, despite all its other failings compared with his larger fictions. Curious. I found her use of "reactionary" in an (?) artistic sense rather confusing. Similarly, she seems unable to get a grip on sf which isn't technophobic—at least, that's the only reason I can see to end up a discussion of the "pernicious" area of sf characterized by "militarism, crude technophilia and a fascination with images of sexual and quasi-sexual humiliation" with a tip of the hat to me and *Timescape*. But that's perhaps what comes of basing judgments on moral elements, without at least confessing what one thinks are the important moral questions. Still, her discussion is excellent, thought-provoking and will stand as a coherent point of view for some time, I suspect. I would hope that the 80s will give us some relief from the dreadful moral earnestness we've seen in the 70s. Not because this subject is boring—quite the opposite—but because it is so often the excuse for a dogged insistence, from the author, rather than an artistic illumination. I gather Roz feels this, too.

Laughed out loud six times, reading the Le Guin parody of my diary. Must say, though, I wonder where all her random rage comes from; it seems unlikely a mere factual diary inspired all this. Maybe moral doggedness is bad for the ulcers.

Gregory Benford *Laguna Beach, California*

Dear Sir September 1981

AN OPEN LETTER TO MY COLLEAGUES IN SCIENCE FICTION

Last month the British newspaper *The Guardian* reported an appeal, signed by West and East German authors, calling for an end to the arms race and for immediate disarmament talks. They appealed for "joint action to prevent Europe from becoming the nuclear theatre of a new and final world war" and rejected "the criminal idea" that a limited nuclear war could be waged and won. Among the signatories were Heinrich Böll and Günter Grass from West Germany, Stefan Heym and Hermann Kant from East Germany. The appeal was said to be supported by writers' unions in France, Italy, Holland, Finland and Yugoslavia, and at least one signatory was Russian.

We in science fiction, living so much of our lives in the future, have better reason than most to look forward to a day when it will be as inconceivable to settle international disputes by resorting to war as we would now think it to burn someone at the stake for wanting to hold a different kind of religious service.

But that day will never come so long as we tolerate the arms race, so long as we live in this hair-trigger world of ICBM's, cruise missiles, neutron bombs and the rest.

I am certain that many people involved in science fiction writing, editing and publishing would wish to associate themselves with this appeal. If those who do would care to write to me at the address below, expressing their agreement and mentioning their connection with the science fiction field, I will arrange for their support to be publicized and send their letters where they will do the most good. Thank you.

John Brunner

Square House,
Palmer St.,
South Petherton,
Somerset TA13 5DB

Dear Sir

October 1981

I wish to announce the resignation of Roger C. Schlobin from the annual series, "The Year's Scholarship in Science Fiction and Fantasy". Dr Schlobin's decision to leave the project was prompted by his desire to become involved in other types of scholarship. "The Year's Scholarship" is the field's only ongoing secondary bibliography and one of the most important resources currently available to scholars and researchers. The series will continue to be published by Kent State University Press, under my editorship, but as annual monographs rather than as articles in *Extrapolation*. With the help of interested individuals I hope to be able to maintain "The Year's Scholarship" at its present level, and perhaps even to expand its scope. To this end, I am soliciting qualified individuals to serve on a newly-created editorial board, whose primary responsibility will be to compile the annual bibliography, beginning with the 1980 installment. Persons are needed to annotate articles in fanzines, semi-pros, and scholarly journals. A pressing need is coverage of the *MLA International Bibliography*. Other needs are PhD dissertations, audio-visual materials, film journals, non-fiction in the professional sf magazines, introductions to works of fiction (the Gregg Press reprint series and other significant titles, and foreign studies. One's position on the editorial board will depend on the scope of his/her assignment. Those wishing to apply for an editorial position should contact me as soon as possible indicating particular titles/areas of interest. For magazine coverage, applicants should be able to annotate from several titles. Information on specific titles (if you are not already familiar with our coverage) is available from me upon request.

Marshall B. Tymn

721 Cornell, Ypsilanti, MI 48197, USA

Dear John Clute

October 1981

I'm sorry to have taken so long making this discovery, but: the *Astounding* facsimile can't be reviewed. I mean I can't review it. I've made repeated efforts over the months to give the book the treatment I feel it deserves, approaching it from different directions, and so on, but I seem never to be able either to do the book justice or wholly sum up my views on it. I suppose the problems are:

I feel I'm in a minority position apropos the "Golden Age", and all the assumptions

and consensus ideas that surround it. To state my position would lead me to making arguments already stated in Foundation.

The book as a piece of literature is of course utter tosh. It's out of date, badly written, and all that. Of course this is not the point: it is an historical document. No good poking fun at Asimov's creaky style when the consensus is so ready to excuse it. But as a document, this book (or magazine) represents an aspect of the "history" I don't accept.

An anomaly is the fact that this has been published by a university press. Thus one is entitled to assume that an academic point is being made about (say) social history or literature or magazine publishing or nostalgia or collecting or something. However, the book presents no academic credentials beyond its own existence. All we have here are smug little memoirs by the likes of Old Fatty.

I believe profoundly that science fiction's obsession with its own past is sick, incestuous and ultimately destructive, and that books like this and the people who edit them should be, well, disregarded. But to make that argument within the sf field, ie. within Foundation, is to raise all manner of side issues not relevant to this book. I don't want to repeat arguments already made in (say) my attack on Lester del Rey in a recent issue.

Enough of that. Here's the book back, and I'm sorry to have been so long with it. I gather the same people have just issued a facsimile of a '60s *F & SF* . . . so why don't you get them reviewed together, and then when you do I'll write you a letter disagreeing with whoever writes the review . . .?

Christopher Priest *Okehampton, Devon*

Reviews Editor's Note: The book in question is Astounding Science Fiction July 1939, *as edited by John W. Campbell, Jr, memoirs edited by Martin H. Greenberg, foreword by Stanley Schmidt (Southern Illinois University Press, 1981. ix + 180 pp, unpriced: probably $12.50). In addition to a cover facsimile, advertisement facsimiles and masthead facsimile, it contains the entire July 1939 issue in facsimile; stories included A.E. Van Vogt's "Black Destroyer", C.L. Moore's "Greater Then Gods", Isaac Asimov's "Trends" plus a letter ("It's unfair! It's terribly unfair! It must be a conspiracy!") from Isaac Asimov in facsimile, plus stories by Nelson S. Bond, Ross Rocklynne and others, an article by Willy Ley, and other paraphernalia in facsimile. Afterwards there are memoirs by A.E. Van Vogt, Isaac Asimov and Ross Rocklynne; these are newly-set but ramble. There is no critical apparatus. Yes there is no critical apparatus no.*

Reviews

The Shadow of the Torturer and **The Claw of the Conciliator**
by Gene Wolfe *(Sidgwick & Jackson, 1981, 303 pp, £7.95 each)*

reviewed by Colin Greenland

What do you get if you cross Dr Susan Calvin with Conan of Cimmeria?

What is the connection between science fiction and sword and sorcery anyway? Peter Nicholls says, "It is an accident of publishing history . . . both have roots in 1930s pulp fiction, and they are often written by the same people." And read by the same people, to quite a large extent; which suggests that they fulfill comparable functions, though it doesn't seem to get us any nearer to understanding what those functions are. A hundred thousand readers effortlessly cross the gap that trips the critic up. Gene Wolfe's Book of the New Sun, of which these two volumes make up the first half, portrays in detail the sort of feudal society of lictors and portreeves that is a prerequisite of sword and sorcery. There is a sword in it, the Torturer Severian's sword, which has, as is only proper, a name, *Terminus Est*. There also seems to be sorcery, but here Wolfe blurs the definition because, like Vance, Moorcock, and Harrison, he sets his feudal society in the remote future, after the rise and fall of a "high and gleaming culture." Relics (ray-guns, rockets, troglodyte mutants) indicate that we ourselves are still on the way up, and that the cultural acme will be pretty much your science fiction standard, technologically anyway. There will even be trading with other planets, so any apparently sorcerous doings in Severian's later epoch may actually have a basis in future or alien science. Clarke's Third Law (all together now): any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic. The apparent distinction between science fiction and sword and sorcery that the one works by logic and the other by magic, is only a difference of emphasis. Science and sorcery are culture-specific terms. As Merryn the acolyte says in *The Claw of the Conciliator,* "There is no magic. There is only knowledge, more or less hidden."

The next question is hidden by whom? indistinguishable to whom? To the characters, the readers, or both? One common spice in the future-feudal novel is a sprinkling of relics of forgotten science, things we can identify but the characters cannot: circuit diagrams in *A Canticle for Leibowitz,* nuclear fission in *Riddley Walker*. They reinterpret the science as religion, in accordance with the rationalist argument that faith in the irrational is only a temporary substitute for science. When knowledge is hidden, it is necessary to invent God; ironically, Wolfe calls Him "the Increate". The Book of the New Sun is named after a lost and possibly fabulous apocalyptic scripture which tells of the messianic Conciliator, who will come again as the New Sun to remake Heaven and Urth. Is the myth a fabrication on behalf of the Autarch, the absolute ruler, affirming his own quasi-divinity and pacifying the populace now that the old sun is cooling? Or is it really a divine prophecy? Science, in the scheme of eternity, may be only a temporary substitute for faith. Wolfe is a Catholic, as was Walter Miller.

Properly hidden, knowledge is power. Wolfe makes full use of the divisive structure of feudalism to show Urth as a world of class distinctions, conspiracies, underground

citadels, and secret passages. Myths are propagated here. The apprentice Severian learns that torture and execution are a science, a "mystery", just as Shakespeare's Abhorson claimed. Even the Witches have their own guild. The story is also full of mysteries in the narrative sense. Some, like the mystery of the flying palace, receive explanations later in the text. Some, like the mysterious identity of Jolenta, you can work out for yourself first from evidence planted by the author. Some, like the mystery of the Botanic Gardens, which seem to distort time, space, and memory, are unexplained, and seems like divagations into the supernatural. When Severian steps backwards and finds himself inside a picture on the wall, unable to see the corridor where he had been standing a moment before, the sense of sorcery is the same, but a mechanistic explanation is provided immediately. Though not very convincing, the explanation alters the status of the incident and its relation to the phenomenological system, the universe of possibility, of the book. It makes (or should make) us adjust our perception of the incident, and therefore of the whole text. Perhaps similar rationalizations will be forthcoming for the Botanic Gardens in the next two volumes, *The Sword of the Lictor* and *The Citadel of the Autarch*. Other "mysteries" are like the Leibowitz circuit diagrams, mysteries only to the characters, not to us. What is this ancient painting of a warrior in full armour, standing in the desert with his strange, stiff banner? As Severian watches the old curator sponge away the grime, he sees that the figure's gold visor shows no eyes, only a reflection of more desert; and "there's your blue Urth coming over his shoulder . . ."

Puzzles like this are fun. Functionally they remind us that the society is really a future one, however antiquated its cultural forms. They put the science fiction in the sword and sorcery. The same thing happens, more subtly and inventively, at the semantic level of the text. The language generally refers to a conventional pseudo-mediaeval technology: length is measured in cubits; things happen "before the candle had burned a finger's width." Badelaires and vascula are only two of the many archaisms Wolfe has cunningly revived to supply the restored antiquity of the "posthistoric" world. "Wrong" words intermittently show us the true perspective of the restoration. In the dormitory of the apprentice torturers "Master Malrubius . . . was waking us by drumming on the bulkhead with a spoon." That bulkhead goes with other clues to reveal that the guild's Matachin Tower is a converted rocket.

Other writers who have recently provided science fiction contexts for fantasy stories have been content to blend the two genres smoothly, to entertain both audiences. The black hole and the biological engineering in Joan Vinge's *The Snow Queen* give a scientific imprimatur to the possibly unfashionable metaphors of Hans Andersen and Robert Graves. Wolfe's mixture works the other way round. There is an incipient black hole in the Book of the New Sun too, but it is the metaphor, for death both personal and cosmic, and the stimulus for people's preoccupation with eschatology. When science fiction constructions interrupt the discourse of fantasy Wolfe makes us think about them and work out their implications. One of Severian's companions, of uncertain history, recalls the time he used to spend aboard ship, reading. He says, "I asked the ship and she gave me another book." That a ship can be referred to by a feminine personal pronoun is a sentimental convention obsolescent in our own time. That a ship can be a female agent who responds to verbal requests takes us out of history into the domain of the impossible, territory of fiction. Severian's friend has just been wounded and is babbling of getting air to the compressors. The "wrong" word, referring to a vanished technology, directs us

away from supposing that the female ship is some elfin barque, a product of sorcery. She must therefore be a product of a sufficiently advanced science, or at least of science fiction: readers of Anne McCaffrey will recognize a cyborg spaceship. The enigmatic sentence is even more complex than that. Since it is spoken in delirium, and the man ostensibly cannot be old enough to remember an age of spaceflight, what we have just identified as a science fiction trope also functions as a different sort of fantasy, the fantasy of delusion. Yet delirium is a state in which people, especially characters in fiction, offer unconscious revelations about themselves. The man has begun to talk a science fiction language we understand and Severian does not; we will be inclined to accept what he says. Just to tie the final knot, his mention of the female ship also suggests a clue, discernible only by hindsight, to his own identity. That's the kind of density Wolfe achieves in his writing, which is why it needs to be read over and over, and yields more on every reading.

Having thus switched the signs on us once, in the next chapter, four pages on, Wolfe does it again. The chapter is a tale within the tale: Severian tells us a folk story called "The Tale of the Student and His Son." In the tale, which has clear Greek and Arabian antecedents, the student's son, himself an artificial creature "fleshed from dreams", has to fight an ogre in the form of a naviscaput—a being half humanoid, half ship. On inspection, a mystery (which may seem to belong to magic and the irrational mode of fantasy) turns out to be science fiction; which on closer inspection turns out to be just another species of fantasy. Of an incident in his boyhood Severian says:

> It was in this instant of confusion that I realized for the first time that I am in some degree insane . . . Now I could no longer be sure my own mind was not lying to me; all my falsehoods were recoiling on me, and I who remembered everything could not be certain those memories were more than my own dreams.

Yet he continues to make so many claims for the infallibility of his memory that we start to disbelieve him. After one such protestation at the very beginning of the second volume he recalls an incident from the very beginning of the first, giving us a chance to compare—and yes, there is a slight disparity between the accounts. It is another mark of Wolfe's mastery that he manages to keep things shifting so subtly in a story of such overwhelming substance; for it is substantial, I have hardly touched upon a tenth of it, on the richness of detail and fertility of invention, on the humour and excitement and the resourcefulness of plot and sub-plot, the interleaving of scenes that fold out of each other in a way that makes you happy to lose track and bemused how he got them in there in the first place. The style is elegant and inventive. Even the archaisms are set so carefully that you can read it perfectly well without turning to the dictionary every few minutes. The characters are curiosities, every one. There is an error towards sympathy, a certain lack of malice: evil seems to reside, implacable, in the world itself, in the landscape, in the gaps between basically quite nice people. But we can put that down to the vague determinism of the whole scheme, and to a lingering naïveté in Severian himself. There is also (apart from the unionization of the Witches) a dull and fairly durable sexism throughout; but we can put that down as a necessary constituent of any pseudo-mediaeval society. I hope. It would be depressing if one of sf's newest and best writers were guilty of one of its oldest and worst crimes.

The story so far is of the gradual and partly accidental politicization of a slightly arrogant, rather ignorant, very likeable young man, rather like Perian in Aldiss's *The Malacia Tapestry*. Severian is more or less working for Vodalus, the radical, the outlaw. And yet we know full well from the very first chapter that by the time of writing his

memoir Severian has become the new Autarch. Other than his unknown parentage and a few wild omens of election, there is absolutely no indication of this eventuality in the first half of his story. Lots of time to go, as Bamber Gascoigne would say, anything can happen yet. People are already talking of the Book of the New Sun as the next classic sf sequence, on a par with *Earthsea,* the Titus Groan books or even (ah!) the *Foundation* trilogy. It will be surprising if Wolfe doesn't earn—and achieve—that crown. It will be very surprising if, even with that conclusion foregone, he doesn't continue to startle, baffle, delight and enrich us all along the road.

Distant Stars
by Samuel R. Delany *(Bantam, 1981, 352 pp, $8.95)*

On Strike Against God
by Joanna Russ *(Out & Out Books, 1981, 107 pp, $4.00)*

reviewed by Nick Pratt

After the dour, drab seventies, the bright, modish eighties: glossed up and padded out designer paperbacks are fast becoming *de rigueur* and Bantam have fallen into line with *Distant Stars,* an outsize trade edition with sixty-plus pages of black and white artwork. It's by no means a bad book but it is, in many respects, an unnecessary one.

The illustrations are technically skilful (all seven artists have sound commercial pedigrees) and even, in places, evocative. But John Jude Palencar, for example, juggles his layouts inventively without ever capturing a feeling of *Empire Star's* interwoven concepts of simplexity, complexity, and multiplexity. Similarly, a much vaunted computer-enhanced sequence from Digital Effects Inc. cannot convey the passage of time; its jumble of superimposed images (a simple photographic process could produce indistinguishable results) merely demonstrates the folly of using technology for its own sake. The problem is inherent in the format: when illustrating a given text, any picture is more liable to serve as a crutch for a lazy imagination than as a springboard for an agile one.

As for the texts themselves, most are readily available elsewhere: "Corona" and "We, in Some Strange Power's Employ . . ."; *Empire Star,* still the most accessible key to Delany's attitude towards fictional construction, a touch dated in its breezily blatant self-consciousness perhaps, but a considerable achievement in its day; and "Time Considered as a Helix of Semi-Precious Stones", *the* example of how to create a futuristic culture by blending Hammett-on-the-chic with Bester revisited (which is why it won two awards; which is, in turn, why this is its eighth reprint). Beside such hardy perennials the new pieces—two previously uncollected stories (37 pp), one virgin story (13 pp), and an introduction (10 pp)—are somewhat overshadowed. "Ruins" originally appeared in Algol in 1968 and appears here in a heavily revised form. A temple, treasure, supernatural events: the story twists the stock material of heroic fantasy into a singularly unheroic configuration, an early exercise in sign-play which Delany aptly describes as "slight". That adjective also applies to "Prismatica" (*F&SF,* 1977), a whimsical Thurberesque piece. Repetitive phrases and cadences contradict their author's own distinction between printed and oral story-telling—this would make an appealing bedtime story for a

patient child.

Delany's most persistent weakness is a tendency to be over-ambitious, clotting vivid and intense descriptions with rhetorical indulgence, or swamping an already intricate narrative with excessive theoretical interjections. The all-new "Omegahelm" offers a package deal:

> On the black skin, the gem-chips were splattered wine. The last fragment of the sun, secanted by the sea, rouged the rocks.
>
> "It's only a sygn, Vondra," Gylda said, as one repeats the obvious to one who has rejected it long ago. "A signifier, they used to say, whose meaning—whose signified—shifts from place to place, world to world, person to person."

Nevertheless, the package includes some forceful moments, tightly interlocking imagery, and a central character individual enough to provoke curiosity. The story is a prelude to a forthcoming novel and, leaving aside reservations about the torments of the mighty and undigested gobbets of Barthes, it will be interesting to see this Vondramach entirely developed. Catherine the Great in space? But pride of place in the current volume goes to the introduction, in which Delany discusses a variety of linguistic concepts without becoming muffled in involutions and terminology (the words "*langue*" and "*parole*" are notable for their absence). The result is an acute, albeit slightly workshop-y, examination of the process of writing.

A newcomer to Delany's work might find *Distant Stars* as interesting as *Driftglass*. But short fiction has always been a decidedly subsidiary element in a career shaped by the dialogue between novels and critical writings: there's not a lot of meat here. When an introduction is the most worthwhile part of a collection, the reader should doubt. And when an inordinate number of typographical howlers betray a cynical indifference (or perhaps Bantam's proof readers are computer-enhanced), the reader should doubt again.

> At any time, on any level, at any moment where you can doubt . . . you can say, "No, I want something better, other, different . . ."

Precisely. Without a doubt this book is a Product symptomatic of the general state of the publishing industry. The major houses are increasingly content to spin more mileage out of tried and trusted material, to the detriment of new or innovative writers, eclectic readers, and creativity itself. Business is business, granted; but a growing number of independent publishers are managing, with comparatively meagre resources, to put out fresh and stimulating work. Small is becoming beautiful.

A case in point: Out & Out Books is hardly a household name and *On Strike Against God* appears with the assistance of public funds from the New York State Council on the Arts (for English readers the parallel is the GLC-aided Sheba). Page for page it is a more expensive book than *Distant Stars* but in every other respect it is a model of economy. Everything here is functional, from the unassuming cover to the quiet confidence of the prose—amidst Russ's easy and informal clarity a fulsome flourish would look plain silly. Despite distinct echoes of *The Female Man* in several scenes, all generic trappings have been discarded: freed from the chore of creating subvertible sf frameworks, Russ applies her full attention to engaging the world. (Those with a taste for such games can play spot the sf personality, cf Delany's *Heavenly Breakfast,* at once a colder and more romantic book.) Even when she employs a confessional sleight—protagonist Esther is conterminous with her real, live self—Russ is less interested in Modernist trickery than in adding weight to her auctorial voice. The niceties of the relationship between fiction and autobiography are irrelevant.

It is, of course, yet another angry book: as always, Russ has drawn her creative inspiration from a resolute feminist passion which, controlled and shaped, becomes her text—in this case with consummate artistry and humour. But this time the anger is tempered with more hope than in any of her earlier works, for Russ has seen an escape from continual compromise. Her penetrating and incisive rejection of the polite little hypocrisies which make the world go round (on the same old treadmill) will inevitably alienate many readers, not all of them male: it's unsettling to study ingrained thought patterns too closely (easier to imagine how alien other people's must be); it's disturbing to accept full responsibility for every little act, each word, each passing notion (easier to dream of things one's never done). But such lacunae mould lives. "I said ha ha the things we took least seriously might affect us the most (T.S. Eliot). Clincher."

No, not a guaranteed clincher, as Russ well knows: habits are too cosy. As well, then, that her aim is not to convert (much), nor to prescribe (no, never), but simply to share a point of view. Esther sees and lives with the insidious degradation of women: she is appalled, and her laughter is a trenchant and bitter survival technique. She also struggles and doubts and explores, and sees the possibility of getting out from under, of finding free space and self: her laughter becomes joyous and anarchic. It's undeniably didactic, but Russ has too much integrity to indulge in homilies. She writes with great power of the world as she sees it. Take it or leave it (she won't care), her vision demands respect.

I have one slight reservation. Although Russ reworks her themes with skill, right through to the familiar non-ending (or rather, open ending; when did you last meet somebody who lived happily ever after?), overmuch reworking will eventually exhaust the most fertile material. But for now, you can find more speculation and acuity, more *humanity*, in a single page of *On Strike Against God* than in the average shelf-full of sci-fi.

Incidentally, copies of *Distant Stars* are already appearing in the second-hand shops, whilst several London bookshops have sold out of *On Strike Against God*. Are the big boys on Fifth Avenue losing their grip?

Shatterday
by Harlan Ellison *(Houghton Mifflin, 1980, 332 pp, $12.95)*

reviewed by Ian Watson

A split man. (As in "Shatterday.") Not schizophrenic, no. Far from it. Hurtingly sane, in a world of insane, self-destructive behaviour.

But busily constructing a split-level art.

For on the one hand there are the stories—sixteen of them in the present collection, which nearly all seem to scream out about terrible life traumas (though "scream" hardly does justice to the cadence of the prose) or about other people's traumas so introjected that one experiences a sense of martyrdom on behalf of others, a stigmatization, a baring of the bloody wounds in one's own person in order that these may redeem the world. And on the other hand there are the introductions, not infrequently about the agonies (and a few fraught ecstasies) in the author's own life, which obviously seem to match up to the horrors (and occasional fraught bliss) in the stories: the loneliness, the mistakes, the pain, the punishment by a neutral universe which nevertheless seems ecologically equipped to gouge out an eye for an eye. Yet these are introductions wherein the author insists that he

"does not write diary," and inveighs against those low-forehead or malicious readers who assume that he does so, and make play with this.

W.B. Yeats once wrote:

The intellect of man is forced to choose
Perfection of the life, or of the work;
And if it choose the latter, must refuse
A heavenly mansion, raging in the dark.

Harlan Ellison arranges things somewhat otherwise. He provides us with two arts side by side: himself as art (like the protagonist in "Shoppe Keeper"), raging—but in the light; and the dark side, the stories. And both are fictions, really. Which is not to suggest that there is anything in the least insincere about the "life-fictions" but that their role, their function, is best approached as the perfect equivalent, in the first person, to the function of the "public" narratives.

For Ellison is so thorough-going that his life has become an art-form too. Which is perhaps what Yeats meant, anyway, except that Ellison rages in the light, in the open—on this second level of his creative activity.

The story where these two strata most obviously appear to collide with one another, trying to occupy the same horizontal plane, is the 60-page long "All the Lies that are my Life". This is the dramatized will and obituary (with flashbacks) of an "Ellisonian" author, from the viewpoint of his nicer, less successful science-fictioneer "friend". I put "friend" in quote marks, since the introduction—the life-fiction preceding the story—tells us that it is about friendship. Actually, if I had to choose a single word, I would say that it is about "winning". And one notes in this introduction, which is among other things about how a presumed friend betrayed Ellison in court, the following: "During the time he testified I felt the pain of watching a friend die. Despite his perfidy, I won . . . and won *big*." Emphasis as in the text.

Which is not to suggest that Ellison's tales and introductions require half-assed psychoanalysis. This is quite irrelevant to their function—as is the biographical question of whether Ellison ever really was "a very little boy in Painesville, Ohio" (p. 229), where his dog Puddles was maliciously gassed to death. *Pain*esville, of all places. Oh, no doubt he really *did* live there, and the place was only named after Thomas Paine!

I seem to have noticed a few reviews of this particular story, to the effect that Ellison didn't ought to have done it—that here he went embarrassingly over the top, aiming for a laurel crown in self-boost and self-flagellation. But no, I don't think so. The funny thing about this long story is that it could so easily, in lesser hands, have been a banal thirty minute radio play in the middle of the afternoon on BBC Radio Four. Funeral; gathering of the heirs; flashbacks and revelations as each gets his or her due deserts and as the true person of the dead man is Revealed To Us. Really, it's a cliché situation, a radio hack standard plot. But what Ellison does with it—*by* going over the top—puts him right up there (in a totally different tone of voice) with Henry James, author of "The Author of *Beltrafio*".

Indeed, this is what is remarkable about quite a few of these stories, and is the reason, perhaps, why Ellison has excelled uniquely (*pace* Ray Bradbury, I suppose) at short fiction and hasn't yet written a full-scale, ahem, *fantasy* novel; and hasn't yet—as I write, duly noting that personal speculations are invidious—come through with the goods on *Blood's A Rover*. If novels be continent-spanning ICBMs, then Ellison is a distress maroon (of great pyrotechnic power) which blasts into the sky from one particular little

lifeboat, or wrecked flotsam, with one item of human anguish clinging to it—albeit representatively.

One can continue the metaphor. The ICBM-novel wipes the opposition out for its own self-contained purposes. But Ellison's distress rocket requires the individual lifeboat to set out from—which may be many things, from a child's remark, misheard, to an encounter with a chat show hostess. Which, indeed, is why Ellison can write remarkably authentic stories while chained, Houdini-like, to his typewriter in shop windows. (Will he escape, with 5000 words linked in a chain, by 5 o'clock?) It is the lifeboat situation. And the sharks are snapping in the water.

"Flop Sweat", written at speed for a radio show a few hours later, is indeed a terrifying story. "Count the Clock that tells the Time", written in public at IguanaCon, I thought was a bit thin when I first read it; but actually it is the world that is getting thin—on re-reading, the story itself comes over strongly. As, indeed, does "Jeffty is Five", which I thought was fairly anecdotal when I read it first—and ascribed its Hugo to a certain aspect of fandom which might perhaps be characterized (by me? perish the thought!) as "crippled infantilism."

I still don't think that "Alive and Well and on a Friendless Voyage" works—though somehow images from it come back to me more and more forcefully. (So, damn it, it must be a haunting tale, after all.)

And "Would You Do It for a Penny?" (an Ellisonian rework of someone else's first draft)—his first sale to *Playboy*—is an interesting example of the anecdote-lifeboat-launched method applied to a situation where nobody is in distress. The Ellisonian maroon arises—and no, it isn't a damp squib; it still goes off—but nobody has really been shipwrecked; and suddenly one understands exactly why *Playboy* bought this tale gladly. It is very like the traditional fodder—up-dated—of the great American lit-slicks: *Harper's, Saturday Evening Post,* when they forked out for Saroyan stories or when Scott Fitzgerald devoted his great talents to adorning anecdotes, impeccably, for a megabuck.

Though why shouldn't Ellison conquer *Playboy* thus? This story is a good example of transfiguring craftsmanship—which Ellison refers to, modest tongue in cheek, as "running it through my typewriter".

Ultimately, what one feels is odd about this story is its merry outcome. For Ellison, staunch enemy of narrow-minded bigotry, WASPism, Moral Majorityism et cetera, is—let us whisper it—a Calvinistic moralist, or Jehovistic moralist. (Compare p.262: "Despite the fact that I have never used drugs . . ." Never *ever*? Never once? Why not? A joint—for example—does not necessarily house a parasitical dybbuk.) Moralist, yes. But he is the *deplacé* moralist of a neutral universe, presided over by no Father—yet one senses, nonetheless, in many of these stories the neutral universe ganging up to set the balance of wrong, right. (Or at least he arranges his cosmos in this way.) In "The Man Who was Heavily Into Revenge" the collective soul does just this—yet, being neutral, it then proceeds to trash the next person in line, hitherto the innocent victim. So, perhaps, in the moral ecology of these tales it isn't so much "right" that balances the accumulated wrong. Instead, a tooth for a tooth, all down the line.

Yes, these are morality tales—in which the moral is not merely inserted as one element in the approved recipe of characterization, cadence, growth-experience, sensitivity et cetera, which doth an award nominee make. Morality is integral; and if no one else is around to see to it, then Harlan Ellison will take the burden on his own shoulders.

So which is he first: artist, or moralist? The best answer to this question is that his art is finest when his morality is sternest.

He also writes pretty top-notch prose, and if it occasionally seems as though this is written in a self-set contest at a highly superior "Prosebowl" (of Malzberg and Pronzini fame), what should it be—stumbling and awkward?

And the book is beautifully designed and produced.

One ends *Shatterday* admiring, and even loving Harlan Ellison—and perhaps wishing, in true *caritas,* to lift the world off his shoulders for a while. But who else could bear the weight? And if the weight wasn't on him, where would he be . . . but lost, in one of the limbos he so well describes.

The only danger is that the weight may become familiar, and therefore even comforting. Did Prometheus, liberated from Mount Caucasus where he had provided much liver pâté for that eagle, ever feel a certain wistful longing for the familiar gouge of its beak—and stab himself in his own guts with his fingers, to recover that ghastly but god-like (atoning myth-figure) sensation?

Where Time Winds Blow by Robert Holdstock *(Faber and Faber, 1981, 286 pp. £6.95)*

reviewed by Michael Bishop

Until *Where Time Winds Blow* I had not read a novel by Robert Holdstock. His first novel Ursula Le Guin commended as "serious, ambitious, fascinating". His second one a reviewer for *The Spectator* called a "profoundly imaginative and remarkable book". I must take these people at their word. To my mind Holdstock's most recent effort, albeit serious, ambitious, and imaginative in those respects that many habitual sf readers may find familiar and comforting, loses its claim on these approving adjectives by its well-intentioned, methodical, and ultimately downright tiresome struggle to capture them. I would argue that a fundamental miscalculation sabotages Holdstock's plot, that his characters function more frequently as pawns of this plot than as believable human beings, and that the novel's "imaginative" trappings are all too recognizable borrowings dumped together into an intermittently colorful but never very tasty stirabout.

I think that Holdstock wanted *Where Time Winds Blow* to be a good book, an important book, possibly even something of a breakthrough book—but I disengaged about a third of the way through, hungry for real rather than manufactured crises, bored by his characters' artificial angsts (a few of which, I confess, Holdstock strives to give universal import), and skeptical of the almost ostentatiously mind-blowing concept from which the novel takes its title. "Ah ha," you can almost hear him exclaim, having conceived of this notion; "what a wow of an idea—I'm going to hang an entire novel from it!" Hang it he does. Although a second reading has given me a grudging respect for the dogged craft with which Holdstock has tried to develop this idea, I do not believe the novel ever truly comes alive. Craft in the conspicuous absence of inspiration bores.

VanderZande's World, sometimes called Kamelios, supports a population of human colonists in a mobile metropolis called Steel City and a smaller population of technologically evolved human beings called "the manchanged" in such austere outlying regions as the Hunderag Country. The planet's most salient meteorological-metaphysical feature is the phenomenon known as the time winds, gales that blow from the past to the

future, or vice versa, depositing the detritus of other ages on the shores of this one and periodically subtracting present-day creatures and artifacts by the same stunning process. The rift valleys seem especially prone to the giftings and depredations of the time winds.

Holdstock's main characters are three members of Steel City's "Section 8", which is devoted to "exploration and monitoring", and the section's alien-obsessed leader, Gulio Ensavlion. (In the United States, by the way, a Section 8 is a well-known escape clause from military service, its principal criterion being demonstrable insanity, and this unfortunate coincidence was all I could think of every time Holdstock innocently trotted out the term.) Leo Faulcon, Lena Tanoway, and newcomer Kris Dojaan, whose brother Mark has earlier disappeared in a time wind, must frequently brave the rift valleys on exploratory assignments. However, *Where Time Winds Blow* centers on Faulcon and on his "determination to live honourably" by fulfilling the stringent (if stupid) code of the human colonists, an effort that ultimately unravels the mystery of the time winds.

Earlier I complained that a fundamental miscalculation undermines a reader's willing suspensions of disbelief in Holdstock's plot. The code of Steel City-ites requires that when one team member takes an unscheduled flight to the Kamelion equivalent of the Cretacious or Mesozoic, via Trans Time Airlines, the surviving members of the team likewise sacrifice themselves to a time wind, the sooner the better. Holdstock is never convincingly able to explain the origins, rationale, or continuing observations of this far-future version of the Indian custom of suttee, whereby a Hindu widow was expected to follow her dead husband into the funeral pyre. But, recognizing and even conceding the stupidity of this code in the personnel-intensive context of interstellar colonization, he makes repeated perfunctory attempts to justify what beggars justification. By doing so, he merely emphasizes the artificiality of nearly everything that happens to Leo Faulcon. He protests too much.

The same objection, I might add, makes it difficult to care about the characters. Although Holdstock tries to flesh them out with neuroses, guilts, ambitions, and quirky noble attributes, many of these take their primary impetus from the peculiarities of either Steel City society or Kamelion physics, both of which are fictional constructs that do not by themselves compel belief. Moreover, Faulcon, Tanoway, and Dojaan seem to spend a lot of time striking melodramatic poses and lecturing one another about duty, reason, friendship, and so forth. Here is Lena Tanoway lecturing Faulcon:

> "You fool. You star-struck fool. Friendship? Do you know, do you *really* know what friendship is? Friendship isn't coming back time and time again and forgiving. Friendship isn't seeing who can vomit *baraas* furthest over the edge of the rift. Friendship is sharing the private part of you; *sharing,* Leo. Not giving, not taking, but exchanging. Friendship isn't one way, one giving, one taking . . . " (174)

This reminds me quite forcibly of a lyric from *The Sound of Music.* It goes on for another twenty lines or so. As for *baraas,* this, Holdstock tells us, is "a rare distillation and among the most expensive drinks in the galaxy," just the sort of beverage one blithely upchucks all over the landscape. If you read it *bare-ass,* as I almost invariably did, it lends a certain droll vividness to the foregoing passage.

My final complaint is that many of this novel's most imaginative-*seeming* ideas and furnishings are borrowings, either deliberate or unintentional, from the works of other sf writers. I do not disdain borrowing as a means of germinating a story idea or of enlivening a story already under way, but the result in this instance begins to suggest a motor car whose parts have been cannibalized from a dozen different preexistent models. The

concept of the time winds I concede to Holdstock, and they are a dandy idea. On page 185 you will find an admirable paragraph about them, prose reminiscent of that in Ballard's enigmatic fictions of the early and mid 1960s. How happy I would be had Holdstock emulated Ballard's succinctness *throughout,* as well as his style in this one isolated and maybe accidental instance.

Other crafty or accidental cannibalizations? Holdstock's crawling Steel City inevitably calls to mind the city in Christopher Priest's *Inverted World.* (Holdstock describes this peripatetic dome as a "glassy shell", admitting that "calling it Steel City was just a way of describing its anti-glare appearance". Supposing these descriptions necessarily dependent on a vantage *outside* the city, I can't help feeling that "anti-glare" is the precise opposite of what Holdstock actually means). Evocations of Priest's "The Watched" raise their mysterious heads at several points in the novel, while Holdstock's manchanged characters, with their origins in the hospital known as The Grey House, often seem voluble descendants of the animal-men from the House of Pain in H.G. Wells's *The Island of Doctor Moreau.* A portion of Ian Watson's *Miracle Visitors* gets transubstantiated and consumed in Holdstock's denoument, which itself involves a metaphysical reversal of the situation at the conclusion of Arthur C. Clarke's *Childhood's End.* There are other minor bits of business whose stale bread-crumb trail I have egocentrically and perhaps wrongly traced back to my own unabashed borrowings from yet other sf authors.

Holdstock may well be capable of a truly taut and emotionally satisfying novel, but what a jalopy this book is! It runs, I suppose, but neither rapidly nor quietly. It tries to be all (or at least most) things to all (or at least most) sf readers, and Holdstock is not yet writer enough to pull off this formidable feat. I would not gladly read this novel again except for pay.

Pilgrimage
by Drew Mendelson *(DAW, 1981, 220 pp, $2.25)*

reviewed by K.G. Mathieson

Serious writers working within the confines of any genre constantly find themselves required to address a perennial problem: how to regenerate familiar materials in ways which are both original and interesting? All genre fiction—however we may choose to define it—inevitably faces the dangers of stagnation and of stasis, of endless repetition of ageing clichés and stock situations, a state of affairs regrettably often abetted in science fiction by a seemingly insatiable appetite for the familiar on the part of the faithful. Writers who choose to attempt to serve somewhat different dishes may go in either of two basic directions: outward, stretching the boundaries of the genre itself, and breaking down the barriers, or inward, in an attempt to shake up familiar components in new and original ways, leaving boundaries (more or less) intact and only pre-conceptions fractured. On the evidence of *Pilgrimage,* Drew Mendelson intends to be a serious writer, and, choosing the inward direction, has signalled his intentions clearly in a promising debut novel.

Pilgrimage constantly flirts with potentially overused situations from the science fiction and fantasy reservoir, and continually succeeds in making of them something, if

not new, then certainly more subtle, often unexpected, and always more interesting than initial anticipations might suggest; Mendelson's ability to manipulate his chosen materials augurs well. The novel is set in the distant future of a slowly-recuperating Earth which has been long but temporarily abandoned by most of its population, leaving only the inhabitants of The City (now swollen to massive proportions) on the planet. Like Peake's "Ghormenghast" trilogy, or Delany's *Dhalgren,* the City itself is a central protagonist in the novel, holding its inhabitants prisoners of their own fear. The City has grown over thousands of years into a huge, self-regenerating organism, creating a life-cycle to its own insistent rhythms through the pilgrimage itself, in which those at Tailend constantly make their way forward to Frontend, where the Structors replenish the decaying City. This fragile order is collapsing finally as the novel begins, and the pilgrimage becomes, for the principal protagonists, a strange journey through the dark underside of the dying City, a journey into sexual awareness, nightmare experience, and an awakening towards knowledge and ultimately the possibility of freedom from the grip in which the City has held them, made possible by the re-discovery of a mysterious jewel which proves to be a communications device intended to signal to the space colonizers that Earth is once again inhabitable; the jewel itself is emblematic of the loss of scientific and technological knowledge, maintained only in pockets by esoteric groups within the City, submerged over thousands of years in superstition and the mindless inertia symbolized in the peculiar and striking figure of The Driver with whom the central characters must contend and overcome as part of the process of freeing at least themselves.

Mendelson avoids many pitfalls in his handling of this material; his adolescent central characters behave throughout as adolescents, skirting the temptation to introduce sword-and-sorcery heroics, permitting them instead a gradual and usually convincing assumption of responsibilities; powerful fantasy is successfully integrated into, rather than imposed upon, the narrative, with allegorical and cognitive dimensions remaining present but suitably muted; the conclusion steers a convincing path between pessimism and affirmation, avoiding the excesses of wholesale redemption or apocalyptic despair. Mendelson is careful most of the time not to let the reader know more than his protagonists do, forcing him or her to participate in the quest with a similar degree of confusion and gradual comprehension through well-timed revelation, and shady areas of only-partial understanding or explanation are maintained for reader and character alike; his prose is always at the very least functional and literate, and avoids throughout the rhetorical excesses often found in handling fantastic materials, and the crucial realization of the City itself, the centre around which the whole novel depends, is convincingly and skilfully achieved.

Just as *Pilgrimage* reflects in a modified form many of the familiar motifs and structures of science fiction and fantasy, so it displaces fairly familiar thematic material; it depicts a dystopian society, but one in which the oppressor is not ultimately one of the sects—the Post Guild, the Mechanics, the Hugen—which populate the labyrinthine corridors of the forgotten City, but the inhabitants, the Folk themselves, prisoners of their own devising, trapped by their own fear of leaving the precincts of their organic City rather than by external constraint. If anything, Mendelson reverses the normal drift of the dystopian tradition—*Brave New World, We, Nineteen Eighty-Four*—by suggesting that imprisonment is a product of the fall from, rather than the advance of, technological society, a relapse into primitivism and superstition consequent upon the widespread loss

of scientific knowledge; science itself is not evil, only the uses to which men put it, or fail to put it. If his plea for a courageous and idealistic individuality can be related to a familiar American pre-occupation, it is muted by his refusal to indulge his above all *ordinary* characters in heroics; his rugged individuals, even in triumph, are convincingly vulnerable, all too human. Mendelson has written an intelligent, interesting and literate first novel, one which marks him as a writer from whom we might expect good things to come should he prove capable of building upon this promising beginning.

The Dreamers
by James Gunn *(Gollancz, 1981, 166 pp, £6.95)*

reviewed by Ann Collier

"Why is this strange world so resistant to my desires?" (Page 145.) Here is a novel of frustration and disillusionment. Its characters believe they have achieved perfect contentment; they have knowledge without struggling to learn, a world of imagination and experience available through a pill, and all material needs catered for without the drudgery of work. Genre readers will be less easily convinced, rightly recognizing this as the stage-set for a dystopian horror story of a society whose members can only relate to machines, to pills and to the fantasies they provide; beneath this well-controlled narrative, there is a sub-text, unacknowledged by the author. Gunn shares Hitchcock's delight in subjecting cool, self-contained women to experiences which leave them begging in vain for mercy. In a novel which prides itself on its erudition and culture, this undertow of primitivism is surprising.

Unifying the book and providing an overall perspective in which to place the action is the search by the Mnemonist for his successor. Rejecting the hedonism of this pill-popping society, he directs the work of the computers which maintain the self-contained urban complex, amasses and processes information and ponders philosophical questions. Already old, he looks for a replacement who will share his pursuit of knowledge to the exclusion of all else. He considers firstly a Historian, also fascinated by facts and information. Secondly, a Volunteer, one of a decreasing band who perform those services which still require human discretion. Thirdly, a Dreamer, who like a film director uses his imagination to shape the raw material of fact and fantasy into a coherent "dream", which can by chemical synthesis be made into capsules and consumed by a sensation-hungry public. The search is doomed to failure; each prospective heir proves incapable of absolute detachment and dedication. Such repeatedly displayed human weakness causes the Mnemonist to question his own altruism and scientific objectivity and to realize how closely dedication and dependence are related. It is this dependency which is the focal point of the novel.

The structure of the book is dramatically episodic. Four regularly-spaced sections describing the Mnemonist's quest form the backdrop for the exploration of each candidate's circumstances and suitability, again presented to us in a succession of scenes. While not writing a bitty or disjointed book, Gunn makes highly productive use of this structure to reinforce his insistence on the lack of interpersonal relationships, of communication and communality. The repetitive style stresses the mechanical barrenness of the consumers' existence. Elsewhere, the style is self-consciously anti-naturalistic. The

Mnemonist's reflections are composed of three strands, a poetic/philosophical meditation on the value of dreams and the nature of the society, a factual/scientific recapitulation of the development of research into chemical memory, and a purely functional set of instructions to the computer about maintenance. Each strand forms on the page a narrow column, each line in print of gradually, decreasing size. Artificial, arbitrary. Like the Mnemonist's life, isolated from all contact with people, never moving from a couch, all bodily needs met so that nothing need distract him from his role as human think-tank, the columns a suggestion of the tubes that feed and sustain the Mnemonist, each fragment of the column a trailing drop of information protein. At first disconcerted, one rapidly adapts to this technique, summoning the concentration necessary to follow these disparate inputs.

There is no attempt at finely-drawn characterization. The hedonists, vicariously experiencing another's version of a fantasy, are merely the pills they take. The three candidates are defined by their obsession, the Historian obsessed by a young, hippy-like nymphet who offers him the excitement and sensuality that has never featured in his life, the Volunteer by a woman who, for what proves to be an ulterior motive, saves him from a permanent immersion in dreams, and the Dreamer by the beauty and passion of the Helen of Troy of his fantasy.

Gunn has clearly enjoyed himself and delights the reader with the variety of tone. Ostentatiously erudite quotations pepper the novel and the Trojan war scenes show the fruit of research. Yet, in the section dealing with the Volunteer, the constant emotional focus is the sexual excitement and gratification of sadism. Naked women are tortured and mutilated by a wronged, outraged, avenging male. The rationalization of this in the narrative is that, unable to exact his vengeance on the wife who has deserted him, the Volunteer derives a substitute retribution in his dreams. But the pervasiveness of the portrayal of women as evil makes one wonder whether Gunn, like the Dreamer, wasn't losing control of the direction of his material. Woman is the infanticide, the adultress, the slave to sexual desire, the schemer, the instigator of incest, the destroyer, the temptress. Man is the vulnerable victim. So powerful are these images that they form a sub-text. Uppity women are not only humbled, they are dismembered in fantasies of prehistoric, Aztec, Trojan and twentieth century times. With great economy, the flavour of the historical period is graphically captured, highlighting the gratuitous savagery of the action.

This apart, the book is written with a sense of sureness about technique which only occasionally proves false. Major elements of the exposition, for example, are too often reiterated, suggesting that the story may once have been destined for serialization. The account of the development of chemical memory and the Historian's research is overdetailed and boring, distracting attention from the flow of the narrative. The first section has so many metaphors that they eventually shunt clumsily into each other. But the general impression is one of fluency.

The dreamers in "The Crystal Ship" by Joan Vinge seek relief from the pain of life, in euphoria-inducing drugs. Gunn's dreamers, by contrast, sometimes seek the pain of life, which to them is a relic of the past, in drugs which give them, for curiosity's sake, the experience of unhappiness. Whilst the novel is intended as entertainment, it contains an implicit warning about the compulsive nature of fantasy. This enjoyable book is marred for me by Gunn succumbing in his treatment of women to that very compulsion.

Frankenstein's Creation: The Book, The Monster, and Human Reality
by David Ketterer *(English Literary Studies, University of Victoria, 1979, 124 pp. price ?)*

reviewed by Gilbert Adair

I forget where, Norman Mailer proposes that the struggle between the devil and god was won, centuries ago, by guess who—who has since kept it going as theatre, for his own amusement. God is bawling in chains, in a cellar. That is the type of the only *theological* scenario (if, as we'll see, there's any) to be read from Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818; revised—and generally used—edition, 1831): Victor's climactic notion of a struggle between Good and Evil (himself *versus* his monster) is frenziedly deluded if he—a problematic co-author of his spurned creature's multiple vengeful murders—is to represent "heaven". And this makes *Frankenstein* a kind of book that began being written about 1800. Sf?—yes and no. Yes: but among other things. No: the term had not yet been invented; further generic divisions later came into play.

"Frankenstein", David Ketterer writes, "*is* a masterpiece". A major task of the critic is to enable us to get more out of (re-) reading the book. In this Ketterer succeeds, and for this reason (alone) I would recommend *Frankenstein's Creation*. It tackles, by close reading and an exegetical structure that models Shelley's own fluid "tripartite" one, a work that is formally innovative, inspiringly complex and very ambitious; chilling, often poignant and savagely ironic. Parallels are organized between (Shelley's) artistic creation, Victor Frankenstein's solitary assembly of his "abortion", childbirth, and the creative/destructive natural energies of electricity and magnetism. A key ambiguity concerns, therefore, the *location* of the monster: a physically self-contained being, but also, in Frankenstein's words, "my own vampire". A "separate entity" is inadequate, then; but nor will it do that they constitute a single creature. Ketterer shows how, by careful—and sometimes disconcertingly clumsy—ordering of narrative "circles" (the three first-person accounts of the polar explorer Walton, Frankenstein and the monster), and of key words and phrases—which become so problematic as almost to float free—Shelley sabotages assumptions regarding the world as composed of distinct elements, with mappable interactions. An intricate assemblage develops of whirling roles and reversals, corresponding/diverging stories inside *and* outside one another: unstable circles, at once concentric and intersecting. Frankenstein bestows "animation . . . upon lifeless matter"; but the monster must then learn to order his confused sensations, and *then*, to speak: consciousness—and thus, (artificial) being?—has yet to be born. Frankenstein faints and is "restored . . . to animation". An "active spirit of tenderness . . . animated" his parents. The monster is the "daemon" of "inanimate nature". "Signs of life" become thoroughly unreliable. The monster is not only Frankenstein's "other"/"self", but anyone's: human relations paradigmatically show ambiguous signs of narcissistic self-reflection, the inability to tolerate difference or invasion: linked in *Frankenstein* (*and* in Ketterer's book) inter-changeably to onanism, homosexuality, incest and necrophilia.

The image constantly held out of perfectly harmonized components—of character, of relationships between human and human, human and nature—is a mirage. Hierarchized *im*balance sets every scene. Frankenstein's father over-protects his (much younger) wife; the son is spoilt. Imbalance—for materialistic reasons—is not only self-perpetuating, but

infinitely regressive. But Frankenstein locates several points at which events were *irrevocably* set in motion: the effect is to produce an over-determined—and therefore, occultly plotted—nightmare/reality without boundaries. Is he punished for transgression—supplanting god and "legitimate" sexuality in creating life—or was he (also) "destined" by a malignant universe? Ketterer writes, "The nature of human knowledge is radically uncertain and largely metaphoric if we cannot decide whether what we 'know' exists inside or outside the mind of man (sic!)". But hearken to Jean-Jacques Rousseau: "Whenever therefore I happen to say, *that we have no ideas but what come from the senses* . . . I speak only of the state into which we are fallen": original sin remains physiological. *But* the world of *Frankenstein* has no beginning: a state of grace from which we might have "fallen" is undiscoverable.

In expounding Shelley's *formal* methods, Ketterer half-echoes—but doesn't refer to—Tzvetan Todorov's ground-breaking *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre* (1973). For Todorov, "true fantasy" forces *hesitation* between a rational and a supernatural explanation, undermining both: the impossible *event* is foregrounded, the nameless monster. In her important extension of this, *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion* (1981), Rosemary Jackson argues that the marshalling of the forces of industrial capitalism coincided with a new line, headed by *Frankenstein,* of "disenchanted, secular fantasies, becoming increasingly grotesque and horrific". "Otherness", the key to psychic "wholeness", is now sought critically within the self, newly split in response to the absence where god had been. In *consolatory* fantasy, from Charles Kingsley to Tolkien and further, re-unification, personal and social, is "achieved": the text is sealed, with just enough of outside left "in" to maintain a pleasant tension. Jackson concentrates on work that, while formally coherent, is "open", *un*healed, invaded: spatial, temporal, conceptual etc. ordering systems split under the pressure of ungratifiable, therefore illegal, desire, and carry desire with them. Symbols, means to ends, are replaced by endless means, only; transcendence by transgression—the bursting through intolerable limitations into vacuity—or by motiveless metamorphosis. The lust for the divine is in fact *re*vitalized in classified sf, and that chiefly is why, as a genre, it is dominantly nostalgic. Sf writers who usually oppose this include Delany, Russ, Dick, Disch, Wolfe; non-sf writers (recently reviewed in *Foundation*), Burroughs, Peake, Robbe-Grillet. My interest here is not in establishing a "canon" of right-on names, but in clarifying what, formally, can be done, discovered to be in fact possible, and under what conditions. New information about *that* is constantly coming in.

Revelatory transformation—see also his *New Worlds for Old: The Apocalyptic Imagination, Science Fiction, and American Literature* (1974)—is, of course, what Ketterer seeks; "metaphorical transcendence . . . it may be ventured, defines a work of art". He includes a useful detailing of Shelley's reading, and a multiplicity of possible biographical influences on names and scenes, enough to subvert any easy theory about the appearance of words in narrative form. But Ketterer has no theory he needs to test. The mass of data is sometimes fused with speculations typical of North American criticism at its blithest:

> The name Clerval suggests Claire Clairmont (Shelley's stepsister) with the substitution of a valley for a mountain . . . Are we to infer that the relationship between Elizabeth, Frankenstein and Clerval is triangular like that between Mary, Shelley and Claire? And what about Byron?

What indeed. Where was *he* on the night of the 4th? Ketterer's chief models seem to be

Northrop Frye's transmission of "mythic archetypes" (which, well, just *are*, right?) via an apostolic succession of literary genres *(Anatomy of Criticism,* 1957); and T.S. Eliot's "Tradition and the Individual Talent", written in *1917*, and still used by institutional and media academics to keep their "discipline" recognizable. Thus the French Revolution, say (the monster: "I will be even mild and docile to my natural lord and king if thou wilt also perform thy part"), is among material "of essentially peripheral interest"; the "central core circumscribed by Mary Shelley's own skull" remains intact, ultimately generative of whatever her hand produces.

Transcendence is the subsuming of diverse materials by meaning; and Mary Shelley does *not* attempt it. Frankenstein's early passion is for alchemy, particularly its "elixir of life". The preface (scripted by Percy Shelley) states: "The event on which the interest of the story depends . . . was recommended by the novelty of the situations which it develops" (experiments by Erasmus Darwin and others, listed by Ketterer). Shelley leaves the *details* wholly vague: "Frankenstein's chemistry," writes James Rieger in his Introduction to the 1818 text (1974), "is switched-on magic". But to argue, as Ketterer then does, that "alchemy rather than science or technology is at the imagistic heart", is not going far enough. Like Walton, who seeks at the North Pole "the wondrous power which attracts the needle"—and who likewise explores against his father's permission—Frankenstein is engaged in what Eric Mottram, in *William Burroughs: The Algebra of Need* (1977) calls "a primary narrative of the West": "the hunt for the mythological centre of energy in the universe, in order to conquer it". But if matter and meaning interpenetrate but are *not* synonymous, the gap is opened that allows death also, the perishability and/or non-humanity of matter, to invade meaning. Frankenstein's raw material is selected, in "vaults and charnel-houses", from "every object the most insupportable to the delicacy of the human feelings". Mortality is the monster's first message, which *no* one can look on: "His yellow skin scarcely covered the work of muscles and arteries beneath . . . ". Soon after his first sight of it, Frankenstein dreams (as Shelley had dreamed her first image of him): he kisses his "cousin"/lover Elizabeth who becomes his dead mother, grave-worms crawling in her shroud; he awakes, and there stands the monster. A highly relevant case is detailed in Ellen Moers' *Literary Women* (1977) for *Frankenstein* as distinctly a woman's attack on fulfilled ecstasy as the one authentic maternal response (illegitimate pregnancies, and a soon-dead infant, had marked Shelley's teens).

This is at the historical point when, as argued in Michel Foucault's *The History of Sexuality* (1979), death—hitherto, in plague, starvation etc., a constant presence—was about to undergo a major reconfiguration. Power would now be "life-administering", "exercised at the level of . . . the large-scale phenomena of population"; the *right* to life would become a central political issue. The sympathetic *proper* scientist who inspires Frankenstein has at least a trace of the "overreacher" about him: the moderns can "even mock the invisible world with its own shadows". Shelley suggests, although nowhere affirms, an alchemical *continuity:* her criticism is therefore implicitly radical of all who claim to redeem the materiality of life by knowledge, machines, promises of education and justice within the predatory reality of "sanguinary laws": they are deluded, deluding, sado-masochistic—perhaps, insane. Her later fantasy, *The Last Man* (1826), is, Rosemary Jackson notes, "even more extreme as a text unable to imagine a resolution of social contradiction except through complete holocaust".

In *Frankenstein,* all change partakes of the gradual or abrupt violence of death. Shelley's grasp of materiality and power—like her husband's (despite his belief in perfectibility) in, say, "Mont Blanc"—prefigures an awareness within which the major writing—narrative, poetic and theoretical—of the latter part of the twentieth century has operated. Formal innovation, such as Shelley's, or—almost at random—Samuel Beckett's or Delany's, is not the fringe sport of literature: it is necessitated by unprecedented configurations of history and information, such as we live in today.

For Ketterer, the major "philosophical" problem of *Frankenstein* concerns "the sliding relationships between the Self and the Other". At one extreme is solipsism—a hoary old number to be sure, but recognizably within the meditative groves—while "The Other is alarming precisely because it is the Other". Meanwhile, "it is human reality which destroys Innocents"—and you can't get much safer. "It must be admitted that the ontology implied by the concluding paragraph of *Frankenstein* is not particularly encouraging": Mary Shelley deserves better than that. But traditional methods, and vested interests, cannot give it.

The Fantasy Tradition In American Literature—From Irving to Le Guin
by Brian Attebery *(Indiana University Press, 1980, 212 pp, $17.50)*

Other Worlds—Fantasy and Science Fiction Since 1939 *(Mosaic XIII/3 – 4)*
edited by John J. Teunissen *(University of Manitoba Press, 1980, 225 pp, $6.95)*

reviewed by John Dean

All too often fantasy critics remind me of variations on mesmerized, bug-eyed dopers wandering forth in a daze, gushing out an ooze of sloppy, seductive words like "wonder", "mystery", "magic", "marvels", and "enchantment". Must these terms be the talismans of the trade? The suffocating shibboleths? The words shimmering amid fantasy (and sf) criticism which are designed to hook the hungry reader – but words which do little to clarify the subject matter which they claim to define? As Fats Waller used to say: One never knows, do one? If a thousand twangling instruments hum about your ears when you confront a successful work of fantasy literature—then how do you compose a rational response to this experience? "Magic" and "marvels"? A placebo quote from Northrop Frye or Joseph Cambell? What's the good critic supposed to do?

Attebery's *Fantasy Tradition* and Teunissen's *Other Worlds* manage both to avoid and slip into this mellifluous critical trap. First off, Attebery's *Fantasy Tradition* has many more strong points than weak. It is written in a crisp, lively style and it charts a poorly examined region of American literary history. For example, of Granville Hicks's evaluation of H.P. Lovecraft, Attebery notes: "Hicks excluded him from *The Great Tradition* . . . with the kind of distaste with which one picks a slug off a rosebush." Attebery is especially strong when analyzing the works of specific writers with an *explication de texte* explicitness and when he pinpoints the American characteristics in their writings. Outstanding are his chapter on Frank Baum and his analysis of Ursula Le Guin's *Earthsea Trilogy.*

However, Attebery runs a hazy range from sufficient to competent when delving into the finer points of genre history. These more abstract parts of his accomplishment smell

of the obligatory mention of major critics required in a doctoral thesis. Nevertheless, one quickly overlooks this limitation and moves on to the rich vein of cogent, down-to-earth readings of fantasy classics. This quality of *Fantasy Tradition* is striking since it underlines Attebery's assertions about the dominant pragmatism of the American character—a trait which has, over the years, both restricted and defined an indigenous American fantasy literature.

Attebery defines fantasy as a story which treats "an impossibility as if it were true", a tale "moved out of the everyday world into the realm of the marvelous". Luckily we know what he means because he lists the works he considers to be "marvelous". He does not wish to be limited, like Tzvetan Todorov, by an "over-exact definition" of fantasy. But a tougher, tighter definition than the one he offers would have deepened his analyses.

Don't get me wrong: this is a valuable, provocative work well worth your reading. I only wish the author had pushed himself harder when trying to get to the inner guts and bones of fantasy. As it stands, *Fantasy Tradition* is an excellent study of how an international species of literature took root and developed in American soil. The guiding tension is "the strong hostility between American thought and pure fantasy". Readers in the United States only took fantasy seriously and it only became distinctly American when the American dream began to sour at the turn of the century. Thus the American tradition of the marvelous as Attebery sees it is marked by three stages: (i) Puritan rejection, since secular fantasy deviated from the Biblically sanctioned true; (ii)Enlightenment rejection, when the fairy tale and its kin couldn't hold up against American scientism; (iii) 20th Century acceptance, when fantasy literature became the sacred sepulchre of lost American ideals. The real turning point in this development was Frank Baum, "who introduced Americans to their own dreams".

In short, America had to create its fantasy tradition in contrast to America. The modern fantasy literature of the United States "represents a uniquely positive response to disaffection" by holding "beliefs and insights safe within a shell of seeming inconsequences". Baum, Beagle, Bradbury, Burroughs, Cabell, Eager, Le Guin, Lovecraft, Norton, Pyle, Thurber and Zelazny have preserved what much of everyday America has lost: the ideals upon which America was founded.

John J. Teunissen's special issue of the Canadian comparative literature journal *Mosaic* is part beginner's guide to fantasy and sf and part a concentrated study of fantasy and sf themes. The general critical tone in *Other Worlds* is decent, conservative, and cautious. A great deal of attention is given to Le Guin's sf because, as Teunissen explains, "she is clearly the science-fiction writer whom academics find most congenial". Clearly Teunissen hopes that this collection will firm up the fantasy and sf academic link. Clothe the wild beasts in the suits, ties and polished shoes prescribed by *The MLA Style Sheet.*

Many of *Other Worlds'* twenty essays review well-trod topics such as robots, humans and aliens, sf as myth, *2001,* and Ray Bradbury's sf. For my money, the outstanding, inventive pieces include Patricia Monk's "Frankenstein's Daughters: The Problems of the Feminine Image in Science Fiction", a highly articulate examination of the ways our cultural matrix has shaped the dominantly male-centred bias of fantasy and sf. Then Ernest H. Redekop rewardingly mingles Borges, Piranesi, Escher, Herbert and Le Guin in "Labyrinths in Time and Space". He demonstrates how the labyrinth motif is used as a pattern of possibilities, as a figurative routing for metaphysical choices. This essay offers a sharp critical trace of literary twists and turns. Peter Brigg's "Frank Herbert: On

Getting Our Heads Together" is a sober, sympathetic analysis of Herbert's conception of the collective mind, of how Herbert "is proposing a trade-off of what we currently understand as human rights and individual freedom in exchange for the survival and development of the race".

Ray Bradbury prefaces the *Other Worlds* anthology with a fantasy about the growth of sf respectability in modern times. I find his naïve charm forced and tedious. "Dusk In The Robot Museums: The Rebirth of Imagination" is as light and peppy as a helium balloon, and almost as gaseous:

> 'My God!' they cried, almost in unison, 'these damned books are *about* something!'
> 'Good Lord!' they cried, reading a second book, 'there are Ideas here!'
> 'Holy Smoke!' they babbled, on their way through Clarke, heading into Heinlein, emerging from Sturgeon, 'these books are—ugly word—relevant!'

Blathering Pollyanaism for some. For others, Bradbury's preface might be taken as a credo for what fantasy and sf criticism should be. As he sums up *Other Worlds:* "This collection should be taken up by all of us who would like to remain childlike and not childish in our 20 – 20 vision, borrowing such telescopes, rockets, or magic carpets as may be needed to hurry us along to miracles of physics as well as dream."

Wow.

Frank R. Stockton
by Henry L. Golemba *(Twayne Publishers, 1981, 182 pp, no price given)*

reviewed by John Eggeling

Anyone seeking a definitive biography and critical appreciation of 19th century popular American author Frank R. Stockton should avoid this work; Dr Golemba has no interest in Stockton as an individual and his analyses are suspect.

As the basis of his research Golemba has simply drawn from the existing body of work on Stockton, primarily Martin Griffin's *Frank Stockton: A Critical Biography* (1939) and Richard Gid Powers' introduction to his *The Science Fiction of Frank Richard Stockton: An Anthology* (1976), together with archive letters and contemporary interviews, and, adding nothing new to that, has created through artifice a stereotyped image of the author that serves his own purpose. His intent is solely to bring Stockton under the searchlight of close literary criticism, himself showing the way by interpreting Stockton's output in terms predicated by current trends in academic interest—the domestic novel, feminism, and science fiction. For the various reasons either outlined or alluded to below, his methods and attitude have undermined his approach. Rather than rescuing Stockton "from the oblivion and from the naïve enthusiasm he does not at all deserve" as Golemba writes in his final sentence, succinctly illuminating the pedantic bigotry he expounds throughout, he may well have consigned Stockton into even remoter regions of darkness.

Golemba's introductory biographical chapter, thirty-two pages long, has a few minor discrepancies with Griffin's account, all unexplained, and is openly contrived.

> The time is ripe to test the appraisal made by *Harper's Weekly Magazine* upon the occasion of Stockton's death: "he was as distinct an embodiment of the American spirit in one sort as Mark Twain was in another."

Golemba has evidently been in complete agreement with that sentiment from the beginning. Opening that chapter with three minor anecdotes from Stockton's childhood

Golemba has made no attempt to imbue the reader with any sense of Stockton's personality, instead immediately equating these episodes with similar situations later found in the works of Mark Twain and George Wilbur Peck. This stereotype is then maintained whenever possible, at times manifesting itself in heavy-handed biographical pointillismes. For instance, speaking of Stockton's father:

> Four years later, at the age of forty-five, he married twenty-year-old Emily Hepzibeth Drean of Leesburg, Loudon County, Viginia, which is halfway between Washington, D.C., and Harpers Ferry.

On a more elementary level Golemba's approach is rough and slipshod, minor errors abound. He continually refers to Stockton's short story "The Widow's Cruise" as "A Widow's Cruise", to "Dusky Philosophy" as "A Dusky Philosphy", and on several occasions to *The Vizier of the Two-Horned Alexander* as *The Vizier of Alexander,* this latter case possibly indicative of undue haste through a narrowing deadline. Other minor discrepancies appear throughout but are purely literal (and generally in protagonists' names), faults equally attributable to type-setting errors, though some do repeat. All rather trivial and unimportant, except . . .

Problems occur when it comes down to synopses of stories and the analytical conclusions drawn from them.

For his detailed comments, Dr Golemba may seem to have been in an enviable position, having had available to him what he himself in his preface describes as the "rare" twenty-three volume Shenandoah edition of Stockton's writings, published 1899 – 1904 (Stockton died in 1902); a set of this edition, he acknowledges, was on hand at his own university. Unfortunately for the run-of-the-mill user of his book, particularly if he be British, the Shenandoah set is neither lodged in the British Library nor anywhere else in England I was able to check. Rare indeed. Nor are we at any point ever given the benefit of his use of a "definitive" text, one intriguingly part-posthumous. One might think that in his chapter on Stockton as "A Master Workman" that he might make some mention of revisions and rewrites as illustrated by the edition he is explicitly using, but there is nothing; in this chapter he is purely interested in showing Stockton's skill and position as a writer through his own interpretation of Stockton's intent juxtaposed with comments by, and Stockton's observations on, contemporary American literary authors. Which leaves me in a quandary as problematic as that confronting the youth in "The Lady, or the Tiger?"

Take for instance "The Derelict", a metaphoric story about two lovers each adrift on their respective derelicts and in the same ocean. From Golemba's reading he sees the male as weak and incompetent and the female's maid as the strongest of the trio; it was she who threw the rope that would reunite them, it was he who didn't catch it. In my version of "The Derelict" (which appeared in a 1908 reprint edition of *The Lady or the Tiger and Other Stories* issued by the same company who had earlier published the Shenandoah edition) the male is so exuberant at the possibility of being reunited with his loved one that when he throws a rope to her maid he forgets to hold onto the end. In that same volume "Our Story" relates of the problems an author and authoress experience when role playing in public the parts they are writing in their collaborative love story; in Golemba's edition "Our Story" is about the problems experienced by two lovers collaborating on a story. Similar discrepancies occur in "The Magic Egg", the third of four stories I read for the purpose of this review. What should I think?

If it is any assistance, in *John Gaythers Garden,* a composite volume of previously published short stories united by additional linkage material and published posthumously, Golemba analyses the Freudian imagery and indicates Stockton's mellower approach towards the end. In his biography Griffin tells us that Stockton died before the work was completed and that Mrs Stockton wrote the last few links.

You may want to buy this for the science fiction section—forget it. Apart from strong attacks on Gid Powers for his lack of perception and the absurd statements that *The Great War Syndicate* (1889) could well be the first American sf novel and was also a prime influence on George Griffith (both made without any justification whatever) one finds the same sloppiness as elsewhere. And as for the bibliography . . .

True to form, the bibliography consists for the most part of a blanket entry for nothing less than the rare Shenandoah edition, under its collective title, and with *absolutely no indication* as to which novels (twenty-one of them) and stories (sixty-six) it contains. To make any use of this deeply lazy and deeply incompetent "bibliography" the user of this book must somehow endeavour to get hold of the Shenandoah edition, which it is not likely he will be able to do. And not only that. Golemba's "bibliography" also provides a listing of some additional Stockton works "deemed especially important," but unless one has Shenandoah at one's elbow there is simply no way of knowing what works from Stockton's complete canon (which Golemba is visibly too incompetent to see the point of listing) this academic fellow feels especially important and which he feels need no mention at all, even indirect. Nor does he provide any criteria whatsoever for inclusion in this extra listing; some titles don't even receive any treatment within the text. My mistake, only *Personally Conducted* doesn't. I see *New Jersey, from the Discovery of the Scheyichbi to Recent Times* does get a two-line mention under its later title of *Stories of New Jersey,* though this title change is never mentioned.

Ultimately, the most horrifying thing about this work is that it is No. 374 of a reputable series, *Twayne's United States Authors Series.* As such it will surely find its way onto the shelves of institutional libraries and a narrow minded doctor of English will just gain a higher status and become more arrogant.

The Life and Works of David Lindsay
by Bernard Sellin, translated by Kenneth Gunnell
(Cambridge University Press, 1981, xxiii + 257 pp, $39.50 US)

reviewed by Gary K. Wolfe

David Lindsay's *A Voyage to Arcturus* has been something of a *cause celebre* among fantasy scholars since 1968, when it appeared in an American Ballantine paperback edition and began to gain currency on college campuses and in courses in fantastic literature. Earlier reprints of the novel, which originally appeared in 1920, had done little more than generate a rather small cult of enthusiasts, the most influential of whom proved to be Colin Wilson. In 1970, Wilson's publisher, John Baker, issued *The Strange Genius of David Lindsay* by Wilson, J.B. Pick and E.H. Visiak. Until this present volume, that book, an odd mixture of puffery, anecdotal criticism, and memoirs, was the principal source of information about Lindsay. The differences between it and Sellin's book illustrate, among other things, the degree to which Lindsay has gained acceptance as a

major writer of the fantastic.

Readers of *A Voyage to Arcturus* are almost inevitably intrigued by the kind of man who could have produced such a strange book, with its powerful, intricately wrought visions presented in such rude prose. Those who pursue their curiosity by seeking out Lindsay's second novel, *The Haunted Woman* (1922), are apt to be even more befuddled by this relatively slight novel—a piece of chamber music to *Arcturus's* symphony. And for most, the later novels, *Sphinx, Devil's Tor, The Witch,* are increasingly confusing. Surely this strange and powerful thinker must have been a fascinating and remarkable individual.

Mr Sellin, who has done more solid research on Lindsay's life and thought than anyone else, shows us he was not. The Lindsay who emerges from this book seems to be a rather annoying eccentric, whose unremarkable life was distinguished only by the spectacular failure of his writing career. While the details of Lindsay's life—which make up about a quarter of the book—do much to put our curiosity to rest, they do not substantially explain his fiction, and Sellin's attempts to make such connections sometimes involves heroic leaps into pop psychoanalysis. I am not quite ready to accept, for example, the notion that Lindsay's whole career as a writer somehow arose out of vagina envy (p. 133).

The two chapters following the biographical material concern Lindsay's backgrounds and characters, but offer little insight into the author as fantasist. These chapters focus heavily on *The Haunted Woman, Sphinx,* and *Devil's Tor,* and suffer for two reasons. First, they shift attention away from Lindsay's strengths and toward his weaknesses; despite the interesting ideas about houses, clothes, and women Sellin offers, he simply cannot make these books sound interesting (although *Devil's Tor* is much more interesting than he makes it out to be). Second, the discussion even of these themes is incomplete because Sellin did not have access at the time of writing (the book was originally a Sorbonne dissertation) to the posthumously published *The Violet Apple* and *The Witch,* which are treated separately in a tacked-on final chapter.

The next two chapters are the most valuable in the book. Here Sellin attempts to trace the evolution of Lindsay's thought from *Arcturus* on, and while his extensive comments on *Arcturus* contain few revelations to readers familiar with the mounting body of criticism on that work, his argument that it represented only the first stage in a developing philosophical system whose goal was a theory of the sublime is impressive. *Arcturus* succeeds more than the later novels, he suggests, because its theme centers on the illusory nature of perceived reality; the vision of the sublime appears only briefly at the end of the novel, in the Muspel sequence. Lindsay's desire in the later novels, especially *Devil's Tor* and *The Witch,* was to move beyond this theme and into a vision of the sublime world beyond, which he treats in various metaphors ranging from the Great Mother *(Devil's Tor)* to the wise woman *(The Witch).* In the penultimate chapter, Sellin argues persuasively that *Arcturus* is a philosophically incomplete work, and that Lindsay's overall output of fiction does reveal an emerging structure of thought.

This, together with some insightful comments Sellin makes about Lindsay's relations to other writers such as L.H. Myers and E.H. Visiak, is primarily what gives the book its value. However, Sellin does not make an effective case for the later novels being particularly interesting for their own sake, and readers are apt to come away feeling that, unless one is willing to undertake the arduous task of unraveling an entire philosophical

system, *A Voyage to Arcturus* is all they need to read. This is unfortunate, since *Devil's Tor,* for all its denseness, does have a richness all its own.

There are also a number of minor errors in detail concerning events described in the novels—Tormance is described as a "country" which is "situated on the star, Arcturus", for example, when it is really a planet of that star—and on one or two occasions a novel is even misquoted. Occasionally, Sellin's style is dull, and his thematic pattern of organization results in a good deal of repetitiveness. The book, moreover, does not offer much insight about fantastic literature in general or Lindsay's place in it. It is, however, thoroughly researched, and the chapter on the sublime is quite well thought out. For those of us interested in Lindsay, it is invaluable; for others, it may offer more than they really want to know.

Three Tomorrows: American, British and Soviet Science Fiction
by John Griffiths *(MacMillan, 1980, 217 pp, no price given)*

reviewed by K.G. Mathieson

John Griffiths' *Three Tomorrows,* the work of "an amateur entering into this Babel" of contemporary science-fiction criticism, proves to be a difficult book to evaluate, in that it seems to fall between the two principal areas of critical research, the general and introductory surveys on the one hand, and more specialized and formally-orientated developments on the other, while nonetheless going over ground already familiar from both; the suspicion lingers that his book might well prove insufficiently rigorous to appeal to the academics while covering ground already familiar to the general reader, a situation which he himself partly acknowledges in discussing the changes which have taken place during the ten years between the first version of this book and its eventual publication.

The book concerns itself primarily with the proposition that

> it is not now necessary to argue the existence of a relationship between literature in general and social attitudes in general. Ever since Professor Karl Mannhiem's illuminating demonstration of their interdependence it has been axiomatic that thought—or rather its verbal expression—can be understood in its social context. Because ideas are not spontaneously generated we can explore the relationship between vested interests and the ideas they espouse. The corollary that, from a sufficiently substantial and homogenous body of thought or knowledge-based literature, insights may be gained into social attitudes has been much less considered. I believe science fiction constitutes such a body of literature for reasons which I will try to explain.

This sociologically oriented approach defines the kind of analysis subsequently offered, concentrating on science fiction as a kind of "literary litmus paper" reflecting on likely developments in the future, a valid enough area of study, but inevitably rather a limiting one. Thus, his definition of science fiction offered in the opening chapter reflects the direction (as he admits) in which he wishes to go, and reiterates a much repeated, and perhaps not very useful, aspect of science fiction;

> A science fiction story is one in which the suspension of disbelief depends on the plausible development of a central technical or scientific idea or ideas.

As a definition of science fiction, this has not moved at all from that offered by Amis twenty years ago (which Griffiths quotes here) in *New Maps of Hell,* and fails to take any account of recent work by a number of writers, including Scholes, Suvin, Angenot and Delany, in which attempts to arrive at a more sophisticated definition of science fiction

emerge. No light is shed on the specifically *literary* ways in which the fiction can be understood as science fiction and not as something else, and while this flaw can be set aside to some extent through the particular approach adopted here, it seems strangely redundant to offer such a definition at this time, regardless of context.

Following a brief survey of the development of science fiction to the present century, Griffiths shifts onto sounder ground as he pursues his topic through a series of chapters discussing thematic manifestations of possible futures in British, American and Soviet science fiction, dealing with disasters, utopian and dystopian fictions, cybernetics, aliens, and Amis's notion of "the idea as hero", and ending with chapters discussing the diverging developments of Soviet and Western science fiction respectively in the last decade. An inevitable consequence of this kind of critical work is that all too often the book turns into a cataloguing of stories and books with only brief space available to each, with the result that interesting points are not given appropriate opportunity for development. While much of the material covered here will be familiar to readers acquainted with the already existing general studies of the genre, the attempt at comparing and contrasting works from different cultures works quite well in terms of his initial premise, and Western readers may well find that the principal value of Mr Griffiths' work lies in the material concerned with Soviet science fiction, on which he has some interesting things to say and reveal; the feeling of familiarity which much of the book evokes does not intrude so much on these sections. Perhaps now, however, it is time to call a halt to this kind of compendious, generalized study, and turn to more specific investigation of critical issues within the field of science fiction, where much yet remains to be done, even in Mr Griffiths' chosen area.

A Fine Anger: a Critical Introduction to the Work of Alan Garner
by Neil Philip (*Collins, 1981, 191 pp, £5.95*)

reviewed by Colin Greenland

Philip discusses the whole of Garner's work from *The Weirdstone of Brisingamen* to the *Stone Book* quartet, including his poems, plays, libretti, and collections of folktales retold. The least part of Philip's labour is to show that all these productions, major and minor, do comprise a whole, tightly interrelated, integrated by their author's regard of his art as a craft to be perfected, a single, eternal task: one thing to do, which will never be done. Garner's writing is, in every respect, concentrated. His subject is the place of the individual character, will and imagination in the vast deeps of history. In his lecture for the SF Foundation series in 1976 he called it "inner time", as J.G. Ballard formerly called his terrain "inner space". Philip, who has studied Garner's sources as carefully as he has his fiction, traces his use of myth, from the arbitrary, synthetic otherworlds of his earliest novels through to the vital force of lore in the *Stone Book* quartet. Myth is a human device for structuring time, and the key to what Philip calls "Garner's ability to articulate the universal by concentrating on the local." He shows that Garner is neither devising new myths, nor at the mercy of old ones, but turning to myth to dramatize the imagination's struggle to reconcile eternity with self, universe with locality. In this way he avoids the trap of asserting that myth is somehow the genesis or explanation for the affective power of Garner's fantasies, rather than its form. He also steers clear of an even muddier pitfall,

that of apologizing for Garner's role as a children's writer. Philip observes: "In a sense all myths, being the expressions of primitive kernels of emotion rather than its sophisticated developments, are adolescent dramas." Andrew Lang handed fairy tales to children because they were not real enough for adults; Alan Garner does so because they describe reality at its greenest. To appreciate fully the dynamism of *The Owl Service* or of the modern story in *Red Shift,* the adult reader needs to remember the sheer power of adolescent compulsions. In any case, Garner's adult audience is at least as large as his teenage one; and with his emphasis on continuity through generations and through eras, the distinction between publishers' markets becomes trivial. In Philip's study there is quite rightly more attention to Garner's affinity with the *Gawain* poet and Harold Pinter than to his neighbourhood in the bookshop to Rosemary Sutcliff and C.S. Lewis.

Philip assumes his reader knows Garner's work well. In some ways his book is not an introduction at all, or not one that leads us by the hand. Instead he sends us hurrying back to the texts so that we can catch up with him. For those who do not know Garner as well as Philip does—can there be many who do?—he includes a thorough bibliography of all his works in every edition; of reviews, essays and articles about him; and a copious list of related reading. In fact, thoroughness is the primary quality of this admirable study. For all his esteem, Philip assesses Garner with the strictness he demands, the severity with which he treats his art, his audience, and himself.

Also received:

Science Fiction Book Review Index, 1974-1979 ed. H.W. Hall (Gale Research Co., 1981, xxii + 391 pp, $78). Cites some 15,600 reviews of more than 6,200 books appearing in nearly 250 general and specialized periodicals. Follows the same format as the earlier *SFBRI 1923-1973.* A valuable bibliographical aid.

Theodore Sturgeon: A Primary and Secondary Bibliography by Lahna F. Diskin (G.K. Hall, 1980, 105 pp, $16). An addition to the useful "Masters of Science Fiction and Fantasy" series of bibliographies, but not quite as satisfactory as the earlier volume on Clifford Simak reviewed in *F.* 20.

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