FOUNDATION

26

THE REVIEW OF SCIENCE FICTION

SPECIAL PHILIP K. DICK SECTION
Brian Aldiss on Dick the writer
Peter Nicholls on Dick the man
Philip Strick on Dick and the movies
David Wingrove on Dick's morality and mysticism
Brian Burden on Dick and assassinations

Jack Williamson on writing sf in the 30s
Pamela Sargent on the shape of her career
Tan Yunji on science fiction in China

Reviews by Barbour, Caldecott, Caracciolo, Cowper, Greenland, Parrinder, Shippey, Stableford, Tuttle and Watson
of books by Ramsay Campbell, Philip K. Dick, Thomas M. Disch, Stephen Donaldson, Robert A. Heinlein, Robert Holdstock, David Langford, Phillip Mann, Robert Silverberg, Gene Wolfe, Donald Wollheim and others

FOUNDATION

THE REVIEW OF SCIENCE FICTION

Editor: David Pringle
Features Editor: Ian Watson
Reviews Editor: John Clute
Administrator: Charles Barren

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Number 26, October 1982

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Editorial

Much of this issue is devoted to the late Philip K. Dick. Since the science-fiction field has lost one of its most important writers it is only appropriate that we attempt to evaluate his career. However, we are not "embalming" Dick—his books will certainly live on—and there are no final statements on his work to be found herein. We shall remain open to good criticism of Dick in forthcoming issues of *Foundation*. Number 27 will contain at least one further piece on Dick (by Neil Ferguson), and other submissions are welcomed.

We are pleased to welcome Jack Williamson to this issue, with a piece on his life as an sf writer in the 1930s, and we are also happy to be running an interview with Pamela Sargent and a short essay on the state of sf in China. In addition, we welcome Stratford Caldecott, Peter Caracciolo and Lisa Tuttle as new book-reviewers. Material already in hand for the next issue of *Foundation* (due February 1983) includes a lively interview with Rudy Rucker and a study by Brian Stableford of M.P. Shiel's novels.

For the benefit of our newer readers, it is perhaps worth repeating who we are. *Foundation* is published by North East London Polytechnic on behalf of the Science Fiction Foundation. The SFF is a semi-independent body, set up in 1970, which has its own council of management. Approximately half the Council members are staff of North East London Polytechnic; the remainder are "outsiders"—for the most part writers and critics of science fiction. As members retire, the Council regularly invites new people to join; the current Chairman of the Council is Dr John Radford, an Assistant Director of NELP.

Foundation's editorial team is elected annually by the Council. For the present that editorial team consists of three people: John Clute, Ian Watson and myself. Both John and Ian are freelance writers—and I happen to be a member of the administrative staff at Brighton Polytechnic. None of us receives any remuneration for editing *Foundation* (nor are we able to pay contributors), and none of us is directly connected with North East London Polytechnic.

NELP provides this journal with an office at its Barking Precinct where a part-time secretary, Mrs Joyce Day, handles our subscriptions. Also in that office is the Science Fiction Foundation's library—upwards of 12,000 books and magazines, plus tapes, newspaper clippings, etc. (The library is open to visitors by prior arrangement with Joyce Day: if you are interested in using it for reference purposes please write to the address shown on the inside front cover of this journal.)

In the past the SFF had a full-time Administrator, employed by North East London Polytechnic. Unfortunately, due to cuts in higher-education spending, this post has been kept vacant since the departure of Malcolm Edwards in 1980. Luckily, Mr Charles Barren, a former lecturer at NELP with a long-standing interest in the SFF, kindly volunteered to become a part-time Acting Administrator, and for the past two years he has provided invaluable unpaid assistance. He negotiated an Arts Council grant for this journal, and he has also striven to revive some of the SFF's other activities. Now he has asked us to print the appeal which you will find below, and he will be most grateful for any helpful responses from *Foundation*'s readership.

David Pringle
September 1982

AN APPEAL

For some time past, I have endeavoured to procure independent funding for the Science Fiction Foundation beyond the very generous support of the North East London Polytechnic and the recent support of the Arts Council. Altogether, I have approached something like fifty grant awarding associations in the UK and the USA—unhappily without any positive result.

It may well be that I am approaching the wrong type of grant awarding association, and that my efforts should be directed elsewhere. It is in this connection that I solicit the help of the readers of *Foundation*. If anybody knows any society, trust or grant award body to which an application may be made with confidence for funds to support a literary and scholastic association such as ours, then I will be grateful to receive the necessary details for lodging such an application. I have in mind three important areas where funding would be most fruitful:

a) The completion of a definitive catalogue of the Foundation's holdings: books, magazines, tapes, illustrative material and manuscripts.
b) The completion of a science-fiction theme index, already started.
c) The compilation of an index of all technology mentioned in sf.

Your help in this matter will be deeply appreciated.

Charles Barren
Administrator

Recently Received:

The NESFA Index to the SF Magazines and Original Anthologies, 1979-80 (NESFA, 1982,90pp, $7.00) *The NESFA Index to the SF Magazines and Original Anthologies, 1981* (NESFA, 1982, 60pp, $5.00)

These very useful indexes are produced under the editorship of Ann A.B. McCutchen for the New England SF Association, Box G, MIT Branch Post Office, Cambridge, Mass. 02139, USA. Previous NESFA indexes covered the years 1966 to 1976. So what happened to the 1977-78 index, you may ask? We are informed that that index "is presently being worked on".

"The Strange Pilgrimage: A Commemoration for Philip K. Dick" was presented at the City Literary Institute, London, on 9th June 1982. The Chairman for the evening was Dr Maurice Goldsmith of the Science Policy Foundation, and much of the organizational work was done by Colin Greenland and Roz Kaveney on behalf of the SF Foundation. It proved to be a memorable occasion.

There were three principal speakers—Peter Nicholls, Brian Aldiss and Philip Strick—and we are fortunate enough to be able to publish their contributions here (in the order in which they were originally delivered). Peter Nicholls led off with the following fascinating glimpse of Philip K. Dick the man.

Philip K. Dick: A Cowardly Memoir

PETER NICHOLLS

My friendship with Philip Dick was enjoyable, intermittent and alarming. It began around the time at which his recent novel *VALIS* begins—early in 1974.

I ought to jump ahead here and explain that as I got to know Phil Dick my feelings about him so disturbed and unsettled me that I was no longer able to read his fiction. I have still not read *A Scanner Darkly, Confessions of a Crap Artist* and *Deus Irae*; I have not even seen a copy of his most recent novel, *The Transmigration of Timothy Archer*. I have read only the first chapter of *The Divine Invasion*. On the other hand, just in the last few days, I've read *VALIS* and I've also read Phil's fascinating introduction to the 1980 short-story collection *The Golden Man*. And I must have read almost every word Phil ever published up to 1974, often two or three times.

I'm getting to my first point in rather a roundabout way. Now that I've read *VALIS* I am able at last to put what disturbed me about Phil into words. I realize that my relationship, such as it was, was not entirely with Phil. I also had a relationship with Horselover Fat. (It occurs to me that this will mean nothing at all if you haven't read *VALIS*. It's really an autobiographical novel; the narrator is Philip Dick, who has a friend called Horselover Fat. It is quite obvious from the start that Horselover Fat and Philip Dick are in fact the same—when he is in the first person he's Phil Dick; when he is a bit manic, and indeed institutionalized, in the third person he's Horselover Fat. It is Horselover Fat and not Phil Dick who gets to talk with God.)

Phil, Horselover and myself exchanged 15 or 16 letters between 1974 and 1976. I've managed to locate some of them in a dusty bundle on top of the wardrobe. Since the whole point of my being here tonight is to give you some kind of flavour of what Phil Dick was like—though nothing like so vivid a flavour as his books will give you—I'd like to read out a few bits of his letters. The first bit was written to me when I had just broken up with the American lady with whom I had been living for six years. This is Phil on marriage:

> I can still vividly see my then-wife Nancy and my little girl Isa and my best friend who was staying with us walking out the front door and getting into my car and driving away forever. I

think it was the fact that they drove off in my car that unhinged me the most, although it may seem absurd. Perhaps you will understand, though. Often our identities are constructed around a marriage, so it can be said that when they walked out of my life my own soul was taken with them, leaving me a kind of empty husk sitting there in that living room. It took me several years to get my soul back; in fact it just now returned this year.

The warmth and the wryness here, of course, are very much the same qualities that bring his stories to life.

Before I read out the second bit, I want to read a short passage from an article I published in *Foundation* 5 in January 1974. I was arguing here—God knows why—that no account of the science fiction tradition that ignores Charles Dickens is complete:

> Here is a typical inhabitant of Dickens' novels:
> "His cold eyes would hardly have been eyes, but for the short ends of lashes which, by bringing them into immediate contrast with something paler than themselves, expressed their form. His short-cropped hair might have been a mere continuation of the sandy freckles on his forehead and face. His skin was so unwholesomely deficient in the natural tinge that he looked as though, if he were cut, he would bleed white."
>
> (*Hard Times,* Chapter 2)
>
> And here, for comparison, is another passage:
> "The door, meagrely, opened and he saw within the apartment a fragmented and misaligned shrinking figure, a girl who cringed and slunk away and yet held onto the door, as if for physical support. Fear made her seem ill; it distorted her body lines, made her appear as if someone had broken her and then, with malice, patched her together badly. Her eyes, enormous, glazed over fixedly as she attempted to smile."
>
> There is no mistaking the kinship between the first and second passage. The first has the more concentrated poetic force, but both writers, creating a kind of inhumanity in the very appearance of their characters, are undeniably using language—highly charged with feeling—to a very similar end, and with a similar use of imagery. Both are preoccupied by the less-than-human masquerading as the human, although the Dickens character is only metaphorically an android, whereas the character in the second passage, from Philip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, is literally an android, though paradoxically described with more sympathy.

Here is Phil's response—in one of the first letters he wrote me—to what I said:

> First, I would like to express the excitement and joy I felt at reading your article in *Foundation* 5 in which you discuss my work and how it resembles that of Charles Dickens. I'm sure you will be amazed to learn that I, undoubtedly like many other readers but with far less reason, failed to recognize the quote from my writings . . . It was one of the greater lessons I've learned about my own work to discover that I myself wrote this quoted passage, and indeed a thrill.

The next passage I shall read out just to show you that Phil's death would have come as no surprise to him, he'd been expecting it for years:

> Really, I do not want to dwell on my troubles, but to make the situation worse, and in a very serious way as I'm sure you will agree, my high blood pressure again fails to respond adequately to the various medications, and in early December I began to suffer once more from dizzy spells . . . They've diminished now, but for several weeks I couldn't walk very far. Specific medication for that did help a lot. They prescribe something which affects the balance centre of the ear directly. But this is still a dreary indication of the unresponding underlying hypertension. Robert Heinlein told me on the phone in November, when I told him what my pressure reading now was, "It could kill you." Well, I knew that already. But I thanked him, since I knew he meant it in a concerned way.

So far, so good. The man revealed in the bits I've read out is sensitive, vulnerable, generous and self-absorbed. By and large he isn't Horselover Fat, however. I've lost most of my correspondence with Horselover Fat. Horselover was paranoid, slightly hysterical, hyperactive mentally and much given to fear and to conspiracy theories. He talked a lot

about how Richard Nixon's "dirty tricks" group— the same group that pulled off the Watergate raid—twice burgled his flat; he spoke of the voices in his head; at the same time he was getting a number of messages from St. Paul; he saw strange portents everywhere, and his life was a patchwork of meaningful coincidences; the death of his cats had powerful metaphysical implications, as did the illness of his son Christopher. You can get the flavour of Horselover's thinking at that time, 1974, by reading the piece he wrote for the book I edited, *Science Fiction at Large,* which was entitled "Man, Android and Machine". He began writing this essay in September 1974, knocked it off when God told him about his son's illness, and completed it in March 1975. If you read it now, you will instantly recognize that it is an essay about the writing of the first draft of *VALIS*. And, of course, *VALIS* itself is the chronicle of Horselover's thinking, though its tone is a little cooler than that of the letters that came hot off the presses from Horselover himself.

I've lost Horselover's more extreme letters, but the following will give you something of the edgy tone of his voice:

> I read "Man, Android and Machine" over the other night . . . it is sort of nuts, but also thought-provoking. I still stand by what I said, except that such matters, being so difficult to communicate, sound sort of—to be blunt—irrational when set down in black and white. I think that Dionysus had me at that time, to some extent (I read a recent very interesting article about "Dionysus in America", and in all truth he certainly did rattle and break down the prison walls here, and not in mere metaphor but actually. I guess I got drawn into the battle, on his side, as witness the somewhat intoxified quality of the speech.)
>
> My collaboration with Roger Zelazny (*Deus Irae*) will be released in June here, I understand. It is not going to be popular: a funny mystical theological novel. But my solo novel about drugs and the watchful police, *A Scanner Darkly*, which Doubleday will release as a mainstream (!!!) novel next January, should do very well . . .
>
> I am proud of *Scanner* and I hope you will like it. It's not like my other stuff . . . "a breakthrough," Doubleday told me on the phone after they had read it. On the bad side of the news, I was in hospital in February in the Intensive Cardiac Care Unit for a mild heart attack, so it's a good thing I declined to come to the UK. I am told now that it is my heart which is in most serious jeopardy, that I've got to lay off and take it easy or I may croak (as we say here). I'm not sure how one goes about taking it easy. My psychotherapist, with a furious and grim expression on his face, yelled at me, "You're to draw up a list of your wants, AND I MEAN THAT SERIOUSLY!" I said, "Yessir, yessir," meekly, and have been drawing up my list of wants. One of them is to not have people yell at me to draw up lists.
>
> But—I am still at work on my in-progress novel, *To Scare the Dead,* trying to make my religous vision/revelation into something which I can communicate, and becoming more and more frustrated every day. One perhaps *cannot* express these things in words. I feel as if I have an aphasia, actually, a speech block. I try to tell people orally, or write about it, and what comes out appears nonsense. I know what I saw, but I can't name it.
>
> Ah well. It's as if the gods were sitting around and having nothing better to do they said, "Let's see old Phil get *this* down on paper." And then revealed all the mysteries of the universe to me and sat back laughing. Gods must have the same kind of sense of humour as cats. I appreciate the vision, but I wish I had also been given St Paul's gift to express it.

This is not wholly Horselover of course—a lot of it is Phil's ever so slightly sceptical observations of Horselover.

My relationship with Phil was not restricted to letters. I finally got to meet him when he was Guest of Honour (one of the four or five guests of honour) at the Science Fiction Festival in Metz, France, in 1978.

I was in the hotel lobby when he arrived, and I recognized him at once from his photographs. I wasn't ready though for his sheer size; he was bulky, tall, overweight and generally bearlike. He came through the door with a peculiarly terrified look. When I approached him and said "Aren't you Phil Dick?" he literally shied away like a startled animal, and seemed about to deny it, or to run. I said "I'm Peter Nicholls" and he looked

at me completely blankly for what seemed a very long time. It was probably around ten seconds. Suddenly his face, which had been frozen, became warm and animated and he gave me an enormous bearlike hug. I was to learn later that these lightning transformations of mood, which outwardly resembled the transition from android to human, were typical of Phil.

The great event at Metz was the confrontation between Harlan Ellison and Philip K. Dick, which I'm proud to say I set up deliberately myself. Harlan had already told me that he had been furious with Phil for years—it was something about a girl—and that he refused to speak to him. (But Harlan had also said to me, "Didn't you get my letter saying what a shit you were and how I'm not speaking to you?" "No, Harlan," I said. "Oh well, that's good," said Harlan, "then I don't have worry about contradicting myself by being friendly now." Harlan's like that.)

Phil had also told me that he wasn't speaking to Harlan. I thought it was pretty silly that these two grown men, one very big and the other very very small, should go on avoiding one another for three days, so I invited them both, independently, to join me for a drink in the bar at six pm, told neither that the other was coming, and sat back to await the action, which exceeded my wildest dreams. They both enjoyed themselves tremendously. Courteously, and by turns, as if it were a formal duel, they abused one another in the vilest and most inventive language. It went on for exactly an hour. Nobody was listening at first, but by the time the hour was up, there was an audience of 60 or 70 puzzled French people. I've never seen two people enjoy themselves so much.

It was the most proficient, colourful, prolonged and non-repetitive trading of invective that I have ever heard, or ever will hear, and I was proud to have brought it about. Harlan was a shade faster on the draw, Phil was a shade funnier; it was Harlan's New York versus Phil's West Coast hip; it was elaborate Jewish curses versus metaphysical lethalities. It was pure magic. Only yesterday, I read for the first time Phil's introduction to *The Golden Man*. He says of Metz: "It was the best week of my life. I was really happy for the first time."

Yet all was not entirely well. The first really bad sign was Phil's guest-of-honour speech. It had nothing of the verve and sanity and humour of his fight with Harlan. This is how Phil describes it, retrospectively, in *The Golden Man:* "I delivered a speech which, typically, made no sense whatever. Even the French couldn't understand it, despite a translation. Something goes haywire in my brain when I write speeches. I think I imagine I'm a reincarnation of Zoroaster bringing news of God."This is an understatement. The speech was disastrous and embarassing, delivered in a strange metallic voice accompanied by a glassy stare. He couldn't stop talking, and went on for over two hours, by which time most of the audience including myself had panicked through embarassment and sneaked out of the theatre. It honestly seemed as if Phil had lost his marbles.

The following morning, too, I had an enigmatic exchange with Phil which left me more disturbed than the occasion seemed to warrant. Phil beckoned me to his breakfast table, where he was eating with the woman he'd arrived with, and about whom he is so dismissive in *VALIS*. He was beaming, relaxed and cheerful and then suddenly, before my eyes, he changed back into—who was it? I don't know. Perhaps it was Horselover Fat.

"I have something vitally important to ask you," he said. "Did you successfully undertake sexual intercourse last night? I need to know how it's done." I wasn't sure what he meant, or why he was asking, but even then, it's difficult to say why the question

seemed so alarming. It seemed so irrelevant, so inappropriate to anything we'd ever talked about, and it was delivered with a profoundly enigmatic, glazed expression. I've got quite a few crude mates, perfectly capable of asking the same question with startling vulgarity, but never, I think, with such an affectless intensity. It was all very mysterious.

I never saw Phil again, and I don't recall getting or sending any letters, either. This had nothing to do with any lack of affection, on my side at least, or with our embarassing conversation over the hot croissants. The whole history of Phil's friendships with people—and perhaps of mine too—is rather jerky and staccato: long, elaborate letters out of the blue, a sudden burst of activity, and then silence for a couple of years. It was my fault, too, that the correspondence lapsed. It was partly laziness on my part, both intellectual and emotional. To make further contact with Phil on any level other than the completely trivial, I would obviously need to work out what the hell was going on in his brain, particularly after I'd met him, and seen how very strangely he often acted. Here was a great writer who had honoured me with his friendship, and I backed off because I was too lazy and too cowardly to make the attempt to get through to him. This feeling was just as dishonourable as the everyday feeling that makes you shift uneasily away from those people one meets on tube trains who mumble to themselves. With one part of my mind I thought, "Phil is a loony, and I can't handle it".

This brings me to my final question. Was Phil Dick sane? The question has no absolute answer of course. Madness is a relative term, as R.D. Laing and others have shown us. Madness in one situation may be perfect sanity in another, and it may be that Phil Dick read the situations of life a lot more accurately than I do. But, of course, there is an answer to the question. The answer is in Phil's books, from the first in 1955 to the last in 1982. I don't have the time or the desire to act as critic tonight (I'm leaving that up to Brian Aldiss and my other colleague, Philip Strick, whose name's ghostly and inappropriate echo of Phil's own has been the source of so much amusement to all of us—not least Brian Aldiss—over the years.)

But I'm not quite finished yet. The May issue of *Locus* contained a great many reminiscences of Phil Dick by his friends and fellow writers. I want to quote a remark John Brunner made in his short piece. Clearly John was also disturbed at that same Metz festival by the way Phil appeared, but his conclusions were not identical to mine. John writes:

> I asked myself, how come a creative spirit of such brilliance is living in such an unhappy body? He was one of the saddest people I ever met. He was incapable of helping someone else to happiness except by giving orders . . . the process of erosion had started before his death . . . but in fact, it must have begun decades ago, and long before I met him it was half past repair.

Phil Dick himself had worries about his mind, but he expressed them with rather more humour than John Brunner. Of one of his stories in *The Golden Man,* Phil Dick writes: "Either I've invented a whole new logic or, ahem, I'm not playing with a full deck."

My hackles rise at John's obituary for Phil. Was Phil Dick really half past repair? In that case, who wrote those books? Were they the work of a man who wasn't quite right in the head? On the other hand, what reason have I to criticise John for being too dismissive when, as I've just explained, my own worries about Phil Dick run parallel to his?

Yet surely John is wrong. The man he describes, whether he is Horselover Fat or Philip Dick himself, is not the whole man. He is certainly not the man who will come to be

recognized as one of the greatest science fiction writers in history, and one of this century's most important writers in any field. The whole Philip K. Dick was the author of the books.

Phil saw himself more clearly than Brunner sees him. He spells it out in *VALIS,* where Horselover Fat, the crazed ex drug-taker and sometimes institutionalized mystic has to be reconciled with the quiet, sensitive, watchful, observant Philip Kendred Dick—they have to become one person again—before their mutual redemption is possible. For most of Phil's writing life, though not in his baroque and painful personal life, this reconciliation took place.

Phil Dick, science fiction's foremost chronicler of schizophrenia, paranoia, affectlessness, depression and the shifting labyrinths of the mind's perceptual mechanisms, often took madness as his theme. But his books themselves were not mad, not even *VALIS. VALIS* does lack some of the saving humour of Dick's earlier work, and it will not be remembered as one of his greatest books. But it is a book of the most incredible courage, as are all his books.

Philip K. Dick confronted in himself and his friends many of the areas that most of us shy away from or pretend do not exist. He kicked away the props of consensus reality and confronted subjective worlds and series of worlds of the most vertiginous, deliquescent complexity. Yet he did all this coolly, compassionately, wisely and unsentimentally, and he never just abandoned himself to the subjective, to pure solipsism. If I were being a literary critic here I'd want to talk about the tone of Dick's writing; it is warm, conversational, and clearly addressed to a reader. The point here of course—and I'm not just splitting hairs—is that if you evoke the presence of a readership by your very tone of voice, if you attest to some kind of common humanity outside yourself, then you are not just a solipsist, you are not floundering alone in a solitary universe. The thing about Phil Dick's intimate understanding of madness, in his books at least, is that he is so transparently sane about it.

Think how amazing Phil Dick's story is! The man could hardly get through the week without some kind of disaster—financial, moral, marital, medical or mental. He had giddy spells, he got into fights, he hallucinated, he alienated his friends, he used in the 1960s to drop acid and take large numbers of uppers and downers, he cancelled firm arrangements, he made silly political gestures. (Do you remember the fuss when he opposed Stanislaw Lem's honorary membership of the Science Fiction Writers of America?) Phil Dick's life was a mess.

That such a man could publish 38 books in 27 years is incredible. That his books should have such wisdom and depth, such humour, colour and sharpness is nothing short of a miracle. This is not just the conventional miracle that we label genius; it was a personal triumph of courage and dogged tenacity. He was one of the bravest of writers.

Phil thought that God had reached into his mind. To this day I am not sure whether he meant this literally or metaphorically. In older times, to call somebody mad was not done. One called them "touched by God"—we still say mad people are "touched"—like wise fools, the innocents in Dostoyevsky's novels. I speak as an unbeliever, but there is no doubt in my mind that Philip K. Dick was a man who, in one sense or another, had truly been touched by God.

The second of our pieces from the Philip K. Dick commemorative evening of the 9th June is by Brian Aldiss, who has long been known as a fervent admirer of Dick. His own most recent novel is Helliconia Spring, *which reached the top of the British fiction bestseller list earlier this year—a rare achievement for an sf book.*

Philip K. Dick: A Whole New Can of Worms

BRIAN ALDISS

We're here tonight to rejoice. There is no reason to mourn—well, not too much. Bucket-kicking is endemic in the human race. Have you ever considered that it may be all of *us* who have gone, whisked into some terrible schizoid version of the present ruled over by Brezhnev, Mrs Thatcher, Pope John Paul, and the Argentinian junta, while Phil Dick remains where he ever was, in Santa Ana, still jovially fighting entropy and kipple with a new, eighth, wife by his side?

We rejoice because Dick is one of the few writers to defy the First Law of SF Thermodynamics. This law states that exploitation in the sf field is so great that writers decay as they age instead of maturing, like bad wine, and that meaningfulness decreases in inverse proportion to number of words published.

Like all good sf writers, Dick was continually trying to figure out what made the universe tick. Even if there is a way to figure out the universe, it probably can't be done through sf, which forever throws in its own "what ifs" to flavour the recipe. Figuring out the universe needs: long scientific training, the mind of a genius, and years of zen silence; three qualities antithetical to all sf buffs. Nevertheless such an attempt is worth making, and for the same reason that never quite reaching the peak of Mount Everest is better than never having climbed it at all. There really were times when it seems as if Dick had the universe in a corner.

The more you try to figure out the universe, the more enigmatic it becomes. You know that ingenious U-bend in a toilet, which used to figure conspicuously in Harpic adverts; it keeps the stinks down the drain instead of in the room? Since the universe you are trying to figure out includes the mind doing the figuring, then—as Sir Karl Popper may have said in a back issue of *Planet Stories*—that mind acts as its own U-bend and refuses to let you get down to the real layers of fertiliser where growth and destruction begin.

All the same, Dick patented his own U-bend into ontology. Before our eyes, he kept opening up whole new cans of worms. Dick suffered from paralysing anxiety states which forays into the world of drugs did not alleviate; we see his mind constantly teasing out what is to be trusted, what let in, what discarded—and how far let in, how far discarded. The process applied alike to words, canopeners, wives, and worlds.

From this, anyone not knowing anthing about Dick might conclude that he was a gloomy and terrifying writer. Well, he was terrifying, certainly, but the gloom is shot through with hilarity. The worse things get, the funnier. His literary precursors are Kafka

and Dickens. Actually, Kafka, Dickens and A.E. van Vogt: it's the secret schlok ingredient that makes Dick tick.

Let's just illustrate with a passage from *A Scanner Darkly*, one of Dick's best and most terrifying novels, where Charles Freck decides to commit suicide:

> At the last moment (as end-time closed in on him) he changed his mind on a decisive issue and decided to drink the reds down with a connoisseur wine instead of Ripple or Thunderbird, so he set off on one last drive, over to Trader Joe's, which specialized in fine wines, and bought a bottle of 1971 Mondavi Cabernet Sauvignon, which set him back almost thirty dollars—all he had.
>
> Back home again, he uncorked the wine, let it breathe, drank a few glasses of it, spent a few minutes contemplating his favorite page of *The Illustrated Picture Book of Sex,* which showed the girl on top, then placed the plastic bag of reds beside his bed, lay down with the Ayn Rand book and unfinished protest letter to Exxon, tried to think of something meaningful but could not, although he kept remembering the girl being on top, and then, with a glass of the Cabernet Sauvignon, gulped down all the reds at once. After that, the deed being done, he lay back, the Ayn Rand book and letter on his chest, and waited.
>
> However, he had been burned. The capsules were not barbiturates, as represented. They were some kind of kinky psychedelics, of a type he had never dropped before, probably a mixture, and a new on the market. Instead of quietly suffocating, Charles Freck began to hallucinate. Well, he thought philosophically, this is the story of my life. Always ripped off. He had to face the fact—considering how many of the capsules he had swallowed—that he was in for some trip.
>
> The next thing he knew, a creature from between dimensions was standing beside his bed looking down at him disapprovingly.
>
> The creature had many eyes, all over it, ultra-modern expensive-looking clothing, and rose up eight feet high. Also, it carried an enormous scroll.
>
> "You're going to read me my sins," Charles Freck said.
>
> The creature nodded and unsealed the scroll.
>
> Freck said, lying helpless on his bed, "and it's going to take a hundred thousand hours."
>
> Fixing its many compound eyes on him, the creature from between dimensions said, "We are no longer in the mundane universe. Lower-plane categories of material existence such as 'space' and 'time' no longer apply to you. You have been elevated to the transcendent realm. Your sins will be read to you ceaselessly, in shifts, throughout eternity. The list will never end."
>
> Know your dealer, Charles Freck thought, and wished he could take back the last half-hour of his life.
>
> A thousand years later he was still lying on his bed with the Ayn Rand book and the letter to Exxon on his chest, listening to them read his sins to him. They had gotten up to the first grade, when he was six years old.
>
> Ten thousand years later they had reached the sixth grade.
>
> The year he had discovered masturbation.
>
> He shut his eyes, but he could still see the multi-eyed, eight-foot-high being with its endless scroll reading on and on.
>
> "And next—" it was saying.
>
> Charles Freck thought, At least I got a good wine.

This unusual ability to mix tragedy with farce is matched by a paranoid's ability to scramble—if not always unscramble—plots. The result is an oeuvre which presents a large scale portrait of the incursions of technological advance upon the psyche of the West, and its shattering under a series of hammer blows. Occasional protagonists may survive, but Dick never leaves us under any illusions about the magnitude of the incursion. Thus his work represents an unrivalled unity in the sf field, a unity only reinforced by the way in which most of the texts of that oeuvre are staged—not far away in the galaxy, which might have afforded some relief—but in one of the epicentres of the disintegrating psyche, Southern California.

With the disintegrating psyche, as some might expect, the disintegrating family. The sole portrait of a family in all Dick's oeuvre is the four miserable junkies, spying on each

other, dying or trying to die, together with their cat child-substitutes, in *Scanner Darkly*. With this absence of familial pattern goes a disconcerting absence of mother-figures, and indeed a certain lack of females all round. It's hard to imagine a Mrs Palmer Eldritch, and the policeman who wants his tears to flow has for wife merely a devilish sister.

For three decades, Dick unfolded this schizoid portrait of the coming age. Again, one must repeat, we can observe in his writing a steady deepening of his understanding and capacities, as we observe it in Dickens.

During the first decade, the fifties, we admire the surface glitter of his puzzles—*Time Out of Joint*—and all that. His prankish short stories become increasingly sophisticated. In the sixties, profound change continues: what was devised becomes felt; complexity of plot becomes matched to a complexity of thought. The weltangschauung is not universally dark, though illusion is harder to disentangle. In this period stand three of Dick's surest memorials, *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch, The Man in the High Castle,* and *Martian Time-slip*. Slightly later, also in the sixties, is another group of three, though I think a lesser group, *Now Wait for Last Year, Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* and *Ubik*. Here, unrealities have multiplied to such an extent that the result is a confusion we are tempted merely to reject as abnormal; the threatened illusions of the earlier group strike much nearer home.

The seventies yield two remarkable novels in which the protagonists strive for reality, in one case finding and in one case failing to find it: *Flow My Tears, the Policeman Said,* and *A Scanner Darkly*. The "explanation" of *Flow My Tears,* whereby a group of people move into transposted reality because of another person's, Jason Taverner's, failings, makes no scientific and even worse theological sense, though for all that it is a sombrely glittering novel, the real hero being a corrupt police chief who does not enter until halfway through the book. But *A Scanner Darkly* is all too terrifyingly plausible, on both scientific and theological grounds, with the terrible drug, Death, which splits the corpus callosum, rendering the victim dissociated from himself. This, it seems to me, is the grandest, darkest, of all Dick's hells.

My guess is that Dick at one time came to some kind of perilous treaty with psychedelic drugs, just as Anna Kavan did with heroin. Kavan never came off heroin; it was her doppelganger, her bright destroyer, killingly necessary to her. Dick's renunciation of drugs brought forth the eighties group of novels, again a trio, *VALIS, The Divine Invasion,* and *The Transmigration of Timothy Archer*. It's too early to judge this group. The last novel, soon to be published, is set in what for Dick is a curiously sunny Southern California, and opens on the day John Lennon is shot. It thrills with intimations of death—but when I said that to someone, he said, "What Dick novel doesn't?".

I have to say, ungratefully, that I so vastly enjoyed Dick giving me bad news, opening up whole new cans of worms at every turn, that I become peevish when a can opens and angels come winging out. That the narrator of *Timothy Archer* is a lady called Angel hardly helps matters. Despite these reservations, it is a complex and interesting novel, fairly light and sunny in tone. It bears the hallmark of Dick, a hallmark discernable even in the minor novels, genuine grief that things are as bad as they are. That's a rare quality in sf.

So Dick began as a smart imitator of van Vogt and ended up as a wizard. Most careers in the sf field flow the other way about. Maybe it's the Hobart effect.

Dick said that it was not the possibilities of sf which appealed to him but the wild

possibilities. Not just, "What would happen if . . . " but "My God, what would happen if . . . "

This is partly why we like him. But ultimately the affection he inspires is beyond analysis. He had a way of dramatising his inner fears which made you laugh. His novels are full of gadgets, sentient hardware, and awesome entities, but nevertheless they are inward novels. He constantly invents new means of doom and destruction, but nevertheless a sense of gusto bounces up from the page. In some peculiar sense, he was a world-league novelist, yet he meekly burnt two mainstream novels when Don Wollheim told him they were no good. There's the paradox. If it wasn't for Don Wollheim at Ace, we'd possibly never have seen any Dick novels ever, and the universe would have been different. All our inner lives, ditto.

Dick's American readers appear only to have found Dick depressing. Was he too wild? Were there too many worms in his can? It was in Britain that he first found more realistic and welcoming appraisal. Accustomed by national temperament to sailing through seas of bad news without turning a vibrissa, we appreciated Dick's ingenuity, inventiveness, and metaphysical wit. We taught the Americans to see what a giant they had in their midst, just as they taught us to admire Tolkien. If we do admire Tolkien.

Now the tide has turned. Hollywood has made what from the trailers looks like a rotten film from a lovely book, and called it by a crummy old Alan Nourse title, *Blade Runner.* The rebarbative Stanislaw Lem said that Dick fought trash with trash. It looks like trash could win.

Meanwhile, the sf world rallies round, aware that some awful grey shagged-out thing on Mars has now got Dick by the short hairs. I've never liked the sf community more. A real spirit of affection is in evidence. Hence this meeting.

The sf newspaper, *Locus*, put out an excellent Dick memorial number, with tributes and memories from many hands. Perhaps I may quote here a paragraph from what I said then, writing in New York:

"Dick was never out of sight since his first appearance in those great glad early days of the fifties, when the cognoscenti among us scoured the magazines on the bookstalls for names that had suddenly acquired a talismanic quality: J.G. Ballard, William Tenn, Philip K. Dick. Now he's gone, the old bear, the old sage and jester, the old destroyer, the sole writer among us who, in Pushkin's mighty phrase, 'laid waste the hearts of men'."

Philip Strick rounded off "The Strange Pilgrimage", the evening in memory of Philip K. Dick, with the following account of the few attempts (so far) to film Dick's works. Mr Strick is highly qualified to speak on the topic, as he is the author of Science Fiction Movies *(1976) as well as a long-standing enthusiast for Dick's unique fictions.*

Part of this talk first appeared in the film magazine Sight and Sound *as a review of the movie* Blade Runner. *We thank the editor of that journal for permission to reprint the relevant sections.*

Philip K. Dick and the Movies

PHILIP STRICK

I have noted with interest that both Peter Nicholls and Brian Aldiss, my colleagues in today's gathering, have departed from their usual approach by reading from prepared texts rather than improvising their speeches. The prepared text is very much a constant in Dick's work; his characters frequently consult oracular handbooks in search of guidance to their present actions and consequential futures, usually to discover that the statements offered are (in the best *I Ching* tradition) ambiguous at best, misleading and deceptive at worst. Now that the texts are all that we have left of Philip K. Dick, we must ironically clutch at them the more urgently for directives, and make what we can of their own uncertainties, declarations, and implications. And in keeping with this predicament, I too am taking the unusual course of referring to a piece already written, for publication in a film magazine, which I hope will guide our considerations of Dick this evening a little way along a suitable path. The piece may, for all I can judge, prove to be ambiguous and even misleading without intending so to be, but in such respects would surely have had moderate approval from Dick himself. So here goes.

It's daunting to learn that Japan produces about 20,000 robots a year and that some 70,000 are already employed, with full labour union approval, in Japanese factories. These are intended to release their human counterparts for such creative roles as the maintenance of existing machinery and the development of new, improved robots. To the cynical eye, such roles would appear to illustrate the steady growth of a wholly robot-orientated culture in which the human takes a totally subservient position vis-a-vis (as Dick would put it) the mechanical.

Looking ahead by a mere forty years, and it doesn't seem too much of a jump, the robots of the Ridley Scott film *Blade Runner* are employed in extraterrestrial mining and exploration too hazardous for the human colonists at a time when mankind, fleeing from a polluted home planet, is establishing itself across the solar system. No longer the clockwork cake-tins of pulp magazine tradition, these immaculate replicas of mankind are the finest products of genetic engineering, compiled as much from flesh and blood as from plastic and electronics, and artificially structured in the laboratory to enjoy an arduous but limited lifespan. After four or five years, if they survive that long, their delicate components begin to disintegrate, and like any other man-made device they ultimately malfunction and are discarded in favour of later, more sophisticated versions. Contrary

to Asimov's well-ordered universe, the chaotic opportunism of the 21st century has provided for no moralistic implant in android programming; these are creatures without conscience, guilt or fear. And as they begin to wear out, they sometimes go berserk and have to be destroyed. In *Blade Runner,* a few unstable constructs have found their way back to Earth (where their presence is forbidden) and are willing to murder in pursuit of an unknown objective. Somebody has to track them down and wipe them out.

The struggle with human facsimilies, as much a part of science fiction writing as Frankenstein, has in the cinema intensified only during the last dozen years. The trend-setter for this, as for so much else, was *2001: A Space Odyssey,* primarily by unleashing a flock of special effects graduates to teach the industry, in contrast to Kubrick's example, that it didn't cost a fortune to reconstruct outer space. In *2001,* the unsleepingly red-eyed computer HAL-9000, terminating life-systems in placid revenge for their complexity, spoke eloquently in warm and appealingly fallible tones for robot liberation. Like the prophet to a crusade, the gargling computer of *Alphaville* had earlier also struggled to improve the world by simplification, but HAL's self-determinism in the face of his dull and inexpressive astronaut passengers was more persuasive and, of course, more widely seen. The message took time, but it got through.

The revolt gathered momentum in the early 70s: the implacable super-computer Colossus in *The Forbin Project,* the petulant nuclear bomb in *Dark Star,* the berserk robot gunslinger in *Westworld,* the living dolls of *Stepford Wives,* all gave the machine a voice to touch the conscience. After *Star Wars,* its villains like storm-trooping puppets, its heroes a querulous android and a diminutive washing machine, its true stars a vast model-making and special effects team, there was no looking back—a robot was as good as a human any day. To prove it, an unlikely heap of wires, tubes, chromium and noise (in competition with Kirk Douglas) lusted after Farrah Fawcett-Majors in *Saturn 3,* and a household computer had its way with Julie Christie in Donald Cammell's *Demon Seed.*

Animated hardware was a vital component of *Alien, The Black Hole,* and such wearying spin-offs as *Battlestar Galactica* and *Buck Rogers in the 21st Century.* In the unjustly maligned *Star Trek: the Motion Picture* (that's the *first* one; it would be difficult to achieve injustice in maligning the second, *The Wrath of Khan*), which hypnotically intertwines a film by Robert Wise with another by Douglas Trumbull, the machine disguises itself as Persis Khambatta and pesters the Starship Enterprise for news of God with, in a sense, surprising success. And in *Heartbeeps,* the Allan Arkush follow-up to *Rock 'n' Roll High School,* robots Andy Kaufman and Bernadette Peters fall in love, contruct a baby from a wrecked truck ("Look darling, it has your wiring") and search for happiness with a mechanical cop hard on their heels.

In the light of *Blade Runner,* these appear no more than preliminary skirmishes to a war that now begins in earnest. Scott's film finds the human and the un-human almost indistinguishable, outwardly as similar as, say, cop and robber, spectator and performer. As a result, the destruction of one by the other is the more disturbing and internecine. In all but life expectancy, there is no question of the superiority of the replicants—they are admirably fast, strong, skilful and resourceful, triumphs of human ingenuity. The plodding bounty hunter assigned to eradicate them (played by Harrison Ford) is uninspired, uncouth, grumbling but persistent, the standard seedy private eye haunted by doubts, drink and defeatism. He's obviously in the Marlowe mould, but his origin is not in fact detective fiction. Both he and his prey, together with their predicament, are from

the universe of Philip K. Dick. The recent discovery of Philip K. Dick by a wider audience than the science fiction fans who have been grappling with him in mingled delight and exasperation since 1952, when his first short story appeared, will have come too late to offer reassurance to a writer for whom the world at large has always been elusive. He died suddenly in March this year in his early fifties, and with his death has come the realisation that his was a singularly resonant voice in speculative fiction and modern writing generally. In Europe, where nearly forty of his novels and collections have remained reasonably available, he has attracted greater respect than in the United States, where the superb novel that he himself regarded as his finest, *A Scanner Darkly* (1977), sold for a mere $2,500 advance. But even in Britain, the popular status of an Arthur C. Clarke, an Anthony Burgess or a John Fowles has evaded him (not, as far as one can judge, that he was ever in hot pursuit), and it will take the cinema—and, as for these three, a cinema of intricate fantasy—to render him public knowledge.

Dick does not make easy reading. He lacks the informality of Clarke, the vocabulary of Burgess, the pointillism of Fowles. His phrasing is often clumsy, bathetic, despairing, a tangle of moods and impressions hurled like warnings of imminent catastrophe. His characters tumble angrily past as if their appearance in the narrative were an unwelcome distraction. The first paragraphs of a Dick novel habitually plunge us into an environment so intact with images, purposes and objectives as to incline us to reconsider the accuracy of our own perceptions. The typical Dick hero is similarly in a state of confusion, seeing himself as an insignificant component in an elaborate social mechanism requiring effort, conformity and commitment for no very clear reward. The rules of the game may change at any moment, nothing is permanent, and a malignant, vaguely godlike presence monitors his every move in the expectation of failure. Dick's is the science fiction of the average citizen attempting an unremarkable survival in an environment that considers him uninteresting and expendable. Far from the bright, muscular heroic myths of *Star Wars* or *Superman,* Dick's adventures lurk in the dark labyrinths of paranoia.

What renders his work so absorbing is its inventiveness and its humour, dizzyingly based on a lunatic logic. Both are combined in the premise of *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?,* the 1968 novel on which *Blade Runner* is based. The near eradication of Earth's animal life other than man has resulted in the measurement of wealth by ownership of live-stocks. In accordance with a catalogue that gives current values as if for antiques or second-hand cars, people acquire goats, sheep and cows as status symbols. If they can't afford genuine animals, they settle for working models. One of the most valuable creatures listed is the toad, said to have been extinct for years; when near the end of the book, one is discovered in the desert, hopes of a fabulous reward are high until it proves to have a tiny control panel in its abdomen. Against this bizarre background of pervasive fakery, the erosion of authentic humanity by undetectable android imitations has all the plausibility of a new and lethal plague whereby evolution would become substitution and nobody would notice the difference. The notion is rich with political and metaphysical implications, but Dick pins it firmly on the obvious target—technology, that process which ensures that, should man wish to lift a finger, future prosthetics will do it for him. And in Dick's view, the defeat of the natural by the artificial is already in sight as an outcome to the struggle.

It looks as if *Blade Runner* is only one of the indications that the warning signs are being noticed. Two other films from Philip K. Dick stories are said to be in preparation,

both based on screenplays by Dan O'Bannon (of *Dark Star* and *Alien*), and both illustrating a similar concern with the mutation of man by machine. A short story from 1953, "Second Variety", is announced for filming as *Claw* by a company called Capital Pictures; the setting is a battleground on which the few remaining infantrymen are fighting waves of adversaries which are no longer human, but self-generating weapons. These devices have built themselves into simulated victims of war and as wounded soldiers, lost girls and infants clutching teddy bears are infiltrating the few remaining trenches to destroy all living troops.

From Walt Disney, there have been reports that a production (possibly to be titled *Total Recall*) will be derived from "We Can Remember It For Your Wholesale", a story first published in the magazine *Fantasy and Science Fiction* in April 1966, in which Dick's customary no-account toiler attempts to better himself by purchasing a memory treatment process that will convince him he's secretly a special agent who has been to Mars. Unfortunately, the phoney recollection clashes with a genuine memory, buried in his subconscious, and he begins to realise that maybe he *has* been to Mars and was better off for not knowing it. Again the collision between fact and fiction conveys a sense of rising panic, and although the Disney studios can be exepected to modify this it's intriguing that two other major Disney projects, Ray Bradbury's Gothic fantasy *Something Wicked This Way Comes,* and a "hard science" thriller *Tron,* in which a video-game champion becomes absorbed by his own computer, sound to be along uneasily similar lines.

Although Dick wrote enough to inspire a generation of film-makers in his startlingly prolific lifetime, *Blade Runner* is nevertheless the first of his novels to make it to the big screen. Jean-Pierre Gorin, Godard's collaborator *(Tout Va Bien)* from the 1970s, attempted without success to get Hollywood backing for *Ubik,* Dick's haunting 1969 chiller about time-reversal in which, as things wear out, they dissolve into earlier models of themselves. John Lennon wanted to make *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* (1965), which was briefly optioned by *Mean Streets* producer Jonathan Taplin. But so far there has been only one small prologue to *Blade Runner's* thunder, in the form of *The Tom Machine,* a National Film School graduation work that won the Grierson Award in 1980 and has appeared at a dozen international festivals (it was a prizewinner at Tours and Trieste) but which, in the nature of film school efforts, is unlikely to achieve full-scale distribution.

Although not derived from a specific story, *The Tom Machine* was created by Dick enthusiast Paul Bamborough with such accuracy that when he subsequently read *Time Out of Joint* (1959) he found almost the exact plot of the completed film. It stars Donald Sumpter as Tom, the archetypal average, whose regimented existence revolves around seemingly pointless daily duties at a computer console, in which imminent emergencies among the cascade of charts and figures are averted only by the skill with which he gloomily runs his fingers over the keyboard. Every night, in his soulless apartment, he is entertained, fed, and ordered asleep and awake by a domestic computer which, speaking with the voice of John Cleese, is fully as petulant as See Threepio.

Unable to get any sense from his colleagues and superiors about the true worth of his job, Tom at last decides to walk out, make for the country, and rear sheep ('Sheep are the only species I've ever had a fondness for,' Dick said in a 1974 interview, 'I think maybe because they're so helpless'). It's then revealed to us, but not to Tom, that he is in fact an integral part of a vital space mission; he's actually a computer, of such acute sensitivity

that a whole production team of actors and technicians is employed to create his 'life' back on earth and broadcast it to him continuously to maintain the illusion that he's human. As chief co-ordinating element of the space probe, he *can't* become physically detached from it. But he tries to, just the same . . .

The electric sheep were an early casualty in the translation of *Do Androids Dream* into *Blade Runner,* although the concept of synthetic animals is still fundamental to the film's forty-years-on society. First considered in 1969 by Martin Scorsese, the book was then optioned by Herb Jaffe Associates and a comedy screenplay was written by Robert Jaffe. According to Dick this was so bad that when they first met 'I wanted to know if he wanted me to beat him up there at the airport or wait till we got to my apartment.'

Meanwhile the actor and scriptwriter Hampton Fancher had set his heart on filming the only science fiction (apart from Alfred Bester's *The Stars My Destination*) he'd ever read, and persuaded another actor, Brian Kelly, to pick up the lapsed option when Jaffe abandoned it. Then it was Fancher's turn to attempt a screenplay, having earlier failed to persuade Dick to write it himself. First results, as has been well documented in Dick interviews (notably with James Van Hise in *Starlog,* February 1982), did not please the author, although he conceded that if Hollywood wanted to rehash *Sheep* into a gut-spilling Mickey Spillane melodrama there was nothing he could do to stop them. 'When I read it originally I thought that I will move to the Soviet Union where I am completely unknown and work making light bulbs in a factory and never even look at a book again and pretend that I can't read.'

The turning point came, it seems, with the introduction of a writer called David Webb Peoples, who reread the novel, coined the term "replicant" (from a process in molecular biology) in order to get away from the too familiar 'android' label, and tinkered the screenplay into something for Dick to rave about. He did rave too. "In all my years of writing, I have never had such an exciting experience as to see one of my books transformed by a master craftsman—it's one of the most high-quality professional screenplays I've ever read." Whether this "approved" version has survived the tinkering that has gone on with the film since Dick's death, unhappily seems more and more unlikely. Latest reports suggest that the crummier 'private eye' voiceovers to which Dick took such exception have been clumsily reinstated. The very early version of the film that I saw had hardly any commentary, and this was a notable asset.

If his skills do seem to have been diluted in this instance, Peoples is nevertheless an interesting writer to have received Dick's endorsement and is in fact no newcomer to praise. He co-wrote and co-edited *The Day After Trinity,* the documentary about the physicist J. Robert Oppenheimer and his role in producing the first atomic bomb, which was nominted for an Academy Award in 1981. He wrote an Oscar-nominated short, *Arthur and Lilly,* and edited John Korty's Oscar-winning documentary *Who Are the Debolts?,* the story of an American couple with an adopted family of nineteen handicapped and orphan children. Threads running through all these can be seen in the textures of *Blade Runner;* the doomed parent, the disadvantaged offspring, the limited lifespan, the precarious future, the prices to be paid for scientific development. Although aspects of the original book had disappeared completely, the Peoples version of the Fancher project became an honourably lifelike personification of Dick's own themes.

Ridley Scott, who only met Dick briefly when *Blade Runner* was nearly complete and had not at that time read any of his work, plucked the title from a reference in the script. It

is a 'licensed to kill' term for the trained replicant-hunter, and coincidentally the title of a 1974 science fiction thriller by Alan E. Nourse for which William Burroughs once wrote *Blade Runner (A Movie)* as a screen treatment. Clearances were necessary, although nothing else of Nourse or Burroughs was used. Like *Gumshoe,* the title is a convenience, judged to lend more punch to the advertising than Dick's quirky, endearing *Do Androids Dream . . .* As with *Alien,* Scott's first objectives when brought into the project were to give it speed, selling power, and a "Heavy Metal" look that would be the equivalent of Ron Cobb's designs for the starship *Nostromo* and H.R. Giger's intestinal mechanoids for the previous film. Convinced that the colonisation of American cities by immigrant communities will intensify, he decided that the street level settings of *Blade Runner* would be dominated by Oriental groups, Chinese food-counters and sushi-bars, Cambodian craftsmiths, Hong Kong jewellers, Japanese night clubs. With this concept, he unknowingly provided a background that any Philip K. Dick fan would immediately recognise from *The Man in the High Castle* (1963), Dick's great alternative-universe novel in which America, having lost the Second World War, is divided into German and Japanese-controlled zones.

Nicknamed 'Ridley's Inferno' during shooting, Scott's city, which he will tell you privately is Pittsburgh, is the best thing that's happened in megalopolis movies since Fritz Lang; it certainly puts to shame the plastic modelling of *Logan's Run* or the furtive muddle of *Soylent Green.* The splendid patchwork of special effects is by Douglas Trumbull and his associate cinematographer Richard Yuricich (they worked together on *2001, Silent Running, Close Encounters, Star Trek* and the currently problematical *Brainstorm*). Their work portrays an awesome conglomerate of towering, hyper-industrialised skyscrapers thrusting from the polluted slums of the lower levels. A grim brown carpet of cloud unleashes a ceaseless torrent of rain. Massive advertising video-screens cover the sides of buildings or are carried over the crowds by flying vehicles, their slogans an insistent muttered chorus on the film's stereophonic soundtrack. Scott's new Giger turned out to be Syd Mead, industrial design consultant for such as US Steel, the Ford Motor Company, Chrysler and the Singer Company; he worked on the V'ger sequences for *Star Trek* and has contributed to Disney's *Tron.* Mead's book of futurist paintings, *Sentinel,* gave Scott the portraits he needed for cars that could hover and take off vertically, called Spinners in the film, and as a bonus the entertaining prospects of parking meters designed to kill the meddlesome motorist.

The style of the *Blade Runner* city, with its gargantuan new architecture grafted on to the old with deliberate awkwardness so that the past keeps showing through, is in fact consistent with the ideas of *Ubik.* The past keeps showing through in so many of Dick's stories, threatening—like one's own memories—to displace the future entirely. Dick found this process both fascinating and destructive, as well as naturally inescapable.

Dominating the city is the mile-high Tyrell Corporation Pyramid, home of the genetics industry's mastermind (played by Joseph Turkel, formerly barman at Kubrick's Overlook Hotel). The Tyrell offices are vastly pillared in Third Reich splendour, and Tyrell's serene assistant Rachael (Sean Young) has the angular black dress and severely swept hairstyle of a Nazi secretary. The blade runner's chief replicant quarry (Rutger Hauer from *Nighthawks*) is blond Nordic superbreed. When he saw them, these visualisations drew from Dick the reminder that it was his research into Gestapo records for *Man in the High Castle* that had given him the basis for *Do Androids Dream.* "I thought, there is

amongst us something that is a bi-pedal humanoid, morphologically identical to the human being but which is not human. It is not human to complain, as one SS man did in his diary, that starving children are keeping you awake. And there, in the 40s, was born my idea that within our species is a bifurcation, a dichotomy between the truly human and that which mimics the truly human."

With its final scene, *Blade Runner* exorcises the Nazi ghost; replicant and bounty hunter, after an attenuated struggle, recognise a fragile alliance in the brevity of their existence. Dick saw this as the expression of another of his novel's concerns "the tragic theme that if you fight evil, you will wind up becoming evil, and this is the condition of life". Scott has his own concluding scene to pursue, but whatever the final result the film has honourably enough of Dick within it for us to be grateful. And if the cinema, as is its usual inclination, offers too vast a gallery of ambiguities and half-truths for us to tolerate, we who continue to know Philip K. Dick through his own, hallucinatory texts, can find a special consolation in his choice of science fiction as a home.

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Understanding the Grasshopper: Leitmotifs and the Moral Dilemma in the Novels of Philip K. Dick

DAVID WINGROVE

> At six-fifteen in the evening she finished the book. I wonder if Joe got to the end of it? she wondered. There's so much more in it than he understood. What is it Abendsen wanted to say? Nothing about his make-believe world. Am I the only one who knows? I'll bet I am; nobody else really understands *Grasshopper* but me—they just imagine they do . . . He told us about our own world, she thought.
>
> (*The Man In The High Castle;* Chapter 15)

Anyone who has read enough of the work of Philip K. Dick to glimpse something of the

the pattern of meaning behind the surface enchantment, must have shared something of Juliana Frink's sense of enlightenment on completing *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy*. It is partly a feeling that the "What if . . .?" element, on which so much science fiction thrives, is subordinate in Dick's work to a powerful moral intention: that the work is not so much an escape *from* as an escape *into* "reality". And just as Hawthorne Abendsen and his alternate world novel, *Grasshopper* mirrors Dick and *his* alternate world novel, *High Castle,* so in thirty science fiction novels Phil Dick has distorted and exaggerated aspects of our world in the trick-mirror of his imagination to give us a far clearer sense of our own world than most strictly "realist" novelists could provide. In this sense, Dick is writing in the tradition of Dickens and Dostoevsky, utilizing the absurd and the fantastic to create a vivid sense of the real—of the feeling and meaning of things as well as the simple idea and appearance of things. But Phil Dick chose to utilize what has, in the literary establishment, been long considered a hack literature, science fiction; and to use its standardized tropes in his own peculiar manner and for his own unique purposes.

That this *was* a choice, and not simply (as is often the case within the genre) an act of ignorance, is clear from a passage in the 1956 novel, *The Man Who Japed:*

> "You've read these?" Allen scanned the volume of *Ulysses*. His interest and bewilderment grew. "Why? What did you find?"
> Sugermann considered. "These, as discriminated from the other, are real books."
> "What's that mean?"
> "Hard to say. They're about something." (Chapter 9)

Dick's consciousness of this distinction—however vaguely expressed—must be borne in mind when reading even the least significant of his works.

> . . . the symbols of the divine show up in our world initially at the trash stratum. Or so I told myself . . . The divine intrudes where you least expect it. (*VALIS;* Chapter 14)

Many readers (myself amongst them) might quibble with the word "divine", and prefer "profound", but, as I hope to show through reference to fifteen of his science fiction novels, what at first sight appears mere "trash" is, in fact, part of a profound and coherent worldview. What Dick has done, I feel, is to construct for us a single, coherent (if not entirely consistent) text, within which he presents those arguments and counter-arguments that preoccupied him throughout his life as *leitmotifs* (recurring themes or specific images). This article will deal with a number, if not all, of those *leitmotifs* —Bardo Thodol; pots; the Black Prison; *dokos*; gubbish; Nord Amerika—and attempt to evaluate both their meaning and their place within Dick's work. Yet to understand these fully we must also understand that there is not a single, directing impulse at work in Dick's writing, but three quite different impulses: if you like, three separate Phil Dicks, whose interests sometimes coincide, but at other times are in conflict. The first of these is the entertainer; the deviser of complex plots, of exaggerated gimmickry and absurd situations; a kind of comic Prospero, delighting in his own inventive excesses; a kind of "What if . . . ?" pedlar, dealing in Can-D illusions. But this first Phil Dick is rarely given full liberty of expression; and where he is—as in *Counter-Clock World* and *The Zap Gun*—it is clearly detrimental to the finished work. More often we find the entertainer subject to the other two Phil Dicks—Dick the theologian-philosopher, and Dick the moral teacher; the abstract theoretician and the concerned humanist. Thus far it is as the theologian-philosopher that Dick has received most critical attention, yet, as I hope to show, it is as a moral teacher that he has true importance.

The comparison between Dick's writing and the work of Dickens and Dostoevsky has been made already, and I shall return to it; but in terms of these overlapping and oftentimes conflicting impulses, Dick is far closer to Dostoevsky than he is to Dickens. Whilst, as entertainer, Dick's imaginative worlds are nearer to the fruitfully-diseased worlds of Dickens, Dick strongly rejects the underpinning Christian sentimentality, and, both as theologian-philosopher and as moralist, echoes Dostoevsky's concern with showing the true and horrifying depths of Man's potential moral degeneration. In the introduction to *The Golden Man,* Dick wrote the following:

> Kabir, the sixteenth century Sufi poet, wrote, "If you have not lived through something it is not true." So live through it; I mean, go all the way to the end. Only then can it be understood . . .

In Dick's work we are often made to "go all the way to the end"—with Jason Taverner, Joe Chip, Rick Deckard, Jack Bohlen, Barney Mayerson and Mr Tagomi—and our experience, second-hand as it is, has the felt aspect of truth to it. These journeys are both a descent into ourselves, and an unveiling of a universe in which the basic explanation for existence—the primal cause (or God)—is absent. It is a journey which mimics (and is sometimes portrayed as) the psychological process of encroaching madness; that same disintegrative process which Dostoevsky portrayed through Raskolnikov in *Crime and Punishment.* But, as Dick realized, there are no pat solutions or simple cures; indeed, the disease is perhaps the condition of life itself:

> "Purpose of life is unknown, and hence way to be is hidden from the eyes of living critters. Who can say if perhaps the schizophrenics are not correct? Mister, they take a brave journey. They turn away from mere things, which one may handle and turn to practical use; they turn inward to *meaning.* There, the black-night-without-bottom lies, the pit. Who can say if they will return? And if so, what will they be like, having glimpsed meaning. I admire them." (*Martian Time-Slip;* Chapter 6)

And yet the journey *is* separate from the terrain. The pessimistic visions of the intellect *are* offset by the eternal optimism of the traveller: Joe Chip forever climbs the stairs to his hotel room, even though the force of death depletes him with every step.

In every case, whilst the labyrinth through which we have travelled is the product of the abstract theoretician, the route through the maze results directly from the moral sensitivity of Phil Dick. Dick is both Hermes, the guide through the underworld, and the fabric of the underworld itself.

Put more simply, the construction and the peopling of the labyrinth are the products of the different Phil Dicks. So far, so good. But what motivated Phil Dick to construct and people his labyrinths? Why did Abendsen write *Grasshopper Lies Heavy*? Or, as Juliana Frink put it, "What is it Abendsen wanted to say?" In the introduction to *The Golden Man,* Dick provides us with a simple, direct answer:

> I want to write about people I love, and put them into a fictional world spun out of my own mind, not the world we actually have, because the world we actually have does not meet my standards. Okay, so I should revise my standards; I'm out of step. I should yield to reality. I have never yielded to reality. That's what SF is all about. . . I want to show you, in my writing, what I love (my friends) and what I savagely hate (what happens to them).

But like all great writers, Dick has mixed feelings towards that fictional world spun from his mind. It is *not* as simple as he makes out; and it can be quickly demonstrated just how potent this ambivalence in Dick's attitude really is. Like the Dickens of *Edwin Drood,* Dick questions the morality of art itself:

> Zina said . . . "Isn't a beautiful dream better than a cruel reality?" . . .

"Intoxication", he said, "That is what your domain consists of; it is a drunken world. Drunken with dancing and with joy. I saw that the quality of realness is more important than any other quality, because once realness departs, there is nothing. A dream is nothing . . . Gray truth is better than the dream", he said. (*The Divine Invasion;* Chapter 13.)

There is, of course, an ironic undertone to this: we know, in this instance, that Zina's world more closely corresponds to our own than the world Emmanuel sees as real. But there are many instances in Dick's work where Emmanuel's argument *is* pertinent: the half-life world of *Ubik* terrorised by Jory, or the world of *Three Stigmata* where Palmer Eldritch, through the drug Chew-Z, becomes in effect an evil deity, peopling the dark labyrinths of his own mind. Both Jerry and Eldritch are evil Prosperos, creating their worlds not to instruct, but to torment: kindred more to the universe of *Lear* than to that of *The Tempest*. But Dick provides us with three arguments to counter this view of fiction as evil, as " 'The Ape of God' " (See *The Divine Invasion,* Chapter 15); three arguments which justify his use of fictional worlds. The first of these questions overtly Emmanuel's assertion that "Gray truth is better than the dream" and reaffirms Dick's belief that we should never yield to reality:

Already Sam Regan could feel the power of the drug wearing off, he felt weak and afraid and bitterly sickened at the realization. So goddam soon, he said to himself. All over; back to the hovel, to the pit in which we twist and cringe like worms in a paper bag, huddled away from the daylight. Pale and white and awful. He shuddered.

Shuddered, and saw, once more, his compartment with its tiny bed, washstand, desk, kitchen stove . . . and, in slumped, inert heaps, the empty husks of Tod and Helen Morris, Fran and Norm Schein, his own wife Mary; their eyes stared emptily and he looked away, appalled. (*The Three Stigmata Of Palmer Eldritch;* Chapter 3.)

This is, perhaps, the least convincing of Dick's justifications, but in *Now Wait For Last Year,* in a discussion on the simulated world of Wash-35 (a fully re-created environment, tailored to fit childhood memories) Dick's mouthpiece, Eric Sweetscent, provides us with a precise definition of the function of fiction:

"I don't like it. I like things to appear what they really are."

A thought came to Eric. "Do you object to a stereo tape of a symphony played back in the evening when you're at home in your apt?"

"No", Jonas said, "But that's totally different."

"It's not", Eric disagreed. "The orchestra isn't there, the original sound has departed, the hall in which it was recorded is now silent; all you possess is twelve hundred feet of iron oxide tape that's been magnetised in a specific pattern . . . it's an illusion, just like this. Only this is complete."

. . . We live with illusion daily, he reflected. When the first bard rattled off the first epic of a sometime battle, illusion entered our lives; the *Iliad* is as much a "fake" as those robant children trading postage stamps on the porch of the building. Humans have always striven to retain the past, to keep it convincing; there's nothing wicked in that. Without it we have no continuity; we have only the moment. (Chapter 2)

This sense of *continuity,* of binding a civilization together, relates, as we shall see, to Dick the moral teacher, whereas the third of these justifying arguments involves, and indeed unifies, all three of the shaping impulses in Dick's work:

"It is up to you to discern who I am. You yourself must decipher my identity; I will not do it for you."

"And in the meantime—tricks."

"Yes", Zina said, "because it is through tricks that you will learn". (*The Divine Invasion;* Chapter 13)

It is in this mode, as trickster, that Dick's genius is most clearly displayed: the twists of the labyrinth and the reactions of the people in the maze, are always and only to this end.

The "brave journey . . . inward to meaning" is a journey of discovery, by which we, the readers, learn something essential both about ourselves and about the world we inhabit.

Yet there is one last element to be considered before we are ready to make the journey; and that is a way of assimilating the numerous and quite complex metaphors Dick utilizes in any single novel. A first reading of any Dick novel (with the exception, perhaps, of the two mainstream novels) leaves the reader with a sense of clutter; of having been presented with too much in too short a space. It is only through reading a number of Dick's novels that some sense of coherence is attained. As Dick says of the film *VALIS* in the novel of that name: "ninety percent of the details are designed to go by you the first time—actually go by your conscious mind; they register in your unconscious." This is, I believe, how Dick's own fiction is constructed, and so, in the remainder of this article, I want to try to *articulate* what is normally only *sensed* or *felt* by the reader of Dick's novels; to go through the novels "frame by frame", so to speak, and bring the unconscious effects to the notice of the conscious mind.

In the 1969 novel, *Ubik,* each chapter carries as an epigram an advert for the all-purpose wonder product, Ubik. But at the head of the last chapter, the product speaks for itself:

> I am Ubik. Before the universe was, I am. I made the suns. I made the worlds. I created the lives and the places they inhabit; I move them here, I put them there. They go as I say, they do as I tell them. I am the word and my name is never spoken, the name which no one knows. I am called Ubik, but that is not my name. I am. I shall always be. (Chapter 17)

In the 1967 novel, *Counter-Clock World,* a similar idea is expressed in an epigram from Erigena: "Man is most correctly defined as a certain intellectual notion eternally made in the divine mind." This preoccupation with an un-nameable entity which created and *is* All (the Primal Cause, or God, normally absent from Dick's worlds) resurfaces in the two linked novels of the 1980s, *VALIS* and *The Divine Invasion.* In these works the pattern enacted covertly in the earlier novels becomes an overt theological statement, expressed in *VALIS* as follows: "One Mind there is; but under it two principles contend." It is a kind of Cosmic schizophrenia which, in *The Divine Invasion,* is made explicit:

> A crisis that caused part of the Godhead to fall; the Godhead split and some remained transcendent and some . . . became abased. Fell with creation, fell along with the world. *The Godhead had lost touch with a part of itself.* (Chapter 11)

But what does this mean in simpler, human terms? How does it affect *our* lives on a non-Cosmological level? In *VALIS* Phil Dick places himself directly within the framework of the fiction. He is there both as the insane, god-haunted Horselover Fat and as the more sceptical sf writer, Philip K. Dick. The pattern of cosmic schizophrenia repeats itself at this most human level, and not merely in the persons Phil Dick is, but in the labyrinth those divided selves jointly inhabit.

> Who am I? How many people am I? Where am I? This plastic little apartment in southern California is not my home, but now I am awake, I guess, and here I live—in comparison to my life in the inter-connected dreams, this life is lonely and phony and worthless; unfit for an intelligent and educated person. *Where are the roses? Where is the lake? Where is the slim, smiling, attractive woman coiling and tugging the garden hose?* The person that I am now, compared with the person in the dream, has been baffled and defeated and only supposes he enjoys a full life. In the dreams, I see what a full life really consists of, and it is not what I really have. (*VALIS;* Chapter 7)

This is Dick talking of his *real* life, not of a fictional division; and yet that same sense of existing in an abased and fallen world first emerged in the 1956 sf novel, *The Man Who*

Japed, where Allen Purcell, as a member of the Morec society (Moral Reclamation), found he had slipped into that world of roses, lake and attractive woman; living in a house he had never owned with a wife he had never seen before.

It is an idea that is continually expressed in Dick's writing, though often (as for Jason Taverner in *Flow My Tears*) the world into which a character slips is more abased that that in which he began. The "half-life" world of *Ubik* is a prime example of a situation in which the enjoyment of a "full life" is shown to be physically denied to the "baffled and defeated" inhabitants. Beginning in the midst of one of these "half-life" worlds—the world of the "special", J.R. Isidore—I want to provide a detailed picture of that *abased* world, before proceeding to deal with the second "principle" of the Cosmic Mind and the basis by which the Godhead is reunited with itself. But first we must enter the world of the tree that died, a journey which, as in *The Divine Comedy,* begins by descending into Hell itself:

> "Remember this?"
> "Oh yes", Mavis nodded. "The tree that died. The anti-colonization Morec."
> "You know better than that", Allen said.
> Mavis looked bland. "Symbol of spiritual starvation, then. Severed from the folk-soul. You're going to put that through? The new Renaissance in propaganda. What Dante did for the afterworld, you're going to do for this".
> "This particular packet", Allen said, "is long overdue".
> (*The Man Who Japed*; Chapter 16)

The world of *Do Androids Dream Of Electric Sheep?* in which Isidore exists, is a Post-holocaust Earth; a world where, though the decaying structures of an inorganic civilization remain, most of the natural life forms have died out or are in the process of dying, killed by the radioactive dusts. It is a world in which Man has assisted the processes of *Natur,* of entropy:

> . . . he saw the dust and the ruin of the apartment as it lay spreading out everywhere—he heard the kipple coming, the final disorder of all forms, the absence which would win out.
> . . . Reaching out, he touched the wall. His hand broke the surface; gray particles trickled and hurried down, fragments of plaster resembling the radioactive dust outside . . .
> (Chapter 18)

The term, "kipple" in the novel serves to express all of the processes of entropy; the decay of forms, the proliferation of junk, the approach of absolute silence and the physical and mental degeneration of the human race. As Isidore says in Chapter 6—"the entire universe is moving towards a final state of total, absolute kippleization."

In *Martian Time-Slip* we are given a remarkably similar scene to the one quoted above, as Jack Bohlen slips into what he believes is his psychotic state:

> A voice in his mind said, Gubble, gubble, gubble, I am gubble, gubble, gubble, gubble.
> Stop, he said to it.
> Gubble, gubble, gubble, gubble, it answered.
> Dust fell on him from the walls. The room creaked with age and dust, rotting round him. Gubble, gubble, gubble, the room said. The Gubbler is here to gubble gubble you and make you into gubbish. (Chapter 10)

Bohlen's reaction, like Isidore's, is to fight the encroaching silence and disorder—the gubbish and kipple—and surround himself with people or with deafening music. But both kippleization and the gubbishing of things can only be contained, not reversed; they are inexorable processes, it would seem. Yet there is an important distinction between the two which reflects a division in Dick's thinking on the matter. Kipple is an indifferent process;

a series of mechanical events which can be perceived by the sanest of observers; whereas Gubbish is a malignant force, and is presented through the vision of a psychotic. And there is, after all, a *Gubbler,* a type of malevolent deity (although this can be traced to its source, to the potent imaginings of the autistic child, Manfred Steiner):

> ". . . why would he want to see that?"
> "Perhaps he has no choice, " Jack said. *Gubbish,* he thought. I wonder; could *gubbish* mean time? The force that to the boy means decay, deterioration, destruction, and, at last, death? The force at work everywhere, on everything in the universe.
> And is that all he sees? (Chapter 9)

But is the vision of a universe of active gubbish and indifferent kipple a psychosis or is it, as Jack considers elsewhere, "a glimpse of absolute reality with the facade stripped away" (Chapter 5)? It all depends, it seems, on whether Time itself is real, or is simply a distortion of our perception of the real. In *VALIS* Dick provides two answers to this conundrum:

> Are we to infer that time has *not* in fact passed? And did it ever pass? Was there once a real time, and for that matter a real world, and now there is counterfeit time and a counterfeit world . . . (Chapter 3)

and

> "Time is a child at play, playing draughts; a child's is the kingdom." As Heraclitus wrote twenty-five hundred years ago. In many ways this is a terrible thought. The most terrible of all. A child playing a game . . . with all life, everywhere. (Chapter 11)

But while Dick finds the first of these ideas quite attractive, it is with Time as a child at play that he more normally deals; sometimes overtly. Manfred Steiner is one example, and Emanuel (in *The Divine Invasion*) another. Jory, in *Ubik,* is a third:

> A boy, he said to himself. Disorganized and immature. A cruel, unformed, peculiar personality. This may be it, he said to himself. It would fit in with what we're expecting, the capricious, contradictory happenings. The pulling off of our wings, and then the putting back. (Chapter 14)

This is, as I have already noted, the *Lear* universe of whimsical and unnatural events, where even the deserving are, like Cordelia, cruelly punished. Indeed, that phrase Joe Chip uses to describe Jory—"pulling off our wings"—is a distinct echo of Gloucester's words in *King Lear,* Act IV, Scene I: "As flies to wanton boys, are we to th' Gods; they kill us for their sport."

Yet when we strip the facade away and leave the *Lear* universe naked, what remains? What *is* the underlying reality—the *really real*? In his usual manner, Dick gives not one, but five different answers. In *Do Androids Dream,* it is Silence, which "burst in without subtlety, evidently unable to wait. The silence of the world could not rein back its greed." (Chapter 2). And again in *Ubik,* it is Silence—" 'Nothing. The sound of absolute nothing. A very strange sound.' " (Chapter 8). In *The Three Stigmata* it is perfect white light—"an empty white expanse, a focused glare, as if there were not a 3-D slide in the projector at all. The light, he thought, that underlies the play of phenomena which we call 'reality.' " (Chapter 6). In *Eye In The Sky* it is a basic formlessness—" 'a gray bucket, no lights, no colours, just sort of—a primordial place . . . Before the cosmos came chaos. Before the darkness was separated from the light. And things didn't have any names.' " (Chapter 3). In *VALIS* we of course have two different visions of ultimate reality, and again they reflect that distinction between an indifferent force and an active deity (which might be seen as representing the mechanical and the theistic universes):

> Under everything else, even under death itself and the will towards death, lies something else and that something else is nothing. The bedrock basic stratum of reality is irreality; the universe is irrational because it is built not on mere shifting sand—but on that which is not. (Chapter 5)

and

> So if reality "(is) to some extent hidden", then what is meant by "theophany"? Because a theophany is an in-breaking of God, and in-breaking which amounts to an invasion of our world; and yet our world is only seeming . . . Horselover Fat would like you to consider this above all other things. Because if Heraclitus is correct, there is in fact no reality but that of theophanies: the rest is illusion; in which case Fat alone among us comprehends the truth . . . (Chapter 3)

Fusing all these images of reality, it might be said that, for Dick, the underlying reality is a formless void of perfect silence, perfect whiteness, awaiting the divine intrusion. Indeed, it is recognizable that the universe Dick presents in his work corresponds very closely to his situation as a writer, facing a blank white sheet, the story unformed and awaiting his god-like direction; the act of naming. This correlation partly explains why Dick's characters often feel, to themselves, like characters in someone else's story, and often, within the story, actually *are.* Indeed, there are few of Dick's novels where this situation does not at some point occur. The most obvious example of this is in *The Three Stigmata Of Palmer Eldritch* where that distinction between fiction and a theological-cosmology is made through the two drugs, Can-D (a confection, and clearly an escapist fantasy), and Chew-Z (which proves another "Fall of Man", a succumbing to god-like but evil forces):

> . . . it's all the same, it's all him, the creator. That's who and what he is, he realized. The owner of these worlds. The rest of us just inhabit them and when he wants to he can inhabit them, too. Can kick over the scenery, manifest himself, push things in any direction he chooses. Even by any of us he cares to. All of us, in fact, if he desires. (Chapter 11)

Of course, it would be difficult to say conclusively whether Dick's worldview influenced the structure of his writing or vice versa, but the fact is that there *is* this strong correlation: the form *is* matched perfectly to the substance of his fiction. The worlds of his novels mimic what Phil Dick perceived in the real world about him. This may seem a lot to claim, but even a cursory reading of *VALIS* would bear this out. As Philip Dick said in an interview in *Science Fiction Review* (August 1976):

> I guess that means I'm taking my own writing as more fact than fiction than I used to. I don't think I ever took it as completely fiction, I always was . . . reaching for an answer . . . to the question of "what is real?" And I think I am finally beginning to get a sense of what is real. And one of the things that is *not* real is time. (Page 12)

At another time Dick would have recalled that final statement, just as he did in *VALIS.* The point is, however, that we must adopt a dual perspective in reading Dick. The layers of illusion and deception—of *dokos,* as Dick calls them in *VALIS*—are not merely a recognition of the fictionality of fiction, nor are they simply an expression of the way Dick thought the universe was actually constructed; *dokos* (delusion/seeming) partakes of both of these ideas; is part art, part nature; part indifferent force and part active malignancy. It is therefore unsurprising that so much of Dick's fiction is physically set where art and nature meet, in the perceptive faculties of the head. Perhaps what is surprising is *how much* of the action occurs in the heads of one character or another. *Eye In The Sky* is a journey through the inside of four different heads; four distinct "percept systems". In *Dr Bloodmoney* it is suggested that the world exists in Bluthgeld's head and

that he caused the Holocaust (a suggestion which is partly validated, yet which is also part delusion). In *The Simulacra,* the paranormal freak, Kongrosian, begins to ingest the universe (Chapter 14), whilst in *Martian Time-Slip,* Jack Bohlen begins to slip into Manfred Steiner's percept-system:

> . . . in some ways he *controls* it, he can make it come out the worst possible way that's . . . how he sees reality. It's as if by being around him we're sinking into his reality. It's starting to seep over us and replace our own way of viewing things . . . (Chapter 10)

Psychosis or drugs—both means by which the perception of reality is altered—are the catalysts of this process of slipping over. For instance, when Alys Buckman takes the experimental drug, KR-3 in *Flow My Tears,* the whole world slips over, into her head:

> "Taverner, like the rest of us, became a datum in your sister's percept system and got dragged across when she passed into an alternate construct of co-ordinates."
> ". . . he and we at the same time remained in our own universe. We occupied two space corridors at the same time, one real, one irreal. One is an actuality; one is a latent possibility among many . . ." (Chapter 27)

I have already mentioned the malignant deities of *Ubik* and *The Three Stigmata,* yet there is also Emmanuel's world of *The Divine Invasion:*

> Pain filled him, the pain of isolation; suddenly . . . everything vanished. He tried to make it return but it would not return. No time passed. Even time had been abolished. *I have completely forgotten,* he realized. *And because I have forgotten, it is all gone.*
> . . . His lips moved and he pronounced one word.
> HAYAH
> The world returned. (Chapter 4)

It is a return to the ubiquitous god of Ubik, the all-permeating presence which creates and *is* the world. And the splitting of that godhead is a process of forgetting, of occlusion:

> At once, Fat understood what he had read. Samael was the creator deity and he imagined that he was the only god as stated in Genesis. However, he was blind, which is to say, occluded. "Occluded" was Fat's salient term. It embraced all other terms: insane, mad, irrational, whackened out, fucked up, fried, psychotic. (*VALIS:* Chapter 5)

In *The Divine Invasion* Emmanuel is suffering from brain damage, elsewhere Palmer Eldritch is naturally blind, Manfred Steiner is autistic, Jory is dead. In all cases the controlling deities are unhealthy, if not insane. They are Samaels, and they perceive things wrongly—

> This is how the goat-creature sees God's total artifact, the world that God pronounced as good. It is the pessimism of evil itself. The nature of evil is to see in this fashion, to pronounce this verdict of negation. Thus, he thought, it unmakes creation; it undoes what the Creator has brought into being. This also is a form of unreality, this verdict, this dreary aspect. (*The Divine Invasion;* Chapter 19)

But the "dreary aspect" is also the abased world of Dick's fiction. Are we then to assume that Dick himself is evil by picturing the world in his peculiar manner? Or, as for Herb Asher in the novel, is it only a part of him which is evil? Of course, there is another, different view. That things actually *are* as bad as the psychotic makes out. The schizophrenics *might* be right in their worldview:

> "The compulsive", Dr Stockstill said, "lives in a world in which everthing is decaying. This is a great insight. Imagine it."
> "Then we must all be compulsives", Bonny Keller said, "because that's what's going on around us . . . isn't it?" (*Dr Bloodmoney;* Chapter 4)

But if the abased world (the exaggerated fiction) is the product of psychosis, of the malignant deity, the Gubbler, it is hard to equate the vitality of that active deity with the

normal condition of psychosis:

> Now I can see what psychosis is: the utter alienation of perception from the objects of the outside world, especially the objects which matter: the warmhearted people there. And what takes their place? A dreadful preoccupation with—the endless ebb and flow of one's own self . . .
>
> It is the stopping of time. The end of experience, of anything new. Once the person becomes psychotic, nothing ever happens to him again. (*Martian Time-Slip;* Chapter 11)

But in Dick's work both inner and outer worlds still coexist, and time still flows. It is not *wholly* a psychotic's world, an occluded world. Kipple, the indifferent force, whilst a sign of decay, is at least a *natural* occurence: a symptom not of compulsiveness, but of normality. As in *VALIS,* only part of this abased world is occluded—the *Lear* universe of theophanies in which Horselover Fat exists. Put simply, whilst the novels mimic madness, it is not to say that they were the products of a madman. Indeed, we can glimpse a picture of a truly psychotic novel from Dick's own descriptions of the effects of psychosis:

> Fat heard in her rational tone the harp of nihilism, the twang of the void. He was not dealing with a person; he had a reflex-arc thing at the other end of the phone line.
>
> (*VALIS;* Chapter 1)

These are people who have lost their human qualities and become machines. The description of the Starman leader, Frenesky, in *Now Wait For Last Year,* with his "single undisturbed psychomoter concentration . . . this unending ensnaring fixity" (Chapter 9), is the description of another form of this. But perhaps the most chilling description of the process by which people become things, is given in *A Scanner Darkly:*

> "Imagine being sentient but not alive. Seeing and even knowing, but not alive. Just looking out . . . there's still something in there but it died and just keeps on looking; it can't stop looking."
>
> Another person said, "That's what it means to die, to not be able to stop looking at whatever's in front of you." (Chapter 14)

The inability to stop looking, the reflex-arc at the phone's end, the failure of recognition and the stopping of time and experience, are all graphically described by Dick in novel after novel. Yet these *things* were once warm human beings. What has happened to them, and why are they fixed? Perhaps it might be described as a blurring of categories, a loss of the ability to make distinctions, yet it seems more extreme than that. They have slipped over, sunk into the *Lear* universe, the abased world, and cannot find their way back—indeed, have lost the means of getting back.

In an essay written in 1976, "Man, Android and Machine" (in Peter Nicholls' *Science Fiction At Large*), Dick described the blurring of the categories:

> . . . sly and cruel entities . . . These creatures are among us, although morphologically they do not differ from us; we must not posit a difference of essence, but a difference of behaviour. In my science fiction I write about them constantly. . . . they can be absolutely born of a human womb . . . and themselves be without warmth; they then fall within the clinical entity "schizoid", which means lacking proper feeling. I am sure we mean the same thing here, with the emphasis on the word "thing". A human being without the proper empathy or feeling is the same as an android built so as to lack it, either by design or mistake. We mean, basically, someone who does not care about the fate which his fellow creatures fall victim to . . .

This blurring of the categories between womb-born and machine-made *things* is, of course, vividly dramatized in the pages of *Do Androids Dream.* But in his descriptions of the android mentality, Dick is making a much more crucial connection than the one between schizoids and machines; he is inferring that certain kinds of madness (however

induced) are actually unveilings of ultimate reality. But to reach that ultimate reality, the schizoids and psychotics must also penetrate the mask of their illness—the stare-locked eyes and reflex-arc voice. And the mask of their illness is death, behind which lies the formless void of perfect silence and perfect whiteness:

> Now that her initial fear had diminished, something else had begun to emerge from her. Something more strange. And, he thought, deplorable. A coldness. Like, he thought, a breath from the vacuum between inhabited worlds, in fact from nowhere.
>
> (*Do Androids Dream;* Chapter 6)

It is the same place from which the creature who took over Palmer Eldritch came—*a vacuum between inhabited worlds.* In seeing the android, Rachael Rosen, in this manner, J.R. Isidore is provided with a glimpse through the veil of apparent reality. And though he may not *understand* it, he can *sense* it—and perhaps even sense what Dick articulates in "Man, Android and Machine": ". . . what we must accept, once we realize that a veil (called by the Greeks *dokos*) lies between us and reality, is that this veil serves a benign purpose . . .".

Dokos, which equates with our perception of things, is a defence mechanism. In Dick's work, it seems that those who lose it tumble into abased and hideous worlds; are given foul glimpses of the Gubbler's universe, where youthful beauty rots away before the eyes. There are several examples of this in the novels: Jack Bohlen's vision of Doreen in Chapter 10 of *Martian Time-Slip;* Joe Chip's vision of Wendy Wright in Chapter 8 of *Ubik;* Leo Bulero's vision of Roni Fugate in Chapter 6 of *The Three Stigmata.* Those three and the apocalyptic vision Jason Taverner has of Alys Buckman in Chapter 21 of *Flow My Tears,* are all sudden, nasty rendings of the veil of *dokos;* abrupt changes of perception. They are death visions, where things age centuries in seconds. But this is only one possibility; there are forever two principles contending in the One Mind, and when, in *The Man In The High Castle,* Mr Tagomi "slips over" for a brief while, he makes a vital recognition:

> Metal is from the earth . . . Yin world, in its most melancholy aspect. All that has died, slipping and disintegrating back down layer by layer. The daemonic world of the immutable; the time-that-was. . . . *Bardo Thodol* existence, Mr Tagomi thought. Hot winds blowing me who knows where. This is vision—of what? . . . Yes, the *Book of the Dead* prepares us . . . The terrible journey—and always the realms of suffering, rebirth, ready to receive the fleeing, demoralized spirit. The delusions. (Chapter 14)

Another name for this is the Tomb World; the world into which Mercer sinks in *Do Androids Dream.* And all of the *leitmotifs* discussed so far, kipple and gubbish, "half-life", occlusion, mental illness, mechanical existence and death visions—all things of the *Lear* universe—are brought together in Mr Tagomi's sudden vision. But the vision is also of that "real" world depicted in *The Divine Invasion,* where:

> "They are poisoned as if with metal . . . Metal confining them and metal in their blood; this is a metal world. Driven by cogs, a machine that grinds along, dealing out suffering and death, he realized . . . There are two realities, he said to himself. The Black Prison . . . in which they now live, and the Palm Tree Garden . . ." (Chapter 10)

This abased, Yin world of metal and death, is the first of the two realities, the world *perceived* with the intellect in Dick's novels; the *terrain* presented to us by Dick the theologian-philosopher. it is also the "bad womb" we have been wrongly born into (see Greg Runciter's comments to Ella, his wife, dead and in half-life; *Ubik,* Chapter 2), and it equates with that sense Dick expressed in *VALIS* (and earlier in *The Man Who Japed*) of the denial of a full life—of the world of the roses and the lake and the slim, smiling,

attractive woman.

So often in his novels Dick presents a world which, like Dickens' in *Little Dorrit,* is a prison world:

> "This whole structure is like a giant torture chamber, with everybody staring at one another, trying to find fault, trying to break one another down. Witchhunts and star chambers. Dread and censorship. Mr Bluenose banning books. Children kept from hearing *evil.* Morec was invented by sick minds, and it creates more sick minds." (*The Man Who Japed;* Chapter 17)

This Morec society is only another version of the "Black Iron Prison" of *VALIS;* and whether it is Mars or Amerika, the Chew-Z experience, "half-life", or a post-holocaust world, the terrain is always that of the Yin world. And the condition of Man within the Yin world is, as Barney realizes in *The Three Stigmata,* "the condition of slavery. Like the Fall." (Chapter 11).

But for most of the time the average inhabitant of these Yin worlds is unaware of their true condition. Like the *Bes* of *The Simulacra,* the secret has been kept from them—

> Any failure would have betrayed to the *Bes* the secret, the Geheimnis, which distinguished the elite, the establishment of the United States of Europe and America; their possession of the one or more secrets made them into Geheiminsträger, bearers of the secret, rather than Befehalträger, mere carry-outer of instructions. (Chapter 3)

The Geheimnis equates to the veil of *dokos.* And yet there must come a moment—an interval—when the veil is rent and the secret made known:

> "But you will tell", Pembroke said . . . "There's no time left now, because Karp and Sohnen has made its move. This is the moment, doctor, the Augenblick—as our German friends say." . . .
>
> "There will be a reaction, of course: I expect it to demolish the system of government. . . . no more division into *Ge* and *Be.* Because we'll all be *Ges,* now. Correct?"
>
> "Yes", Superb said. (Chapter 13)

We have seen already that most penetrations of the veil of *dokos* were the result of mental illness, and there is no difference here. The removal of the Geheimnis will have the same effect; to be a Geheiminsträger and to have perfect knowledge of the *really real,* is, in effect, to be mad. But that happens *after* the revelation. The moment of revelation itself—an interval in which the perception of the terrain changes radically—equates with St Paul's idea that "we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye". Dick recognizes this and uses St Paul. In *Counter-Clock World,* it is this quote from *Corinthians, 15* that he uses to describe the change of perception that allows everyone suddenly to realize that Time runs backwards.

If we return, then, to that moment in Chapter 14 of *The Man In The High Castle,* where Mr Tagomi had his *Bardo Thodol* vision of the Yin world, we see once again the *augenblick* related to St Paul and a change in perception—a rending of the dark glass of *dokos:*

> Now one appreciates Saint Paul's incisive word choice . . . seen through glass darkly not a metaphor, but astute reference to optical distortion. We really do see astigmatically, in fundamental sense: our space and our time creations of our own psyche, and when these momentarily falter—like acute disturbance of middle ear.
>
> Occasionally we list eccentrically, all sense of balance gone.

It is at such a moment of optical distortion, when Dr Bluthgeld suffers a moment of disturbance in the middle ear, that the holocaust of *Dr Bloodmoney* occurs, and the whole world slips into the dream visions of Hoppy Harrington (see the opening of Chapter 5).

One last element remains now to be added before the map of the terrain is complete: the *leitmotif* of "Nord Amerika"—Dick's obsession with the evils of Nazism, and their apparent grafting onto modern-day America. In the *Science Fiction Review* interview, Dick provided an insight into the importance of this *motif* within his writing:

> I think that may have been the moment when this began, was the extermination of the gypsies, and Jews, and Bible students in the death camps, people making lampshades out of people's skin. After that, there wasn't much to believe or disbelieve, and it didn't really matter what you believed or disbelieved. (Page 11)

In Dick's novels the huge manufacturing cartels and drug producers are invariably German (A.G. Chemie, Karp and Sohnen), the half-crazed scientists are German (Bluthgeld in *Dr Bloodmoney,* Dr Denkmal in *The Three Stigmata*) and even the philosophical emphasis is distinctly Germanic. Indeed, the finest and, to my mind, most important expression of what the Yin world *is,* can be found in *The Man In The High Castle,* in the "Scandinavian", Mr Baynes' thoughts about Nazism:

> But, he thought, what does it mean, *insane?* . . .
>
> He thought, it is something they do, something they are. It is their unconsciousness. Their lack of knowledge about others. Their not being aware of what they do to others, the destruction they have caused and are causing. No, he thought. That isn't it. I don't know; I sense it, intuit it. But—they are purposelessly cruel . . . is that it? No, God, he thought. I can't find it, make it clear. Do they ignore parts of reality? Yes. But it is more. It is their plans . . . Their view; it is cosmic. Not a man here, a child there, but an abstraction: race, land. *Volk. Land. Blut. Ehre.* Not of honourable men, but of *Ehre* itself, honour; the abstract is real, the actual is invisible to them. *Die Gute,* but not good men, this good man. It is their sense of space and time. They see through the here and now, into the vast black deep beyond, the unchanging. And that is fatal to life. Because eventually there will be no life; there was once only the dust particles in space, the hot hydrogen gases, nothing more, and it will come again. This is an interval, *ein Augenblick.* The cosmic process is hurrying on, crushing life back into the granite and methane; the wheel turns for all life. It is all temporary. And these—these madmen—respond to the granite, the dust, the longing of the inanimate; they want to aid *Natur.*
>
> And, he thought, I know why. They want to be the agents, not the victims, of history. They identify with God's power and believe they are godlike. That is their basic madness. (Chapter 3)

This madness is, of course, given to its personification in Manfred Steiner, the godlike autist of *Martian Time-Slip,* from whom the Gubbler stems: the force that is actively malignant in its identification with the natural processes of Kipple. Baynes' thoughts are a perfect summation: the map of the terrain. But as ever with Dick it is only half the story. In *The Simulacra* the neo-Nazi "Sons of Job" are *Americans,* and Baynes, the Scandinavian, turns out to be Rudolf Wegner of the Abwehr, an official of the Nazi machine. Bertold Goltz, the leader of the Sons of Job, proves to be the chairman of the government that controls the United States of Europe and America. Once again Dick is saying that it is far from simple, that the fault does not lie with a single racial type, but with a way of seeing things. Insanity, as has been said before, is an occlusion, an astigmatic vision of things; and the Yin world is a result of this occluded, astigmatic vision. It is the result of seeing in abstract, rather than human terms. And yet it is not *all* that can be seen; it is only one of the two principles contending in the One Mind; only the terrain, the labyrinth, and not the people inside the maze.

The labyrinth is, as I said earlier, a product of the abstract theoretician, of that impulse in Dick himself that responds to *Natur* and identifies with God's power. But the other principle contending in the One Mind—a principle that corresponds with Dick the moral teacher, provides a way out of the labyrinth, and even in his most abstract moments, in the

Tractates Cryptica Scriptura of *VALIS,* Dick can recognize this:

> The One . . . generated a diploid sac which contained, like an eggshell, a pair of twins, each an androgyny, spinning in opposite directions (the Yin and Yang of Taoism, with the One as the Tao). The plan of the One was that both twins would emerge into being (wasness) simultaneously; however, motivated by a desire to be (which the One had implanted in both twins), the counter-clockwise twin broke through the sac and separated prematurely; ie., before full term. This was the dark or Yin twin. Therefore it was defective. At full term the wiser twin emerged . . . From them as hyperuniverses they projected a hologram-like interface, which is the pluriform universe we creatures inhabit. (*VALIS:* Chapter 6—Note 47)

This was clearly Dick's personal cosmogony, held in his life and dramatized in his fiction. It was not, for him, merely a theory; it was (as the earlier quote from *VALIS,* about the other life denied him, demonstrates) something he experienced daily.

But to return to the argument; because the Yin world was born first, our perception of the "hologram-like interface" between Yin and Yang worlds is in the Yin world's own defective manner. And yet what is perceived (and indeed can be measured scientifically) as the whole of life, is not all that is there. Like J.R. Isidore we *sense* that another world exists. Indeed, the Yang world is not so much a way of *seeing* as a way of *behaving.* It is a *moral* universe, different in kind from the Yin world:

> Charley, without answering, picked up one of the pamphlets, turned the pages, then read aloud. " 'The measure of a man is not his intelligence. It is not how high he rises in the freak establishment. The measure of a man is this: how swiftly can he react to another person's need? And how much of himself can he give? In giving that is true giving, nothing comes back, or at least —' "
>
> "Sure; giving gives you back something", Nick said.
>
> "You give somebody something; later on he returns the favour by giving you something in return. That's obvious."
>
> "That's not giving; that's barter." (*Our Friends From Frolix 8;* Chapter 7)

But to prove that it is more than a problem of semantics—of defining what a word means—we have to leave, momentarily, the world of the tree that died. This is not to say that we have cast aside the pattern of Dante's *Divine Comedy:* it is still with us. We are out of the Yin world of Hell, however, and for the moment are standing in the holographic-projection of Purgatory (the "real" world), knowing what lies beneath us and searching for a way up into the Yang world of Paradise. Indeed, we are in the very situation Richard Hnatt finds himself in, in *The Three Stigmata,* having undergone artificial evolutionary treatment in Dr Denkmal's surgery. Hnatt's increased perceptive faculties allow him a glimpse not merely of the terrain, but of the route to be taken:

> Hell and heaven, not after death, but now! Depression, all mental illness, was the sinking. And the other . . . how was it achieved?
>
> Through empathy. Grasping another, not from outside, but from the inner. For example, had he ever really looked at Emily's pots as anything more than merchandise for which a market existed? No. What I ought to have seen in them, he realized, is the artistic intention, the spirit she's revealing intrinsically. (Chapter 5)

However it is not simply a question of *escaping* from the Yin world into the Yang, but of harmonizing the elements of each. In *The Man In The High Castle,* Robert Childan, a figure curiously similar to Hnatt (both are salesmen of others' artwork), glimpses this harmony of elements in the lifestyle of two of his Japanese customers:

> The *wabi* around him, radiations of harmony . . . that is it, he decided. The proportion. Balance. They are so close to the Tao, these two young Japanese . . . I sensed the Tao through them. Saw a glimpse of it myself.
>
> What would it be like, he wondered, to really know the Tao? *The Tao is that which first lets in the light, then the dark.* Occasions the interplay of the two primal forces so that there is

always renewal. It is that which keeps it all from wearing down. The universe will never be extinguished because just when the darkness seems to have smothered all, to be truly transcendent, the new seeds of light are reborn in the very depths. That is the Way.

If *psychosis,* the ultimate in Yin-world vision, was the stopping of all experience, *wabi* is its Yang counterpart, the beginning of the new. Childan gives a small piece of metal jewellery to the young Japanese, Paul, and through it we are shown a different aspect of this harmonizing force:

"The hands of the artificer", Paul said, "had wu, and allowed that wu to flow into this piece. Possibly he himself knows only that this piece satisfies. . . . By contemplating it, we gain more wu ourselves. . . . To have no historicity, and also no artistic, aesthetic worth, and yet to partake of some ethereal value—that is a marvel. . . . in most cases, the wu is within the viewer. It is a religious experience. Here, an artificer has put wu into object, rather than merely witnessing the wu inherent in it. . . . It is authentically a new thing on the face of the world." (Chapter 11)

It was a similar piece of jewellery, purchased from Childan, that gave Tagomi the *Bardo Todol* glimpse of the Yin world. More often, however, it is not through metal, but through fired earth that the new is born—through clay pots. And though Dick uses the Japanese terms *wu* and *wabi* only in *The Man In The High Castle,* it is upon that same sense of a religious experience contained within an oject, that balancing of forces *within* something, that he dwells time and again. In *VALIS* he makes the connection explicit:

Stephanie brought Horselover Fat to God . . . by means of a little clay pot . . . It looked like an ordinary pot: squat and light brown, with a small amount of blue glaze as trim. . . . The pot was unusual in one way, however. In it slumbered God. He slumbered in the pot for a long time, for almost too long. (Chapter 2)

In *Flow My Tears* this same harmony and sense of godliness is implied but never stated. Mary Anne Dominic's quiet, balanced lifestyle plays Yang to Alys Buckman's violently disordered Yin world: each world producing its own particular flowering; the Yin-world skeleton of Alys, dead for centuries; and the simple piece of pottery that epitomizes Mary Anne's modest Yang world—

The blue vase made by Mary Anne Dominic wound up in a private collection of modern pottery. It remains there to this day, and is much treasured. And, in fact, by a number of people who know ceramics, openly and genuinely cherished. And loved. (*Epilog*).

That there is *wu* in Mary Anne's pot—or God, if you like—is emphasized by the fact that this passage is the last thing in the novel. It is towards *balance,* or the Tao, that all of Dick's work tends.

In *VALIS,* however, the pot is not merely a symbol of Tao, nor, like the silver jewellery a container of *wu,* but a key to the understanding of cosmological events:

The photos showed a Greek vase, on it a painting of a male figure who we recognized as Hermes. Twined around the vase the double helix confronted us . . .

"Twenty-three or -four hundred years ago", Fat said. "Not the picture but the *krater,* the pottery."

"A pot", I said . . . There could be no doubt; the design, predating Christianity, was Crick and Watson's double helix model . . .

". . . Originally the caduceus . . . was the staff not of—Hermes—but—" Fat paused, his eyes bright. "Of Asklepios. It has a very specific meaning, besides that of wisdom, which the snakes allude to; it shows that the bearer is a sacred person and not to be molested . . . which is why Hermes, the messenger of the gods, carried it". (Chapter 14)

A part of this (in keeping with the novel *VALIS* itself) strikes one as being on the lines of Von Daniken, but the connection of the pot, the life symbol and the messenger through the underworld is essential to Dick's work. Pots show up throughout the film of *VALIS*

(See Chapter 9), just as they do in the novels of Philip K. Dick, and, whether Dick knew it or not (and it is my belief that he did, as he constantly quotes from Heraclitus), one of the earliest Western conceptions of a dualistic cosmos utilizes the image of pot and potter:

> Potters use a wheel that goes neither forward nor backwards, yet goes both ways at once. So it is like the cosmos. On this wheel is made pottery of every shape and yet no two pieces are identical, though all are made of the same materials and with the same tools. (Heraclitus, Approx 500 BC)

We have already encountered this image in Dick's cosmogony of the twins Yin and Yang, born of the One, and meet it again in his essay, "Man, Android and Machine", where he deals with Time.

What we need to deduce from this is that the *wu* is only the visible product of the cosmic process, just as a pot is only the end product of the contrary directions of the potter's wheel and the shaper's hand. In *The Three Stigmata* Anne Hawthorne makes this very point:

> "Don't tell us, Barney, that whatever entered Palmer Eldritch *is* God, because you don't know that much about Him; no one can. But that living entity from intersystem space may, like us, be shaped in His image. A way He selected of showing Himself to us. If the map is not the territory, *the pot is not the potter.* So don't talk ontology, Barney; don't say *is.*"
> (Chapter 13)

This is Dick telling us, as he often does in his work, to look at the metaphorical *meaning* of his *leitmotifs.* We must never accept the literal *is;* never accept the simple surface entertainment. *The map is not the territory.* Indeed, it is wrong-headed to approach Dick in the manner that, for example, Bruce Gillespie does in his essay, "Mad, Mad Worlds: Seven Novels of Philip K. Dick", and say of *The Man In The High Castle:* "If Dick adopts this structure in order to present a composite picture of a fully imagined world (in which Japan and Germany won the Second World War and together occupy America) then I would say he fails completely.", because it was never Dick's intention to present such a composite picture. We must go back to Juliana Frink's words that opened this essay—"He told us about our own world, she thought . . . What's round us now." When we forget that, in reading Dick, then we are liable to end up in Horselover Fat's condition,—"insane, mad, irrational, whacked out, fucked up, fried, psychotic"; in short, *occluded.* The *leitmotifs* give us a map of the terrain, but we have to read them metaphorically to understand their true significance.

Even so, reading Dick's work in this manner is far from easy, not least because he chooses to provide us with real and honest responses to the moral dilemmas he sets his characters. They are not cyphers in a philosophical game, reacting predictably to stimulae (as many of Dickens' characters might be said to do). They are much more like Dostoevsky's haunted protagonists in *The Devils,* capable of the most debased and also the most saintly acts, and yet never able to see things clearly for more than the briefest of moments. Indeed, characters like Rudolf Wegener would be at home in the landscapes of Dostoevsky's Russia, caught between utter despair and a curious, almost visionary hope:

> He thought. We can only hope. And try. On some other world, possibly it is different. Better. There are clear good and evil alternatives. Not these obscure admixtures, these blends, with no proper tool by which to untangle the components. We do not have the ideal world, such as we would like, where morality is easy because cognition is easy. Where one can do right with no effort because he can detect the obvious. (*The Man In The High Castle;* Chapter 15)

Yet it is with these "obscure admixtures" that Dick, as moral teacher, *must* deal. And,

to his credit, he presents his moral alternative—the Yang route out of the Yin labyrinth —with a genuine clarity and simplicity that avoids the twin traps of sentimentality and bathos that Dickens so often fell foul of. In presenting his "solutions" to the moral dilemma I wish to begin with the one suggested by Hnatt in *The Three Stigmata:* Empathy.

When a character "falls" in Dick's work, as Jason Taverner does in *Flow My Tears,* it is not so much a question of Hubris punished by Nemesis, not a lesson in humility, but an unveiling of occluded eyes and a lesson in understanding how others live. Hell for Dick was the isolate self. Other people are a *necessity.* The true evil of Palmer Eldritch's Chew-Z, for instance, is that it does not, like Can-D, allow the experience to be shared.

Isolation is another form of madness in Dick's work, and the ultimate in isolation breeds the ultimate in madness, as Manfred Steiner's autistic visions of the Gubbler prove. When a person is isolated, they begin to see things from a solipsist viewpoint; each distinct person becomes merely a datum in their percept-system—as Taverner became in Alys Buckman's. Yet the worlds Dick's characters inhabit are *designed* to isolate: that is their *purpose;* to cut human beings off from one another. It is not surprising, therefore, that, in the Yin world of metal and machinery, the cure to isolation should need to be disguised, and the Yang element of Empathy be contained in a machine, as it is in *Do Androids Dream:*

> "But an empathy box", he said, stammering in his excitement, "is the most personal possession you have! It's an extension of your body; it's the way you stop being alone." (Chapter 6)

It is not merely a dramatic externalization of an inner (and unmeasurable) human force, but a beautifully ironic recognition of the connection between Yin and Yang worlds. *Do Andoids Dream* is a battleground between the two contending principles of the One mind, yet it is also a novel in which the distinction between Yin and Yang worlds are constantly blurred. Each uses simulation. Buster Friendly, the television and radio personality, is an android. Wilbur Mercer, the religious leader, is in reality, "an elderly retired bit-player named Al Jarry" (Chapter 18). The surface distinctions between the two are not, therefore, immediately discernible, and J.R. Isidore does not at first recognize that only one of them is truly benevolent. Yet the distinction, when it is made, is clear cut: it is between death and life, nothingness and plentitude. Two quotes will suffice to demonstrate this:

> . . . an android trait, possibly, he thought. No emotional awareness, no feeling—no sense of the actual *meaning* of what she said. Only the hollow, formal, intellectual definitions of the separate terms. (Chapter 16)

and,

> So this is what Mercer sees, he thought as he painstakingly tied the cardboard box shut—Life which we can no longer distinguish; life carefully buried up to its forehead in the carcass of a dead world. In every corner of the universe Mercer probably perceives inconspicuous life. Now I know, he thought. And once having seen through Mercer's eyes I probably will never stop. (Chapter 22)

It is clearly a distinction between the intellectual, scientific *understanding* of a *thing,* and the nebulous *experience* of a living *emotion.* Yin-vision *is* occluded: it is a fixed stare which cannot see beyond surfaces—which is why even though Mercer himself is scientifically proved to be a fake, it does not invalidate the experience of Mercerism. *The pot is not the potter.* Yang-vision, however, implies a sudden awakening to the plight of others—seeing what *they* see and going beyond the bounds of self-interest:

He made me take her seriously, Asher realized . . . It was as if I imagined that she was making up her illness . . . What does that say about me? he asked himself. Because I really knew she was sick, not faking it. I have been asleep, he said to himself. And, while I slept, a girl has been dying. (*The Divine Invasion;* Chapter 4)

It is this same experience-what we might call "seeing through Mercer's eyes"—that Jason Taverner undergoes in *Flow My Tears,* Taverner was asleep, he had forgotten—had blanked out—the struggles of his own past. In the novel he is forced through the dilemma of his "non-existence" to see what he had refused to see from the safety of his celebrity:

It would be funny, he thought, if this were happening to someone else. But it's happening to me. No it's not funny either way. Because there is real suffering and real death passing the time of day in the wings. Ready to come on any minute. (Chapter 5)

And the suffering is there because of the fragmentation of the communal world that happens inside the Yin labyrinth. The only possible solution is to combat that fragmentation at source, through simple human connection. In *VALIS,* the young "Messiah", Sophia, when she reads from the *Sepher Yezirah,* states explicitly: "What you teach is the word of man. Man is holy, and the true god, the living god, is man himself. You will have no gods but yourselves . . ." (Chapter 12). And in *The Divine Invasion,* in describing the Torah to Herb Asher, Elias embellishes this idea:

"Torah is the totality of divine disclosure by God . . . Without it the world could not exist . . . 'Whatever is hateful to you, do not do it to your neighbour.' That is the entire Torah. The rest is commentary . . ." (Chapter 8)

It is the simple tenet that underlies Christ's teachings, and is implicit in all of Dick's writing. But Dick, like Christ, knew it was not enough simply to say "Understand; See as others see; Empathise; and 'Do unto others . . .' ", but believed that the connection is active. Herb Asher and Jason Taverner must not merely wake up to the real suffering, but must *act* upon their realization:

"This is what it's for; this is the goal . . ." The parable about the tree that died.
The tree had died in isolation, and perhaps the Morec of the packet was confused and obscure. But to him it came over clearly enough; a man was primarily responsible to his fellows, and it was with his fellows that he made his life. (*The Man Who Japed;* Chapter 4)

This is the *essential* moral purpose of Dick's work. It is the one and only route out of the isolating labyrinth. And this is why "connecting" figures, such as the Anarch Peak in *Counter-Clock World* (with his "*Sum tu*" creed—"I am you"), Mercer in *Do Androids Dream,* Felix Buckman in *Flow My Tears,* Molinari in *Now Wait For Last Year,* and Tagomi in *The Man In The High Castle,* are so vitally important. In *Dr Bloodmoney* we are given a choice of solipsist visions, between the insane physicist, Bluthgeld, and the paranormal cripple, Hoppy Harrington. In a world blighted by these two, the positive force is supplied by another such connecting figure:

What was it about Dangerfield, sitting up there above them in the satellite as it passed over them each day? Contact with the world . . . Dangerfield looked down and saw everything, the rebuilding, all the changes both good and bad; he monitored every broadcast, recording and preserving and then playing back, so through him they were joined.
(Chapter 7)

The biblical undertone is clear. And this "responsibility to (one's) fellows," this simple active connection, stems from a reverence for life, from *agape,* and from a care and esteem for it, from *caritas. Agape* and *Caritas* are forms of love; of that "true giving"

Charley read about in the pamphlet in *Our Friends From Frolix 8.* But Dick never neglects the problem of a more basic, fallible love, of *eros,* particularly as it applies to that most fallible of human institutions, marriage. That in itself could be the subject of an essay as long as this one. Here I wish only to deal with two aspects of it that are related to this matter of empathy and connection.

> Father Faine said, "Does it have to do with adultery?"
> . . . "Hell no", Tinbane said . . . "You see—there's this situation I can profit from. But at someone else's expense. Now, whose good should come first? If theirs, then why? Why not mine? I'm a person too. I don't get it!" (*Counter-Clock World;* Chapter 5)

It is a question that is partly resolved in the novel through the selfless sufferings of the Anarch Peak on behalf of Sebastian Hermes. But is selflessness or altruism something to be desired? In *Flow My Tears,* Jason Taverner is faced with the problem of human love:

> "Then why is love so good?" He had brooded about that . . . "You love someone and they leave. They come home one day and start packing their things and you say, 'What's happening?' and they say, ' I got a better offer someplace else', and there they go, out of your life forever, and after that until you're dead you're carrying around this huge hunk of love with no one to give it to."
> Ruth said, "Love isn't just wanting another person the way you want to own an object you see in a store. . . . When you love you cease to live for yourself; you live for another person."
> "And that's good?" It did not sound so good to him. (Chapter 11)

It is *eros*—human love with all its selfishness, bitterness and jealousy—that confuses and obscures the demands of *caritas* and *agape.* And yet Dick's recognition of this obscuration of the simple tenet "Whatever is hateful, do not do it to your neighbour", is what makes his work so powerful and so *real.* There are no simple platitudes: everything, even what seems best of the Yang world, must be questioned. And yet for all of Dick's very human scepticism, there *is* a moral certainty that surfaces time and again; a belief in simple compassion and a defiance of destructive evil. It is this that Dick expressed in a letter of 9 September 1970 to *SF Commentary:*

> Everything is on a small scale. Collapse is enormous; the positive little figure outlined against the universal rubble is, like Tagomi, Runciter, Molinari, gnat-sized in scope, finite in what he can do . . . and yet in some sense great. I really do not know why. I simply believe in him, and I love him. He will prevail. There is nothing else. At least, nothing else that matters. That we should be concerned about. Because if he is there, like a tiny father-figure, everything is all right.

And this "tiny father-figure", this connecting-figure, is always seen to use his finite strength in the service of his fellow men and against the forces of the Yin world.

They are *interveners,* like Runciter in *Ubik,* providing Joe Chip with notes and clues and eventually even a can of Ubik, the life-force itself. Or, like Nick Appleton, in *Our Friends From Frolix 8,* they are there " 'In God's name . . . to stare you down . . . Because you and those like you must pass away." ' (Chapter 26). Or again, like Felix Buckman in *Flow My Tears,* they are "fighting for a coherent society" (Chapter 10)—for *connection.* And their only resource against the all-encompassing labyrinth, the "Black Iron Prison", or Yin world, is an eternal optimism (Wegener's "hope", even as he is driven away to his death), and a belief in some immeasurable, essential spark which equates with that which is truly *human* in Man, the:

> . . . something *in* me that even that thing Palmer Eldritch can't reach and consume because since it's not me it's not mine to lose. I feel it growing. Withstanding the external, nonessential alterations, the arm, the eyes, the teeth—it's not touched by any of these three,

the evil, negative trinity of alienation, blurred reality, and despair that Eldritch brought back with him from Proxima. Or rather from the space between. (*The Three Stigmata;* Chapter 13)

Or, as Tagomi said—"when yin lies everywhere, the first stirring of light is suddenly alive in the darkest depths . . ."

Whilst Philip Dick called himself a Christian, his work followed no dogma but reflected what he said was "*my* idea of what (Christianity) is" (*Science Fiction Review* interview). That "idea", was not limited to a biblical exegesis, and spanned many different theological and philosophical theories. But beneath all is a passage from *Ecclesiastes 12;* a passage which provides, along with the already quoted passage from Chapter 3 of *The Man In The High Castle,* a perfect description of the Yin world:

> Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth, before the evil days come, and the years draw nigh . . . before the sun and the light and the moon are darkened and the clouds return after rain; in the day when the keepers of the house tremble, and the strong men are bent, and the grinders cease because they are few, and those that look through the windows are dimmed, and the doors on the street are shut; when the sound of the grinding is low, and one rises up at the voice of a bird, and all the daughters of song are brought low; they are afraid also of what is high, and terrors are in the way; the almond tree blossoms, the grasshopper drags itself along and desire fails; because man goes to his eternal home, and the mourners go about the streets; before the silver cord is snapped, or the golden bowl is broken, or the pitcher is broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern, and the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it. Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher; all is vanity.

And yet the grasshopper does not always drag itself along, does not always *lie heavy,* as another version of this passage reads. The human spirit is not part of the Yin world, but moves with the Yang of the potter's wheel in an opposed direction.

In the world of the tree that died, Dick told us of the grasshopper who fiddled:

> The grasshopper who fiddled. That was Bonny. In the darkness of the war, with its destruction, its infinite sporting of life forms, Bonny fiddled on, scraping out her tune of joy and enthusiasm and lack of care; she could not be persuaded, even by reality, to become reasonable. The lucky ones: people like Bonny, who are stronger than the forces of change and decay. (*Dr Bloodmoney;* Chapter 9)

Here is a short but stimulating essay on Philip K. Dick and American politics. It serves to remind us of the sharp political edge of so much of Dick's fiction—an edge which could be felt right from the earliest days of his career. Brian Burden's piece deals primarily with the early works, and hence balances the emphasis on Dick's later fiction in the foregoing essays by David Wingrove and others.

Philip K. Dick and the Metaphysics of American Politics

BRIAN J. BURDEN

Warren Commission Document 943 is entitled "Allegations of PFC Eugene Dinkin re assassination plot". Dinkin was a U.S. Army cryptographer stationed in Europe. Early in the autumn of 1963, he became convinced that sumblimal technique associated with advertising were being used in certain newspapers, notably the army newspaper, *Stars and Stripes,* to "sell" readers a number of sinister propositions. These were:

1 That President Kennedy was a Communist sympathiser.
2 That therefore he ought to be killed.
3 That a Communist would assassinate him.

Dinkin even estimated the date of the projected assassination—"on or about November 28".

Having tried in vain to alert US government officials, Dinkin went AWOL and approached American journalists in Geneva. They gave him the raspberry. By the time Kennedy was murdered on November 22 1963 Dinkin was in army custody undergoing "psychiatric evaluation".

Undoubtedly, Death was in the air at that time. Consider for example a story by Philip K. Dick, which appeared in the October 1963 issue of *Amazing* under the title of "Stand-By". The interested reader can find this tale (retitled "Top Stand-By Job") in the collection entitled *The Preserving Machine* (published by Pan Books), where it occupies pp. 116-136.

Dick's story is an sf fantasy about Washington power-politics, and its plot need not concern us. What is fascinating is the almost hypnotic regularity with which certain motifs recur. Here are just three examples:

1 "Stand-By". This urgent phrase appears no less than twenty times, and is distributed as follows: pp. 116, 117 (4 times), 119 (twice), 120 (twice), 121, 122, 123, 125, 128, 131, 133, 135 (4 times).

2 Words or phrases directly evoking death—thirteen, distributed as follows: pp. 117 . . . dead, 118 kicked the bucket, 120 croaked, 121 died, 127 not alive, 131 murder, 132 wipe-out . . . dead, 134 dead . . . dead, 136 buried . . . near-fatal accident.

3 Reference to elimination (by death or other means) of Presidents or aspiring Presidents—at least eighteen, distributed as follows: pp. 117 (twice), 118, 120, 121, 123 (twice), 127, 128, 129, 130, 131, 132, 133 (twice), 135 (twice), 136.

If Dick scented the death of Presidents, it is not surprising. The idea was widely publicized in 1962. 1962 saw the filming of Richard Condon's 1959 novel *The Manchurian Candidate.* For the .001% of readers who do not know the story, it concerns an emotionally stunted young ex-serviceman with a domineering mother. Brainwashed by the Communists, he is programmed, on his return to America, to assassinate the Presidential candidate at one of the 1960 party conventions. While the real Lee Harvey was still living it up back in the USSR, the film's casting directors were assigning this role to British actor Laurence HARVEY! Filmgoers (this writer included) watched with baited breath while Harvey sneaked a disassembled rifle past security men to a high vantage point. Shortly afterwards, a "shot" through the rifle's telescopic sight showed the Presidential candidate in the cross-hairs.

Needless to say, the release of the film led to a massive paperback imprint of Condon's novel. In Britain, the Pan Book edition went throught two printings in the period 1962-63. By the time Kennedy was shot, a majority of people in the English-speaking world was already familiar with what, with only a few minor alterations, was to be the official scenario.

Coincidence? Then try this one. In October 1962, Popular Library decided to bring out a paperback edition of Robert Donovan's *The Assassins,* a book which had been out of print for seven years. In an extra chapter produced for the new edition, Donovan brags that his book served to alert Ike to the perils of assassins with telescopic rifles—an odd assertion, since the subject gets no mention in the main text (and in any case Fletcher Prouty has informed us that foolproof precautions were developed during the 1950s).

At any rate, the book was marketed, with a dramatic cover picture depicting a photo of the White House at night, crudely ripped across the middle.

The reprinting of *The Assassins* could not have performed better service to the Warren Commission if it had actually been commissioned in advance, for its predominating theme is that unique (nay, fabulous) American institution—the lone assassin. "Historically", Donovan tells us in Chapter One, "assassination has been a weapon in the struggle for political power". However:

> The assassination and attempted assassinations of American Presidents followed none of these historical patterns. They involved neither organized attempts to shift political power from one group to another . . . nor to alter the policy of the government . . .

And, a little later: "By and large . . . the assassins not only were lone operators, but were most of them suffering from mental disease . . ."

No wonder former CIA chief Allen Dulles turned up at an early (and for a long time, top secret) session of the Warren Commission with a big grin on his face and a stack of copies of Donovan's book under his arm:

> "I've got a few extra copies of that book I passed out to our Counsel. Did I give it to you, Mr Chief Justice? . . . It's a fascinating book, but you'll find a pattern running through here that I think we'll find in the present case. I hate to give you a paperback, but that's all there is."

And how fortunate for Dulles that Popular Library had decided to reprint just a year earlier; otherwise there wouldn't even have been a paperback. A month later, despite the initial scepticism of his colleagues, Dulles was still harping on about his "pattern".

It seems that a "pattern" did exist, though not the one that Dulles was hawking. Dick perceived it years before Kennedy was assassinated, and wrote about it in *Solar Lottery* (1955).

In *Solar Lottery,* the real power lies with a handful of industrial conglomerates. The office of President has been trivialized to that of "Quizmaster", and to ensure that the Quizmaster has no special talent and no political base, he is chosen at random, by lot. To ensure that he never wields his theoretically extensive powers to any real effect, assassination has been institutionalized. Each assassin is selected by a panel presided over by the system's leading jurist, Old Judge Waring, and each assassination is broadcast live on TV. The blurb in my Arrow edtion puts it like this: "Would the new man be good enough to avoid his killer? . . . Lots of excitement for everyone, keeps them all happily distracted while the Big Five industrial complexes run the world, the planets, the people, unremarked, unopposed." In 1955, the role assigned to the fictitious Judge Waring would have seemed a harmless enough tilt at the real-life Chief Justice Warren. Who would have thought that eight years later that same Chief Justice Warren would chair a panel which, by unanimous vote would declare one Lee Harvey Oswald to be the lone assassin of the President of the United States?

Dick recognizes in his novel that the "lone assassin" is a non-starter, a fiction out of folk mythology. His lone assassin, Keith Pellig, is not one man but legion. He is a zombie android, foisted on Judge Waring by the power-hungry Reese Verrick, and operated by relays of experts. Even with these advantages, plus an arsenal of para-human powers, Pellig fails in his assassination mission. In a similar way, Oswald seems to have been the "patsy" for a sophisticated conspiracy. Much evidence connects him with Kennedy's assassination, but there is no convincing evidence that he shot Kennedy. In his short life he had various puppet-masters—the CIA, the mafia, the loony right, and probably others. He claimed to be a Marxist, but his political activities suggest a well-briefed provocateur rather than someone with an authentic political commitment. An additional synthetic element in Oswald's persona as an assassin was provided by the media. Oswald was one of perhaps a dozen suspects arrested in Dallas, but he was the only one the outside world heard about. This was because, shortly after his arrest, sources in Washington began to leak data concerning Oswald's alleged subversive activities. Similar data was flashed to Lyndon Johnson aboard Air Force One, along with an assurance that there was "no conspiracy". The gunning down of Oswald—on live TV in the *Solar Lottery* manner—two days after his arrest, ensured that his "lone assassin" persona was not endangered by the rigours of a trial.

Just how accurately Dick diagnosed the relationship between the Presidency and other powerful political and economic interests in the USA may be judged by reading such books about Kennedy's assassination as Jim Garrison's *A Heritage of Stone* (Putnam, USA, 1970) and David Lifton's *Best Evidence* (Collier-MacMillan, 1982).

"Stand-By" and *Solar Lottery* are concerned overtly with issues of politics and power. In other stories, Dick deals with these topics indirectly. The short story "Imposter" (1953), for example, may be perceived as a parable about the mood of fear, loathing and paranoia generated by the HUAC/McCarthy witch-hunts.

Spence Olham has been employed for ten years on a government military project, doing his bit towards a seemingly endless interplanetary war. He is weary, and begins to doubt the need for the protracted conflict. One morning at breakfast he expresses these

doubts to his wife. When his friend Nelson arrives to drive him to work, there is another man in the car, a Major Peters of military intelligence. Peters curtly informs Olham that they have come to destroy him. His distaste for the war has been noted; this confirms an intelligence report that the real Olham is dead and that the enemy have substituted an android, programmed to duplicate Olham's memory and personality, and containing a lethal nuclear device. Peters and Nelson are to take Olham to a safe place and dismantle him. The reader notices that while Peters looks upon Olham as a robot, and talks, with forensic accuracy, of "destroying" him, Nelson, hysterical with rage and hatred, talks continually of "killing". Determined to vindicate himself, Olham escapes, but his quest brings him face to face with the decaying corpse of the real Olham. His exclamation of horror and despair proves to be the "trigger phrase" which detonates the bomb.

The reader observes at once that the true authors of the disaster are Peters and Nelson. They create the situation in which the trigger phrase is spoken; without their intervention, Olham would never have embarked upon his quest and the phrase would never have been uttered. Close scrutiny of the story shows that, according to the internal logic of the narrative, it is Olham's doubts about the war which lead to the arrival of his executioners, and it is the pressure they put upon him which, in effect, transforms him from a human being into a lethal robot. In 1953, any decent American who challenged the national mood of Cold War hysteria was likely to find his loyalty called into question, and there were plenty of Nelsons, eager for the pretext to play Judas. Witch-hunters the world over look upon their targets as less than human. Subject any normal individual to abnormal pressures, and he or she will come to feel dehumanized and may "explode". Out of these propositions, plus a well-worn theme from mainstream sf, Dick has crafted a story of rare power.

The motif of a protracted interplanetary war also underpins the first sf novel of Dick's maturity, *Time Out of Joint* (1959). I first read this novel in the late sixties. It affected me powerfully. While reading it I felt that my own sense of reality was under threat. I also assumed that it ws an allegory about the Vietnam war, and was amazed, looking at the publication data in my brand new Penguin edition, to discover that it was written at a time when the war was just a twinkle in Allen Dulles's eye. Ragle Gumm, a brawny veteran of the Pacific war (he thinks), lives with his sister and her husband and son in a cosy, sunshiny middle American small town. Ragle has a remarkable talent for puzzles, and instead of working draws a steady income in prize money from the competition in the Gazette, his local daily paper. His longstanding success in predicting where the "little green man" will be has made him quite a celebrity, but he is increasingly aware of the futility of his existence. He feels guilty about his lack of a job, and his civic conscience is exercised by the ever-present threat of nuclear war. He makes up his mind to quit the competition, leave town, and begin a new life, but every time he tries to do so, obstacles are placed in his way. In addition, a number of disconcerting personal experiences lead him to believe—depending on his mood—either that he is cracking up mentally or that there is some sort of higher reality which he only dimly perceives. Ragle's wish to leave town and his yearning for transcendence prove to be directed towards the same goal, for when he finally does break out of Old Town, he discovers the world in which he has been living to have been a total sham. In the real world, the year is not 1959 but 1997. The USA has degenerated into a seedy, war-scarred military dictatorship, locked in a fratricidal conflict with lunar colonists under the slogan "One Happy World".

Less than ten years after Dick wrote this novel, US television newsreels of Vietnamese children being napalmed and of American students being bludgeoned senseless by National Guardsmen were punctuated by political commercials in which Hubert Humphrey, the Democratic Presidential candidate, bleated about "the Politics of Happiness". Humphrey had been Lyndon Johnson's right-hand man in promoting the Vietnam carnage, and had stepped over the corpse of Robert Kennedy to take the Democratic nomination.

Ragle, we discover, played an important role in the war, but the stress of the work and his own uneasy conscience drove him into a retreat psychosis in which he believed himself to be back in the world of his childhood. To accomodate him, placate him and keep him working, the government built Old Town and people it with actors, intelligence agents, and hypnotized personnel who, like Ragle, really believe in the synthetic life they are leading. And, through a seemingly harmless competition, Ragle, unknown to his conscious self, has continued to prosecute the war. Old Town may be read as a symbol of small-town America, its institutions and ethical standards diminished by corporate interests in general and the Warfare State in particular into an appearance rather than a reality. Consider Dick's treatment of three aspects of the small town life-style—the family, marital fidelity and neighbourliness. In Chapter Four, Vic remarks Ragle's malaise:

> The poor guy, Vic thought. It certainly has got him down. The loneliness and isolation of sitting around all day . . . the futility . . . He put his arms around (Margo) and kissed her; she leaned warmly against him.
>
> If he had this, he thought, maybe he'd feel better. A family. Nothing in the world is equal to it. And nobody can take it away.

But as a matter of fact Vic's family is a sham and Margo is not his wife. A few pages later, Vic reproves Ragle for his flirtation with Junie Black, and when Ragle remarks that her husband is a nitwit, Vic insists that "It's the institution. Not the individual". But as a matter of fact Junie is not married to Bill Black. As for neighbourliness, the degree to which Bill and Junie uphold this tradition—dropping in with small gifts or takeaway Italian food, sometimes with no pretext at all—amuses and irritates Vic and Margo. But actually Bill Black is a high-ranking intelligence officer, assigned to babysit Ragle. His neighbourliness is no more than disguised surveillance.

Old Town—or it's equivalent—experienced a moral crisis during the Vietnam war, for it seemed that all its trusty folk heroes—Bob Hope, Billy Graham, Al Capp—were gloryifying an enterprise which, to judge from the stories of the returning conscripts, ran counter to all of Old Town's values and ethics. Their politicians assured them that the war was just and that the USA was winning; the evidence of their eyes and ears told them that the war was a brutal, deadlocked military adventure which was killing and alienating their sons. It was during this period that the term "credibility gap" came into vogue. And that term accurately describes the feeling among the bona fide citizens of Old Town in Dick's novel, with their recurring sense that they are being "duped".

Writing in 1970 of his experiences when investigating the JFK assassination, District Attorney Jim Garrison observed: "We fear rejection by our government just as, when we were children, we feared rejection by our parents. We do not want to learn that the country in which we have lived all our lives has changed. We do not want to find that we are alone in a strange land.."

This article has sought to illuminate the political aspects of Philip K. Dick's work. Dick is not a polemicist, but he is a very shrewd analyst, and however audacious his fantasies may be, his creative instincts are firmly rooted in reality.

Karel Čapek invented the term "Robot", but it was Jack Williamson who coined the word "Android"—and coined many vigorous words of science fiction besides; though the coinage paid him in return, back in the early days of the Pulps, would administer instant nervous breakdowns to many of today's mortgaged, contracted and award-toting science-fictioneers. So that the tale of those early days is one, almost, of a harrowing labour of love—as much as, seen from today's perspective, one of cent-per-word peonage.

Another labour of love is Jack Williamson's autobiography in progress, When Wonder Was, *from which we are delighted to print two consecutive chapters detailing the joys and strains of those sf days of yore; and we look forward with the keenest anticipation to the completion and publication of the entire book, before too long.*

Meanwhile, Mr Williamson has three new books out or due out soon: a new novel Manseed *in hardcover from Del Rey (October 1982),* Wall Around a Star *in collaboration with Fred Pohl from Del Rey (February 1983)—a sequel to their* Farthest Star; *and* The Queen of the Legion, *from Pocket.*

The Profession of Science Fiction, 30: The Way it Was, 1933—1937

JACK WILLIAMSON

1 Freelance, 1933 – 1935

Wolfgang Pauli, in 1931, had found that atomic theory required the existence of the chargeless and massless particle that Enrico Fermi later named the neutrino. The next year James Chadwick, working at the Cavendish Laboratory in England, discovered the neutron. Two more long steps into the hazardous mysteries of the atom.

Most men, in those grim times, found no cheer in such triumphs of science. The grip of depression kept closing tighter, and people were yearning for any escape. Briefly, in the fall in 1932, Howard Scott caught the public imagination with Technocracy. Perhaps the technicians could manage production and government well enough to save us.

Hope of that soon flickered out. By March of 1933, when Franklin Delano Roosevelt took over from Hoover, most of the nation's banks were closed. Industrial production

was just over half its precrash level, and 13,000,000 were unemployed.

With the ring of confidence in his radio voice, Roosevelt proclaimed that all we had to fear "was fear itself". Desperate for anything, the nation believed him. In the dramatic actions of "the hundred days", he called Congress into special session, outlawed the exportation of gold, and launched the New Deal. The Century of Progress opened that summer in Chicago, with Sally Rand stealing the show with her fan dance. Seeking escape from the tragedy of their murdered son, Charles and Ann Lindberg flew north to Greenland and back across half the world.

My own situation had begun to improve. A handwritten note from Desmond Hall brought cheering news. Street and Smith, an older and stronger firm than Clayton's were reviving *Astounding*. F. Orlin Tremaine was the new editor, and they promised quick money for short stories, though at only one cent a word. Before the end of 1933, they had taken the last two stories Harry Bates returned when Clayton went under, as well as a new one, "The Flame from Mars", grown out of a hike with my brother into Meteor Crater. At *Weird Tales*, Farnsworth Wright and Bill Sprenger had begun making payments when they could, sometimes only $25, for "Golden Blood" and "The Plutonian Terror" and "Invaders of the Ice World".

Records are lacking and my recollection uncertain, but after another stint of work I was off again, by bus to Chicago. Ed Hamilton rejoined me there; we stayed at the "Y". E. Hoffman Price was back from New Orleans. We saw him again and met Wright and Otis Adelbert Kline and a few others of the *Weird Tales* brotherhood—they were an engaging group, full of obscure occult and Oriental lore, happy with one another, drawn to *Weird* as the early science fiction fans were to Gernsback and *Amazing*. Never close to many of them, I was proud to be admitted as at least a 'prentice member.

After a few days in Chicago, I went on to visit Ed at his home in New Castle. That was a new world to me, older than my own, ethnically different, northern instead of southwestern, with wooded hills instead of treeless flatness, grimy urban shabbiness instead of hardscrabble farms. Through the next few years I was there several times at different seasons, enjoying a new milieu, enjoying Ed's family, enjoying Ed himself for his sharp intelligence and his sardonic wit, his professional competence and all he knew of books I hadn't read.

Ed had a car, and sometime before Christmas we drove to Florida. Al Greco, another young friend of his and I think a better friend of his sister Betty, came with us as far as Miami. We went on to Key West, which was still deep in depression. The Florida boom was long dead by then, and the overseas highway had not been rebuilt since the last hurricane. We crossed one long gap by ferry, almost the only outsiders who did. The big resort hotel was closed. With the sponge fishers gone to better grounds, the cigar industry dead, and the naval base abandoned, half the population was unemployed that winter. By summer, the city was in receivership, begging for New Deal aid.

That sleepy stagnation only heightened its allure for me. It was still another world, new to both of us, fascinating for its history and its blending cultures, and tropical enough, with its palms and white beaches and the coral reefs around it, to have come out of my old romantic dreams. For eight dollars a month, we rented a house near Ernest Hemingway's big place on the beach—he was away hunting lions in Africa. We had our own cistern and our own tropical orchard. Ed got the use of a boat for equipping it with mast and sail. We spent the winter on the beach or in Ed's boat or writing science fiction.

A dream vacation, yet not quite the fun I had expected. My energies were ebbing; I didn't know why. Key West isn't really tropical, and our house had no heat. I remember shivering through the miserable chill of the northers, when the wind was too cold for the beach and we had no way to get warm. Ed spent a lot of time fishing, mostly alone. I remember the time he let the sail jib and the boom swing back across us to capsize the boat. We were close to the beach and I waded ashore, leaving him to gather up the wreckage on his own.

He was more outgoing than I; he found friends among the native "conchs", Captain Robbie Whitehead among them. We knew an eccentric old German who, I think, had been a lab technician in the navy hospital. He was building an odd-looking airplane near the old slaughterhouse on the beach where Ed kept his boat, and I remember his anxious way of peering out at people who came near. His plane was never meant to fly; we learned later that it held the body of a Cuban girl he had loved, which he had stolen from her grave.

The only story I recall writing there is a novelette, "Born of the Sun". My favorite way of plotting in those days was to begin with something staggeringly impossible and find a fictional way to show it happening. Suppose the sun were a huge living creature? Suppose our planets were eggs it had laid? Suppose the Earth were to hatch?

I remember discussing the notion with Ed. He scoffed at it, but Tremaine had announced that *Astounding* would now feature "thought variant stories" developing startling new ideas. My idea seemed startling enough. To keep the story going until the planets began hatching, I added a cult of evil Orientals and a lovely heroine abducted. All pretty improbable, but our readers then were mostly young and forgiving. Isaac Asimov, fourteen that year, recalled it to be included in his *Before the Golden Age*, and Forry Ackerman reprinted it again in his more recent *Gosh Wow! Science Fiction.*

With spring coming, we took steerage passage on a steamer to Cuba and spent a week or so in Havana. Once again, a different world. We rented a big, high-ceilinged room off a narrow street in the old colonial city; it had noisy antique plumbing and brilliant bougainvillaeas all around the window. Drinking a very few Cuba Libres and a lot of orange juice, we went to the races and a jai alai game and made bus expeditions into the suburbs and tried our little Spanish on clerks and waitresses. I remember the ancient walls of El Morro and the magnificent harbor at night, the black water glittering with the lights of the Malecon. A little more wistfully, I recall the vivid dark charm of the Cuban women, sadly untouchable for me and I think untouched by Ed.

Back from that expedition, we drove north again to Georgia. I caught a train home from Valdosta, arriving underweight and ailing. One doctor gave me quinine for malaria, but I imagine my troubles were mostly psychosomatic. Eye strain, sinusitis, indigestion, a general malaise. My scanty records show nothing at all finished and sold in 1934. I was becoming increasingly unhappy with myself and my writing career.

In those first few years, I had achieved most of what I thought I wanted. *Argosy*, of course, had kept turning me down, and the high-paying slicks were always out of reach, but I had earned something of a name in the science fiction pulps. Though my travels were never made in luxury, I had managed to see a little of the world. Now, more and more clearly, I was beginning to see that what I had won wasn't enough. Yet I knew nothing else I could do.

Most of 1934 has dimmed in my mind; perhaps there wasn't much worth remember-

ing. But my health got better. I began gaining two pounds a week after another doctor took my tonsils out again—they had been painfully cropped some years before. A little later, on a diagnosis of "chronic appendicitis", I also let him remove my appendix—that was probably ill-advised surgery; it left adhesions that strangled a gut and nearly killed me in a VA hospital in 1946. Both Ed and Al Greco had appendectomies soon after mine. That seemed oddly coincidental to us, but when I happened to mention that to my analyst a few years later he didn't seem surprised.

Trying hard to get back into production, I built a little cabin on the ranch where I could work without interruption. Only one small room at first, but large enough for desk and files and bookshelves and bed. Later I added a tiny bedroom, a little windmill for electric lights, and even a sort of bath—though water for it had to be carried two hundred yards, and the toilet was still anywhere about the farm where you could hide from public sight, with sagebush or new corncobs or whatever for tissue.

Fiction markets were still dismal. *Weird Tales* was overstocked with serials for years to come—Wright had run "Golden Blood" ahead of several he had already accepted, including one of Ed's, something unlikely to happen again. With *Wonder* and *Amazing* deep in trouble, that left only *Astounding* and my dwindling hope of cracking *Argosy*. Reading the letters from Ed that survive, I find us discussing collaborations that always came to nothing. I was also working on ambitious but ill-planned projects that kept bogging down before I got them finished, failing for reasons I could never see. My income for 1935 was only $540, down from $1157 the year before.

Yet life went on. Coached by my sisters, I was learning to dance. Never very well—and I never knew much to say to the girl—yet I enjoyed it. Neighbors—those to whom dancing wasn't a mortal sin—took turns as hosts on Saturday nights. We danced waltzes, two-steps, sometimes a schottische. The music was fiddle and guitar, sometimes a banjo, the musicians rewarded with whatever fell into the hat when it came around. Outside in the dark, there was a little cheap wine, cheap whisky, sometimes moonshine. We used to drive many miles to dance most of the night and get back home at daylight, with cows needing to be milked.

Late that summer, still enamored of ships and the sea, I took a longer voyage, from Houston around to New York, a trip I enjoyed. Though I was in steerage, I had bought an impressive-looking Korelle Reflex camera that I could carry as a disguise on the first-class deck. I remember dancing one night with a tall attractive housewife from Wichita; her husband was genially tolerant—I suppose he saw how harmless I was. The ship's engineer turned out to be a fan who liked my work; we talked science fiction, and he showed me through the ship.

In New York, trying to meet the editors, I found a less eager welcome. Though *Amazing* had published a lot of my work, all I saw of the venerable T. O'Connor Sloane was a momentary glimpse through his office door. Gernsback gave me a few minutes of his time and a sample copy of *Gadgets*, his newest magazine. The people at *Argosy* were so friendly on my first call that I went back again, and failed to get past the receptionist. Somewhat more warmly, Tremaine took me to lunch and reported that "The Legion of Space" had been well received.

Westward bound, I stopped in New Castle for another good visit with Ed Hamilton. In Chicago, I saw Wright and Sprenger, and spent several days at The Century of Progress. I remember walking through the exhibits with "Jack Darrow", whose frequent letters in

the magazines had made Chicago famous in fandom.

The next summer, Ed and Betty drove out to spend several weeks with us on the ranch. Their letters seem to show that they enjoyed the West as much I had Pennsylvania. The rest of the family and some of the neighbors helped me entertain them. One rancher friend, Finus Tucker, had wit and imagination enough to play cowboy for Betty, rolling his own Bull Durham smokes and assuming a bow-legged roll and an exaggerated drawl that impressed her immensely.

That year, 1935, the writing went better again. Tremaine bought two more novelettes for *Astounding*. "Born of the Sun" grew from an unlikely notion about the origins of the planets. "The Galactic Circle" had a more striking idea, a circular flight through size—the explorers in their ship shrink into infinite smallness; still shrinking at the end of the story, they return out of cosmic immensity to the same world they had left. I suppose I tried too hard to make it something serious, with too many characters of types I didn't know. Some readers praised it, but Asimov calls it "rotten" in a fan letter he wrote me in 1939—he had rated eighteen of my stories; "The Cometeers" and "The Legion of Space" were graded "super-perfect", with five stars each, and I was ranked third overall, behind E. E. Smith and John W. Campbell, but "The Galactic Circle" stood alone at the bottom of the list, with only a single star.

Weird Tales accepted "The Ruler of Fate" that year, to run as a serial in 1936. Welcome news, even though they were still in trouble, paying Ed only $25 a month on a debt of some seven hundred dollars. I think they were doing a little better by me, but I was happy that fall to find another market, one that reported and paid with less delay.

It was the "Thrilling" group, published by Standard Magazines. The chain was owned by Ned Pines and very efficiently edited by Leo Margulies and such associates as Mort Weisinger. Ed was writing detective stories for them, and I think he helped open the way for me. By the end of 1935 I had begun selling occasional horror novelettes to *Thrilling Mystery*.

Gernsback's floundering *Wonder* became *Thrilling Wonder* when Pines bought it in 1936. I sold a few stories there, and two unmemorable novels to *Startling Stories,* the lower-paying companion magazine launched in 1939. Though checks were almost instant, at a full cent a word for *Thrilling Mystery* and *Thrilling Wonder*, Leo required every story to fit a very rigid pattern. Mort told me once that they had no actual objection to good writing, but all that really mattered was to fit the formula. I learned the horror pattern well enough to invent a variation on it that I wrote up for *Author and Journalist*, but writing for Leo was never much fun.

Ed, evidently, enjoyed it more than I did. He wrote all but two or three of the Captain Future novels, which began appearing in 1940 in their own magazine, more juvenile than *Thrilling Wonder* and even more rigidly formulistic. A master of the pattern, though its restrictions used to chafe him, he kept on pounding out repetitions of it for a good many more years after the magazines were dead, in his scripts for *Superman* and *Batman*.

In the fall of 1935, I undertook a more ambitious project. Others besides Asimov had liked "The Legion of Space"—another fan a few years later tabulated the comments in the published letters and reported that my antiheroic Giles Habibula had been the most popular character of the 1930s. When Tremaine asked for a sequel, I plunged eagerly into "The Cometeers". The manuscript I sent him was 65,000 words. He had me cut 10,000 words, but generously paid me for them. His check for $650, received in early 1936, was

the best I had received; it brought that year's income to $1430.

A nice burst of prosperity, but not enough to content me. Wanting more out of life than I had found, I was beginning to think of psychoanalysis.

2 Under Analysis, 1936 – 1937

Ernest O. Lawrence patented the cyclotron in 1934. On May 8, the Dionne Quints were born. On July 22, John Dillinger walked out of a Chicago movie theater into a hail of gunfire from the FBI. His only Federal offence seems to have been driving a stolen car across a state line, but J. Edgar Hoover had seen the way to make himself a national hero.

Nylon was invented in 1935. Streamlining had become the newest technological fad, applied even to stationary buildings. The *Normandie* made her maiden voyage to New York. The *Queen Mary* followed in 1936. In October, the China Clipper finished its first roundtrip flight to Manila. Mae West earned $480,000 in 1936; Shirley Temple was seven years old; Margaret Mitchell published *Gone with the Wind.* Hitler fortified the Rhine.

Though FDR was trying hard, with the NRA and the CCC and the TVA and the AAA and the WPA, the Great Depression had been hard to cure. Even in the mid-1930s, twenty million Americans were still on relief, perhaps twenty-five million. Nature had conspired to compound disaster. Years of drought blighted farmlands. I remember the Okies trekking west across New Mexico, and the great clouds of dust that rolled after them out of the north and east, settling over everything and turning the whole landscape a dull blue-gray. Through the searing Kansas heat wave in the summer of 1936, my analyst tried to cool his office with a fan blowing air against a block of ice. That winter the Ohio valley suffered the worst flood in history.

I've sometimes wondered if I might have been happier, coming of age in better times. Probably not. Within my own narrow limits I had been pretty lucky, able to escape hard labor and hunger, as free as my own nature allowed to do what I wanted. Yet, with 1936 beginning, I felt as deeply troubled as the whole world was.

There's a glimpse of my own private depression in a scrap of journal I kept that year, from February through March. The entries are rigidly inhibited, though written for "my eyes only", and bleak enough to explain why I quit them so soon, but they do describe my unhappy situation and document my efforts to escape.

I've been reading Spengler's *Decline of The West*, a massive work which is hardly lively or cheering. I'm still a virgin, haunted with longings for sex and fears about it. Living and trying to work in that narrow cabin on the ranch, I'm recovering from flu, limping about on painful arches, suffering from frequent colds and eyestrain. Most of my projects are horror stories aimed at *Thrilling Mystery,* bits of hackwork designed to fit a stifling formula.

"The Cometeers" was more fun to do, but Tremaine has been silent about it. In mid-February he returns two installments to be condensed into one, but he's buying it. The revisions take five days; I mail them back to him on February 19. His check for $650 arrives the same afternoon, but the journal reports no elation. Nor much more when Leo Margulies writes that he has bought *Wonder Stories* and wants novelettes at a cent a word. Instead of plunging into one, I'm buying a chromatic harmonica that I hope to learn to play by note—a doomed undertaking, because I've no ear at all. Jo, my older sister, is gravely ill when the journal opens, though soon improving. A slice of Tremaine's check goes for her hospital bills, and worry over her future is one more burden.

An attractive neighbor girl has been going with me to movies and dances. I learn now that she has just married a man I didn't know about; he has been away somewhere in military service. Though I wanted her, my sense of loss is soon blunted; I've always known she really wasn't for me; we have too few interests in common. Yet I've quit going out with Jima and my sister Katie. In early March I mail "The Ice Entity" to Leo Margulies and begin a series of eye treatments with an optometrist at five dollars a visit.

As well as Freud and a bit of Jung, I've been reading Karl Menninger's *The Human Mind* and *Facts and Theories of Psychoanalysis* by Dr Ives Hendricks. On February 29 I write Dr Hendricks to ask about coming to Boston for analysis with him. He refers me to Menninger in Topeka, who agrees to see me at the Menninger Clinic in Topeka on April 13. The April 4 entry, the last until 1938, reports two checks from Margulies, $100 for "Death's Cold Daughter" and $80 for "The Ice Entity".

Topeka is the capital of Kansas, but far overshadowed by Kansas City, which is only 70 miles away. Some of my own impressions of it, a few years later, went into *Darker than you Think*. I recall it as a quiet little city, half asleep in those hard times. Its best-known citizens were Senator Arthur Capp, publisher of the daily *Capital* and *Capper's Weekly*, and Alf Landon, governor of the state. Out of mere curiosity, I called on Landon the morning after the Republican convention nominated him to run for the presidency against FDR. His secretary let me in. I found him alone in his office, with time to shake hands and inquire about Republican power in New Mexico, of which I knew nothing. When election time came, he carried only Maine and Vermont.

The Menninger Clinic occupied a big aging building with lawns and trees around it. I took physical tests that included a head X-ray and talked to a good many psychiatrists; most of them must have been interns. One of them commented that writing science fiction was symptomatic of neurosis. His promise that I could be cured became one more mental problem, because I wanted no remedy. When the tests were over, I began analysis with Dr Charles W. Tidd, meeting him five hours a week at five dollars an hour—a low fee, even in those times, though it was finally too much for me. I liked him at once, and I'm grateful for all he did for me.

Before I left the clinic I wrote an article about that first year. Turned down without comment by *Atlantic* and the like, perhaps because it offered too much clinical detail, the piece has never been published, but bits of it may show something of what the analysis was for me. The lead paragraph is about the Kansas River, which runs throught Topeka.

"It must once have been deep and clear; but now it is choked with bars of mud, red-stained with the lifeblood of the despoiled and dying land, turbulent with whirlpools that make it dangerous for swimmers . . . Sometimes I have imgained myself leaping down into that murky stream . . . There are several reasons for this fearful covert wish to die: a blind savage anger at my own failings, with the guilty need of self-punishment; a childish; irrational desire to injure the analyst by my death; the fact that the leap stands for impulsive abandonment, for the final fatal rebellion against the old false tyranny of self-control.

"This year I have learned all these things, and now I shall never kill myself . . .

"It has been a lonely year. I am sitting, this quiet April afternoon, in the upstairs front room that costs me ten dollars a month—I had neither the money nor the need to live in the sanitarium. The room is furnished with two chairs, bedstead, dresser, and my typewriter on the table. It sometimes seems chill and bare, and during the winter I was

driven to various ingenious expedients to keep my feet warm as I worked. Habitually I eat down at the Greek's place, where a square meal is fifteen cents. My clothing was shabby at the beginning, and becomes inevitably more so. I have made few friends, in spite of fumbling efforts, because of the intangible barriers of fear.

"My profession is the writing of adventure stories for certain of those rough-paper magazines known as 'pulps'. One of them now lies on my desk, with my name in white letters across a garish cover illustration. Beside it is a note from the editor, asking me to do another yarn. Almost desperately, I need the cent a word he would pay. Hopefully, I run a sheet of clean paper into the machine and begin:

> Martin Drake listened in terrible apprehension to the heavy footsteps coming up the stair. His breath stopped, at the abrupt harsh grate of the key in the lock. Cold with a sudden sweat, he crouched beside the door.

"From years of practice, I have gathered many technical tricks that build simple interest and suspense. Familiar word-patterns rise mechanically. But even a 'wood-pulp' story must be the expression of genuine feeling: words are valueless without emotion. And this story has no reality for me; I care nothing for Martin Drake and the cause of his trepidation. My feelings are confused and turbid as the river.

"Still I try to make myself go on. I stare at the sheet of paper, knot my hands, double up as if with cramping agony. I begin to weep, out of sheer helpless frustration.

"This is all childish, I say; silly. I want to write, perhaps more than anything else I could do. There is no visible reason why I can't, and every necessity that I should. So I try again. But the machine mocks me. The few words I write are dry and empty . . . I rip the page out . . . Baffled, defeated, I throw myself down on the bed. But I am too tense to relax, too bitter. I get up and try to read, try to study some other man's story. But it seems as hollow as my own. And I know the tricks well enough, if I could only muster up the feeling".

Hence the little essay, an effort to record my own real emotion.

"Five times a week I go for the fifty-minute 'hour'. I always start thirty minutes early, lest I be delayed. The old fear strikes me when the girl at the desk calls my name. (She's a pretty girl, and I've learned that part of the fear is due to desire for her, and my unconscious jealous apprehension of the analyst.)

"Walking lightly and hastily, a little breathless, sometimes with a pounding heart, I climb the stairs and walk across the hall and enter the office of the analyst. He has laid a paper napkin ready for me across the pillow on the couch. He stands and bows to meet me, a handsome man with an easy, friendly smile—and yet I feel confused and afraid.

"Quickly, feeling a self-conscious restraint, I lie supine on the couch. It is difficult to begin speaking. I delay: my hands ball into fists; my body tenses; I make aimless striking motions.

" 'Just say what you feel,' the analyst prompts me quietly. He is sitting relaxed in his chair behind my head. His manner is always easy, unsurprised. His low voice is sympathetic, encouraging. 'Just tell me all your thoughts.'

"With a convulsive effort, I begin. I try to talk rapidly, because there is so much to say; because the time is so costly, and I do not wish to waste it; perhaps because I wish to hurry over some painful, shameful thing; also because the talk eases tensions and sometimes I become relaxed and comfortable toward the end of the hour.

"My hurried voice is low—all through life I have spoken softly, as I have stooped, to

make myself inconspicuous and avoid aggression and danger. Sometimes I become inaudible. The analyst asks me to repeat, and I make a brief effort to speak distinctly.

"Continually, too, he must urge me to go on. For when I have come to a difficult matter, my voice checks and stops. To speak each word takes a desperate new effort. I catch a deep breath or make random body-movements to delay the need to speak. I search for painless asides and diversions. Often the thoughts themselves flee away and leave my mind a blank. Hopefully, I inquire if the hour isn't already gone.

"The analyst usually says little, except for his continual, sometimes tormenting pressure to 'go on . . . Yes . . . Yes . . . Just tell me all about it.' But his rare pointed questions, his suggestions and disarmingly tentative explanations tear the veil from many a disguised expression. Slowly I have come to understand myself, though I know even less psychoanalytic theory then when I came. Such words as 'libido' and 'id' seem strange when I recall them, for I was requested at the beginning to stop reading Freud and his followers.

"There have been dramatic moments. Once in the middle of the hour I began to cry, and talked through my sobs about 'my little black doggie.' The dog, I said, had been mine when I was a tiny child, and I had caused its death. When the hour was over, I walked away from the clinic into a nearby cemetery, where I could cry like a heartbroken child. That abandonment of grief was the most complete I have ever known, and it became more grist for the analytic mill. Because it seems that this little black dog never actually existed; it was only one more disguise for things still too painful for me to face."

It had been a lonely year. I remember walking the river bridge many times that dry summer, when low water wandered between red mud banks, and again on bitter winter days when the river lay frozen under drifting snow, and in the spring when it ran high, choked with drifting rafts of dirty ice. Sometimes in the afternoon, when movies were cheap, I could escape into other dreamlands. Back from a week at home at Christmas, I moved into that ten-dollar room; through the first months, before I found the fifteen-cent meals at Nick's place, I had lived a little better in a boarding house. The budget allowed me a nickel for an ice cream cone or a candy bar when I walked out alone in the evening. I haunted the candy store, searching the racks of pulp magazines for clues to writing skill. The owner was a lecherous old man with designs on young Mexican girls. Once a young fan I met there went with me to hear a hell-fire evangelist preaching in a tent; I had gone as a casual people-watcher, and I felt amazed and a little appalled when he found God. Out of boredom more than talent, I took WPA courses in tap dancing and drawing; for a long time I kept my sketch of one classmate, an attractive girl I never really knew. I paid a few precious dollars for a night flight over Topeka in a Ford Trimotor that took off between two rows of lanterns across a wheat field. The only friend I recall was an able but troubled newspaperman who left Topeka before I did; he was a homeless drifter the last I knew, searching the nation for jobs he never found.

In spite of all my painful money-pinching—which became, of course, one more goal for Dr Tidd's probing—the year had been good for me. Somewhat to Ed Hamilton's surprise. In a letter written when I first came to Topeka, he says he's "mystified and a little alarmed." He admits that I'm introverted, but he says I need analysis "no more than a fencepost." In later letters he keeps urging me to give it up and come on to Pennsylvania for another visit with him. But I stayed on as long as I could—until my payments to the clinic were three months behind, with another fifty due my brother for money he lent me

to live on.

In theory, I should have turned out fiction enough to meet those modest fees, but my writing had gone badly, with only one novelette sold to Tremaine and a couple of horror yarns to Margulies. Most of my effort had been wasted on two or three longer projects that I must have known were hopeless, because, secretly, I wanted them to fail. Such "unconscious resistance" became more grist for the analytic mill.

In spite of all such problems, I had made a little progress, at least against the barriers to sex. Prostitution was still wide open in Topeka, and I was lucky enough to find a patient girl already familiar with the hangups of Menninger patients. Without money and a car, however—and with hangups enough still remaining—I felt helpless to attempt much more along the private sector.

My health was improving. On Dr Tidd's advice, I had taken my eye problems to Dr F.C. Boggs, an opthalmologist, who gave me a special stereoscope with which to treat myself for exophoria and fitted me with new glasses that I wore comfortably for many years. A podiatrist threw away the arch supports that had kept me limping and taught me how to care for my feet.

More than that, I was escaping some of my old internal conflicts, correcting my old notion that will and feeling and reason must be always at war. Slowly, uncertainly, I had begun to find a less divided inner self that I could like, and to accept parts of me that I had always tried to deny.

No analysis ever ends. As Dr Tidd once put it, the process is like peeling an infinite onion. Everything becomes symbolic of something deeper, with no final truth ever revealed. With inner conflicts not half resolved, I—one part of me—wanted to stay on with Dr Tidd. But the outlaw self, still spoiling my work, made that impossible. In April, Dr Tidd agreed that we had reached a dead end.

When Ed Hamilton heard that we were breaking it off, he wrote that if I could raise the fare to New Castle and fifteen or twenty bucks to support me for a week in the big town, he would take me with him for a trip he was planning to New York. Then, if I would stay with him till June, I could ride west again with him.

I accepted that generous offer.

Foundation *has never featured an interview with a woman writer: surely a disgraceful display of rampant testosterone, which we are glad to amend with the following piece. Pamela Sargent is responsible (amidst her own fictionalizing) for the* Women of Wonder *anthologies, showcasing—as American publishers like to say—sf work by, and about, women. Once again, we sincerely thank the indefatigable Dr Jeffrey Elliot for his assistance.*

Pamela Sargent: Woman of Wonder

An Interview by Jeffrey M. Elliot

Pamela Sargent was born in 1948. She was a teaching assistant in philosophy at the State University of New York at Binghamton, where she had taken a B.A. and M.A. in philosophy and had also studied ancient history and Greek, when her first science fiction story appeared in the September 1970 issue of *Fantasy and Science Fiction*. Her first novel, *Cloned Lives,* was published by Fawcett-Gold Medal in 1976; Fontana brought it out in England in 1981. Her other books include the novels *The Sudden Star* (Gold Medal, 1979; published in England as *The White Death* by Fontana in 1980) and *Watchstar* (Pocket Books, 1980), as well as a short story collection, *Starshadows* (Ace Books, 1977). She has also edited four anthologies: *Women of Wonder* (Vintage, 1975; Penguin, 1978), *More Women of Wonder* (Vintge, 1976; Penguin, 1979), *Bio-Futures* (Vintage, 1976) and *The New Women of Wonder* (Vintage, 1978). Timescape-Simon & Schuster will publish her novel, *The Golden Space,* in 1982 and another novel, *The Alien Upstairs,* will be published by Doubleday. Her short fiction has appeared in *Fantasy & Science Fiction, Universe, Orbit, New Worlds,* and other magazines and anthologies.

Jeffrey Elliot: At what point did you want to be a writer?

Pamela Sargent: I always wrote, from the time I learned how to write. Perhaps this was a sign of low intelligence—I often didn't know what I thought until I wrote it down. I was also trying, however dimly, to put some order in a life which seemed chaotic and without much purpose. And I enjoyed a good story and wanted to tell them as well as read them. By the time I was in my teens, I had written hundreds of pages—my speciality was the "slice-of-life" taken from my own experience, though the people in my stories, unlike me, always seemed to know the right thing to say—and had begun a lurid novel about ancient Egypt during the time of Rameses II, which I abandoned after about forty pages. I even experimented a little—writing one story entirely in dialogue, another using letters, another showing only what the characters did and not what they thought, even attempted one in French—you couldn't beat me for pretentiousness in those days; I was a true literary snob. And I read everything I could get my hands on.

I don't think I would have been a writer, or even much of a reader, if I hadn't been extremely nearsighted. My mother used glasses only for reading and no one else in the family wore them, so no one thought of taking me to an ophthalmologist until I was in

second grade. Up to that point, I had strange ideas about the world—for instance, that people's faces were mutable and only had features and expressions when they were close to someone else, since their faces were blurs when far away. I remember touching my face when I was alone and marvelling that my nose and eyes and mouth were still there when there was no observer. I lacked peripheral vision and was always being startled by people suddenly appearing before me as if arriving by matter transmitter. I disgraced my athletic family and friends in games because I could never see where the ball was—to this day I prefer individual sports like swimming and running because of that. And unlike most of my contemporaries, I didn't get into the habit of watching much television because I couldn't see the screen that well. By the time I finally got glasses, I was addicted to reading and writing because at least I could see the words.

Elliot: Where did your interest in science fiction begin?

Sargent: Pretty far down the road, compared to others. When I was a freshman in college, I had read H.G. Wells, *1984,* and *Brave New World,* but little else, and I had seen *The Twilight Zone* and *The Outer Limits* on the tube. I thought of science fiction—when I thought about it at all—as a satirical or didactic form of writing, though *The Outer Limits* had shown it could deal in symbolism or surrealism as well.

The first science fiction book I can remember reading was *Man of Many Minds* by E. Everett Evans. I had ordered a bunch of paperbacks when I was about twelve, and *Man of Many Minds* came by mistake with the others. It was a revelation. Here was a protagonist who could read other minds, who got on a spaceship and went to another planet, who met aliens—it all struck me as terribly original, and I thought E. Everett Evans was a genius who had thought it all up by himself. I didn't know there was a tradition of writing where such notions were commonplace. For some reason, I did not go on to search out other such books, maybe because I was embarking on the adventure of adolescence, which in my case turned out to be, figuratively speaking, a shipwreck I almost didn't survive. I didn't need adventures on far worlds; I was having plenty of my own in real life. My own speculations about the world gave me plenty of indigestible food for thought without adding to it. I wanted certainties, not more questions. But the science-fictional impulse was dormant in me, just waiting for the right moment to emerge. The girls' school I attended required a senior thesis in the student's last year, and I chose to write about H.G. Wells—got an "A" on the paper, too. By my junior year in college, I was reading a lot of science fiction and was soon writing it as well.

Elliot: What was it about science fiction that first attracted you?

Sargent: At first, it was the unusual settings, the strange and wondrous things that the characters took for granted. It was the same sort of quality that had attracted me to historical novels—my vice as a child. And it was so different from anything I'd read before. I value novels for their uniqueness, the individual vision and voice each author has—I appreciate variety and can't imagine anything deadlier than reading the same type of thing over and over. The perspective on human society is so unusual in science fiction, which allows you to step outside your own time, while in other novels you can feel that the characters are drowning in their own cultures and can't seem to see beyond them. I had always liked history, and sf seems sort of a continuation of history in an imaginative way.

When I first started reading science fiction, the wonder and the strangeness were enough to satisfy me. But I quickly latched on to particular authors. Now I read a book by Wolfe or Clarke or Wilhelm or Disch because it is a book by Wolfe or Clarke or Wilhelm

or whoever, not because it's science fiction—which it isn't in some cases. In other words, I read them for the same reason I pick up a book by Tolstoy or V.S. Naipaul or Elizabeth Bowen or John D. MacDonald—because I want to hear that particular voice.

Elliot: When did you start writing sf, and why?

Sargent: I started writing science fiction to make a point. I wanted to deal with the despair I often felt in a story; so I wrote what must have been my first sf story when I was about fifteen, though since I knew nothing about sf, I thought of it more as a parable. My setting was a future world where no one was allowed to be unhappy or to feel pain. To insure this, everyone had to wear a monitor on his wrist. If you were sad, tranquilizers were dispensed. If you were in terrible pain, you were put out of your misery. The protagonist was a depressed person who decides to do away with himself, tries and fails, and then has to run for his life from the Euthanasia Corps, who have decided he's too unhappy to live. After a series of thrilling chase sequences, the Corps catches the man, and as he dies, he realizes that he wants to live after all. I don't think I have to explain the point of this derivative, didactic tale.

That was my only attempt at science fiction until years later, when I wanted to make a different kind of point. George Zebrowski, who must bear the blame for encouraging my interest in sf by giving me books from his extensive collection to read, had been writing for some time and had even gone to the first Clarion Writers' Workshop. He had published a translation of a story originally published in Polish and, with Jack Dann, sold stories to a little magazine and to *Worlds of If.* I thought: If they can write stories, why can't I? I hadn't written anything except papers for professors for a while, but that didn't stop me; I think I wanted to prove to them that I could write a story, too.

Elliot: Did you always feel confident that you would succeed?

Sargent: I'm still wondering if I'll succeed—confidence was never my strong suit. I always expect the worst; I'm still pleasantly surprised when a story or book is published. At least now I know that if something of mine is good enough—if I've worked on it sufficiently—it will be published and people will read it and presumably some of them will like it, which is gratifying. But the writing seems to get harder. It used to be easier, maybe because I wasn't so ambitious and was satisfied if the story was told in a reasonably clear manner. I look back now and my early work seems only an approximation of whatever vision prompted it. Simply writing clearly is difficult, let alone trying to do more.

Elliot: Do you recall the circumstances of your first sale?

Sargent: Well, I had two first sales—I always think of them as being sort of simultaneous. One was a story called "Landed Minority" which took place in a university setting; being a student at the time, I was well-equipped to write it. The other, "Oasis", was in part a J.G. Ballard imitation with headings in front of each section. George told me to send the stories to David Gerrold and Stephen Goldin, who were editing a collection of pieces by new writers and who had solicited submissions from Clarion alumni—I remember being quite impressed that David's address was in Hollywood, and had an image of him as a fortyish producer type in a mansion. He wanted "Oasis", though he made me rewrite it several times, to its benefit—I finally got rid of the Ballard-like headings—but turned down "Landed Minority". George told me to try that one on *The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction,* so I did. I nearly died when a couple of months later, I went out to my mailbox and found a cheque and contract—the first I'd ever received for a piece of writing. I nearly went crazy trying to find someone to share the news with—almost

everyone I knew was out of town. I recall having to toast myself in solitude with a bottle of beer.

I should point out that I might not have published a story at all if George hadn't encouraged me. For one thing, I didn't know where to send sf stories. For another, once I had finished "Landed Minority", I felt I had proven I could write such a tale and lost interest in it—I usually lost interest in anything I wrote once it was done, though I had vainly submitted stories to *The New Yorker* or *The Atlantic Monthly* once in a while. Getting the story down on paper was enough satisfaction for me then. George had to fish "Landed Minority" out of a wastebasket and convince me to type it up.

Elliot: When you write, how do you start, get warmed up?

Sargent: With many delaying tactics, I'm afraid. I have to have coffee to wake up, and then have to exercise to get my circulation going. I check my pens, clean the typewriter, sometimes go over what I wrote the day before. I refuse to sit and stare at blank paper, so if I'm not ready to write, I do laundry or housework or letters until I am. But I also believe that writing, like exercise, is something one has to do every day—if you don't, you get out of shape and it just gets harder.

Elliot: Can you describe a typical day's work?

Sargent: I always start in the morning. I might be writing a first draft or typing up what I've done the day before—I write first drafts by hand. I never break for lunch, because lunch can become a delaying tactic, and then I dawdle, and pretty soon it's time to get supper and I never get back to work. I always put in at least six hours and often more. I have to put in long days, six days a week, because I'm a slow writer and might come up with five or six pages at the end of the day if I'm lucky. Sometimes things go just right and I can do ten pages or more. In the evening, I read or see friends. I do more writing if I feel like it, but won't force it, because I've found that if I push too hard, I do less the next day.

Elliot: Do you need any particular environment in which to write?

Sargent: I don't think so. I have an office now, but I have written in libraries when I was in school, on park benches, at kitchen tables, and had to write my first novel in the dead of winter in an unheated room after moving to a place that needed repairs. I spent this summer working to the sound of jackhammers while the road outside was being repaired. Obviously, I would prefer silence or the accompaniment of music, but having grown up in a large family, I'm used to noise. I'm hoping that the office won't spoil me and make me unable to work elsewhere.

Elliot: Is emotional stability necessary to write well?

Sargent: Unfortunately, no. I sometimes think emotional instability is, though. I began to write professionally when my personal life was a shambles. I wrote when I was younger partly because I was deeply unhappy and had trouble communicating with people; I don't show my feelings easily, and writing helped me to understand some of them. Doesn't almost every writer have an unhappy childhood? I can't imagine that a truly happy person would feel the need to write. I've known plenty of people who talk about wanting to write, but when it comes right down to it, they're too content with their lives as they are to bother. They don't need it; it doesn't gnaw at them. There's always something else to do that they enjoy.

I should qualify these remarks, though. I think you have to control your life to some degree—if it's completely chaotic, you won't get any work done. You may be unstable, and many writers are, but not while you're writing. "If you want a divorce, fine, but I've

got to finish my book first." I suppose we've all said things like that. It sounds heartless, but you have to do it. I think it's especially hard for women to learn, because we're used to putting others first. Once, I was having a terrible argument with friends—one of those things that goes on until three in the morning and can end with you never speaking to one another again—and I had to get up the next morning with that issue still unresolved and finish my essay for my anthology *Bio-Futures* because the publisher was pressuring me about the deadline. In the last few years, I've been lucky; except for one bout with major surgery, my life has been calm, and I now prefer it that way.

Elliot: How about financial security? Can that be a detriment to good writing?

Sargent: Having money can never be a detriment. Not having enough money certainly can be, because it can tempt you into thinking you can just hack it out—think of all the books that are written because the writer needs money and not because she really has to write them. I don't condemn the writer for this, because there's nothing shameful about making a living as opposed to giving up, but it is sad and does the reader no service. I have always been in favour of a guaranteed annual income, an extremely modest one, for everyone below a certain level. Everyone would get enough for basic survival while still having an incentive to make more. More writers would benefit from something like that than from any number of grants, which most "genre" writers can't hope to get anyway.

Elliot: How does the idea of a book or story come to you?

Sargent: In a vision. It's suddenly there. But I'm making it sound too easy. This is a difficult thing to describe. A lot of disparate elements suddenly come together; for a short moment, time doesn't exist and you hold the whole work in your mind. At the risk of sounding grandiose, you understand for a second God's perspective on the universe. Then it's gone, and you have to go through a sort of *anamnesis*—recalling what you know. Vladimir Nabokov described this well; he spoke of "rapture" and "recapture", though he used two Russian words to describe the process.

Obviously, this isn't going to happen in a vacuum. Your experience, your reading, and your knowledge must provide the elements that will make up the vision. And some visions will necessarily be more powerful than others. Sometimes something is missing. I've been working on a long novel which I envisioned years ago; I saw everything except where it took place—the setting. That came much later, when I was reading about the planet Venus and talking about it with George Zebrowski. Suddenly I had my setting, and the vision was whole.

Elliot: Do you do any library research or special reading to prepare for writing a novel, or while you're writing one?

Sargent: I try to—it's not always systematic. Sometimes I'm reading for a special purpose; other times, it's simply to feed things to the unconscious and see what bubbles up. For my first novel, *Cloned Lives,* I had to do a lot of reading in biology, as you might expect from the title—but I soon realized that I would have to research space colonies, know something about the moon, and so on, because of where various events in the book took place. For just one scene, I had to read three or four articles in *New Scientist* in order to get certain details clear in my mind. And I had to learn something about the issues involved in biological research, not just the research itself.

For my second novel, *The Sudden Star,* which takes place in a disintegrating world with a mysterious plague, I found books like McNeill's *Plagues and Peoples,* Huizinga's *The Waning of the Middle Ages,* and Tuchman's *A Distant Mirror* fruitful. Of course,

research can take many forms. Part of *The Sudden Star* takes place in Miami, and I needed to know what that city and Miami Beach were like so I could extrapolate from the present. Some of my most productive research was done in a Miami Beach bar, where the bartender turned out to be knowledgeable about the area's political structure, had connections with the Cuban community, and knew much about recent immigrants and their activities, both legal and illegal. I also visited all the places where various events take place —an enjoyable way to do research.

Elliot: Do you outline a book before you start to write it?

Sargent: I think one of the worst things you can do is outline a book in great detail before you write it, because writing is a process of discovery and the outline will limit or inhibit the writer. At the same time, I like to have a rough idea of where I'm headed. I almost always know where I'm starting and where I'll end up, but not how I'm going to get there. I usually do some sort of sketch, a rough kind of synopsis, but it's never final. *The Sudden Star* was a mess until I abandoned my rough outline, and most of the first draft, sat down with a piece of paper and crayons, and assigned each major character a color; after drawing lines representing their interactions—the paper ended up looking like a messy plaid—I finally knew where I was going. With *The Golden Space*, on the other hand, I didn't know the ending until I wrote it. Different books require different methods.

Elliot: Has writing come easily to you?

Sargent: It did at first. It doesn't now. I'm basically a Puritan—I think working hard and having to struggle builds character, and makes you value things more. I wrote my first two published stories without much effort, and had them accepted for publication almost right away. But then I had to learn some painful lessons. One had to be rewritten many times before it was fit for printing. The next stories didn't sell as easily, so I had to learn after publishing what most writers learn before they publish—that writing well is very hard work. This has very much to do with attitude—I had to stop thinking of my writing as something I did on the side that didn't really matter, and take it seriously. I had to become a little more professional.

Elliot: Are your characters ever taken from real life?

Sargent: Definitely. When I was taking art, we were taught to draw from life, and I do the same in my stories and books. Aisha, Simon, and Ildico in *The Sudden Star* were modelled on people I knew. So were the Swensons in *Cloned Lives*—I made use of some characteristics of my family for them. They are, of course, very different people; the Swensons are middle-class academics in spite of being clones, while Ildico and Aisha are prostitutes and Simon is a murderer and fugitive. But I must point out that, even when I start with a real person as a model, the character grows and changes as the book is written. The character becomes himself and often turns out to be quite different, because I find out things about him I didn't know before and could never know about the person he's modelled on. It would be a great mistake to say that the girl I modelled Aisha on *was* Aisha.

Elliot: What role should characterization play in science fiction? How do you respond to those writers who argue that science fiction leaves little space for complex characterization?

Sargent: I would say that one of the main purposes of a novel is to explore human character, and that the same applies to science fiction—unless you want to argue that it isn't literature. There is plenty of room in science fiction for complex characterization,

and if you don't have enough space, use more. Look at Gregory Benford's *Timescape*—rich in thought and ideas, and equally rich in terms of characterization. A lot of writers just don't want to do the work—and some readers probably don't recognize a good characterization when they see one. I've heard some people argue that Arthur C. Clarke is not good with characters. On the contrary, I think he does a particular kind of character —the socially immature man who is dominated by rationality and a desire to learn and then to transcend his human limitations—quite well. I have known people like that.

Elliot: What does it take to make a character work in science fiction?

Sargent: I think it helps to write about the sort of people you know, or with whom you have some familiarity, and not to use stock figures or make them up out of whole cloth. Of course, you cannot simply take a twentieth-century person and transplant her to a thirtieth-century world. We are all products of our environment, of our societies. So you must ask certain questions. What would this man be like if he had grown up with others genetically identical to him? What would this woman be like if she were immortal in a world of immortals? What would this girl be like if everyone she knew could read her every thought, and she knew theirs? If you don't know any superscientists who secretly rule the world or empresses of the galaxy, don't write about them unless you are tremendously gifted at artifice and can make the reader forget that you couldn't possibly know such people. Sometimes, of course, a book may require characters the writer can't meet—people genetically so altered, for instance, that our normal human desires would mean nothing to them, or cybernetic intelligences of the kind that populate some of the works of Stanislaw Lem.

Elliot: Which of your characters do you look back on with particular affection?

Sargent: I have some affection for all of them, even Simon in *The Sudden Star,* who is, I think, redeemed at the end. I suppose I'm particularly fond of Sarah in *The Alien Upstairs,* maybe because her job—selling sportswear in a department store—is a lot like a job I used to have, and because she lives in an apartment like the one I used to rent. Her life is a lot like mine was once, though she has experiences I didn't have. Writing *The Alien Upstairs* gave me the most pleasure I ever had in writing a book, which may account for some of the affection I feel for Sarah. I also like Kira Swenson in *Cloned Lives;* she turns out, I think, to be the strongest of the Swenson clones.

Elliot: Would you say, ever, that there is any didactic intention in your work?

Sargent: What a loaded question! We all know that being didactic is bad, don't we? Everyone says so. Fiction shouldn't be didactic; it's always a criticism. Don't burden the reader with lectures; if you want to send a message, use Western Union. Yet novels do say something about life, about how life should be lived, whether the author intends it or not. This seems especially true of science fiction, which draws on both utopian and satirical traditions. By developing a fictional future society in a certain way, a writer can seem to be making a comment about the world as it is or can appear to be communicating certain views, even when she isn't, or doesn't mean to. Whether or not a reader likes the result may depend on whether or not he agrees with the ideas being expressed.

The notion that fiction shouldn't be didactic is a comparatively recent one; I sometimes feel that it's also a way of saying literature isn't important. In cultures where it is important, readers seem to accept didacticism. The trouble with some sf is that the ideas are often so simpleminded, one of the most popular lessons being: "You live and learn". There are others. "All men (and aliens) are brothers." "Knowledge is power."

"Knowledge is good." You could sum up much of Heinlein by saying: "A man's gotta be free, and fight for that freedom." Incidentally, Heinlein's didacticism doesn't seem to have hurt his popularity, which shows that readers are of two minds about this. I can see why readers might shy away from books that try to teach them obvious lessons at great length, but there's nothing inherently wrong with being didactic in a novel. People have ideas and talk about them in real life; characters in books ought to be entitled to do the same.

So to answer your question: yes, there is some didacticism in my work, though not as much as there is in that of some other writers. I've tended to be more interested in character development and story structure up to now, but the didactic element is there.

Elliot: Do you feel that you belong to any particular tradition in science fiction?

Sargent: That's a hard question to answer. I certainly don't belong to the "space opera" tradition; I can't write about adventurous interstellar goings-on with any conviction, maybe because I didn't start reading sf early enough. I'm not utopian, and I don't specialize in social satire. In *Cloned Lives,* I was trying to write a reasonably realistic near future novel, a "hard science" book, so to speak, but with fully realized characters. *The Sudden Star* is an "after the catastrophe" novel, and I wanted a large cast of characters and a complicated plot. *Watchstar* takes place in the far future and is somewhat anthropological, dealing as it does with the consequences of a confrontation between a non-technological society and a technological one. *The Golden Space* is partly a thought experiment: how would human beings adapt to life as immortals in a world of immortals? How would it feel to be immortal, and how would society change? How would our attitudes change? What do you do when you can live forever? *The Alien Upstairs* is a near-future novel of ordinary people caught up in extraordinary events. I can't fit them all into one tradition, but I do tend to be a "realistic" writer rather than a "fantastic" one. I would like to be able to write many different kinds of books, though I suspect that a "hard science" novel about physics will forever be beyond my grasp.

Elliot: How can a writer know if his work is really worthwhile?

Sargent: You can't. You have to sustain a kind of faith in the face of doubts. You do the best you can. I don't mind admitting that I've had a lot of doubts about my work, so many in fact that I have almost given up writing for publication a couple of times. It's especially difficult to keep faith in yourself when you're writing in a "genre", such as science fiction, because so many people assume that this sort of writing is inherently worthless and think of you as a hack writing only for money, or as someone who is incapable of other things.

Elliot: Is it necessary for a writer to be a "loner"—not to belong to any literary movement?

Sargent: In the long run, yes. All you have to offer readers is what makes you unique, not what makes you like other writers. Writers have to work alone, anyway; it's not a communal enterprise. When you're just starting out, it can be helpful to associate with like-minded writers in order to gain encouragement and aid and thus you might appear to be part of a movement. But you can't keep writing just for them and being part of a movement might end up limiting a writer. You have to break away and go out on your own eventually, just as you have to leave home. Start your own movement, if you must.

Elliot: What would you say makes the writer different from other people?

Sargent: Certainly the desire to sit at home alone, working at a desk, makes the writer

different; most people would rather be out with others. In fact, contrary to what Alvin Toffler seems to think, most people will never prefer working at home to working somewhere else, even with all the technological devices in the world. Getting the hell out of the house is an overwhelming desire for people; young mothers complain because they can't. Writers can tolerate more solitude than most, but even we have to get out and do other things.

Writers also tend to feel that they're observers, that they are somehow apart from things even when in the midst of events. And writers are very self-absorbed folk. One would have to be to spend all that time with oneself alone, listening to one's voice. It's important to remember that others are not nearly so fascinated by you, and that your own self-absorption is often at war with your powers of observation.

Writers also remember, and have a tendency to bear grudges precisely because they remember. I think everyone should strive to be especially sensitive and considerate in the company of children, if only because one might be in the company of a child who is destined to become a writer. That child will recall every hurt and thoughtless action in later years—will be, in fact, inordinately sensitive—and you may find yourself immortalized eventually as a cruel and callous character. Kurt Vonnegut says that psychiatrists at the University of Iowa hospital have interviewed many of the writers who come there to teach, and have found that they are depressed and come from families containing many victims of depression. Sounds right to me.

Elliot: What about writers as friends? Can the relation be other than competitive?

Sargent: I see you've read my story, "The Novella Race", which deals with a writers' Olympics. It would be foolish to say that there isn't competition, since we live in a competitive society. But obviously other writers can be friends, too. An older writer, for example, might be a mentor to a younger one, a father or mother figure. And it would be silly for me to feel competitive with Arthur C. Clarke, say, or Ursula K. Le Guin, because I'm not at that stage of my career yet. When a new writer comes along who's really gifted, I personally feel joy—such a writer elevates all of us with that gift.

I guess it's easy to feel competitive with writers your own age who started writing at about the same time you did—you can feel as though you're all jostling for the same position on the totem pole, or the gravy train. Publishers and editors, to their shame, sometimes seem to foster such competitiveness. But even here, competitiveness disappears when you really appreciate the writer's work. I don't feel competitive with Michael Bishop or Edward Bryant or Elizabeth Lynn, for example, though there are times I wish I had done as well with my particular concerns as they have with theirs. And another writer who is also a friend can be a source of comfort when you're discouraged. People who don't write don't really understand a writer's complaints—they think you should be overjoyed to be in print at all.

Elliot: For much of your writing career, you've lived with sf author George Zebrowski. What are the advantages of living with another writer?

Sargent: I have a sympathetic soul, someone who understands. I don't have to go traveling all over the country whenever I want to talk shop with someone. Writing can make you feel isolated—I have acquaintances who didn't know I was a writer until the local paper blew my cover. I also don't have to explain my absentmindedness when I'm absorbed in a piece of work to the exclusion of nearly everything else. And I have a critic who can read my final drafts and reassure me before I send them out, and I do the same

for George—criticizing another manuscript helps me to learn as well.

Elliot: Are there also disadvantages?

Sargent: Sure. Competitiveness can rear its ugly head. Sometimes we've had to call a moratorium on talking shop, which can be too much of a good thing. And we don't do any writing together, as a rule, because we both feel it's important to retain our individuality, our own personal visions—if we did work together, I'm afraid that personal disputes might appear in the guise of editorial objections. We don't agree on a lot of things—in writing as well as other areas—and that can cause trouble, but I would find it boring to live with someone who agreed with me on everything, and George has brought things to my attention that I might otherwise have ignored.

Some writers seem to feel that those nearest them must live their lives in service to the writer—this is especially true of male writers, I'm sorry to say. Well, neither George nor I has ever been served in that way because each of us has had to contend with another writer. This may seem a disadvantage, but it isn't. It's a lot better for our character.

Elliot: In a recent article, you wrote that a good writer must possess a measure of anger. Why is anger a useful emotion for a writer?

Sargent: Maybe I should ask you a question. How can anyone with the slightest sensitivity look at the world, and the lives most people have to lead, and not be angry? For example, who wouldn't be angry at the fact that a few men in Washington and Moscow can decide that millions of people—I'm talking about you and me and everyone we know and anyone who's going to read this interview—might have to die in a nuclear war? I mean, these guys don't even have the power of reason any more—they worry about whether women should be allowed to fight in combat, but think it's okay for women—and children—to die from the effects of atomic weapons. And it's all right to spend a lot on new weapons systems, too—but not all right to spend too much feeding poor people. It's all right to give money to dictators in El Salvador, but not good to help Sandanist Nicaragua with its economic problems. It's also okay to have the murderer Pol Pot as our government's ally now, because he's opposed to Russia and Vietnam. Well, I could go on and on. The point is that, if you aren't angry, you've bought a lot of lies, and I don't see how you can be any kind of a writer—or a functioning human being—if you don't get angry about things. You have to be able to see through the lie. To bring up another example—you have to wonder about a society that insists on sentimentalizing small children and fetuses, but has so much child abuse. So a writer has to be able to see the lie in order to get at any truth in his work. Whether or not anger will enhance the writer's work is a harder question. It has to be sublimated to an extent, or he'll end up beating the reader over the head with it.

Elliot: Much of your writing, both fiction and nonfiction, reflects deep socio-political concerns. In raising such issues, how do you steer clear of moralizing and, at times, lapsing into despair?

Sargent: Well, I probably don't. I'm very prone to despair, to severe depression. But despair has one thing going for it—a person in despair can't do much of anything, so in order to get anything done at all, you *have* to get out of it. You acknowledge it and then wait for it to pass. Anger is a much more useful emotion, more likely to lead you to some constructive act than despair.

Moralizing, at least in a piece of fiction, usually takes care of itself. As I get to know the characters and their world, I usually find that things are not so cut-and-dried as I might have thought in the beginning. I don't have villains and heroes as characters—only people

who are trying to live their lives as best they can. I won't deny that they have arguments about how it is best to live, or how human nature can limit us, but I am not writing tracts. To bring up a more illustrious example—Tolstoy wanted to show the evils of adultery when he wrote *Anna Karenina,* but would anyone consider that book a tract against adultery? The artist in Tolstoy conquered the moralist.

Elliot: Some writers are painfully sensitive to criticism. Have you been much affected by your critics?

Sargent: I might as well admit that I have had very painful experiences with some reviews. And it's the bad reviews I always seem to remember, to the point of having them memorized, not the good ones. Like Nixon, I once had an enemies' list. I have great sympathy for John McEnroe. He can't challenge stupid tennis linesmen even when he's right without looking like a boor, and a writer can't reply to a reviewer without looking like a fool or a crybaby. Those are the rules. So one must suffer reviewers, if not gladly, at least in silence. One reviewer for a magazine once published a statement asking writers to write to him and tell him if they wanted him to review their books, especially ones the writer considered important—and I found it hard to believe that a writer could so lose her dignity that she would actually lower herself to do so. Then there are the reviewers and publishers of amateur or little magazines who send you their publications saying that there's a review of your book inside, and you open it to find a pan. These are obviously people who know nothing about good manners. Don't get me wrong—some of these small publications do better, more thoughtful reviewing than larger ones—but you would think they would know that writers would prefer to see only the good reviews. Even worse—because they should know better—are the writers who call or write to tell you how much they sympathize with you after seeing a bad review of your book when you might not even have heard about that particular review. This is sometimes good for losing a whole day of work, which may be the point of the call or letter, now that I think of it.

As you can see, I'm touchy about this. I'm not so sensitive that I can't read a mixed review that at least attempts to be constructive, but I see no reason to read abuse. And I don't—not any more. Publishers send you almost every review, good or bad, that they receive—as they should. But I give them to others to read first and tell them to throw away the ones that are cruel and abusive. Why read them at all? I'm no masochist. And I think it's dangerous to let misplaced criticism affect how you might write your future work. Anyway, no one is going to be as critical of my work as I am. I have found that thoughtful reviewers who are critical of certain things in my work almost always have the same criticisms I have arrived at independently, so I'm not saying they can't occasionally be right. There are a few reviewers intelligent enough that I might read them even if they were highly critical, because I might learn something, but most of them are selective in their reading and are unlikely to get to me.

I have—and here I should beat my breast and cry *mea culpa*—done some reviewing myself. It taught me, among other things, that the book which is likely to get the best review is the one that takes the least effort to read, because the reviewer is faced with a stack of books and resents anything that slows her progress through the pile. And the writer who has an established reputation will get praise for substandard work—you've got to write plenty of bad stuff before you get called on it—or will get an undeserved pan because the reviewer is a young Turk out to make his own reputation. I also learned that it's easier to say bad things rather than talk about why a book is good. Any book deserves

at least some care from a reviewer. I set myself a rule for reviewing, and that is never to say anything in print that I wouldn't say to the writer's face, and to search for what is worthwhile—if a book is completely worthless, why review it?

It is consoling to remember that many—perhaps most—readers don't read reviews, or pay attention to them, and are more likely than not to take the writer's side when the reviewer has been cruel, thinking of the reviewer as a wise guy.

Elliot: Have you ever been envious of another writer?

Sargent: Oh, of course! I envy Ursula Le Guin and Kurt Vonnegut because they are taken seriously as writers and get serious critical attention. I envy Gregory Benford because he has two careers he can pursue for the love of it—writing and physics. And I envy Frank Herbert his royalty checks. Well, I could go on and on, but I'm stuck with being myself, and must make the most of it.

Elliot: How do you see yourself in the age of personality writers, promoting themselves and their work?

Sargent: I'm not much good at promotion. I keep thinking that the work should speak for itself, and that any promotion is the job of the publisher. I value my privacy—luckily, I'm not well-known, so I have plenty of privacy—and am very ill at ease in crowds or speaking before groups. My ideal would be to live the way J.D. Salinger does. I don't object to writers who do promote themselves—some of them are very entertaining—but I always feel, when I appear, that I'm letting people down. I have no talent for being charismatic.

Elliot: If you were to have a frank discussion with the science fiction publishing establishment, what would you tell them?

Sargent: The first thing I'd say is that there shouldn't be any science fiction publishing establishment, that such books should be published simply as fiction. I don't like the whole idea of genres. But I'm being unrealistic. Publishers have to market their books, and such divisions are only harmful when they lead writers to think of themselves only as genre writers who shouldn't attempt more, or lead critics to dismiss whole groups of books. Perhaps more to the point, I would say that publishers would better fulfill their obligations to readers and to themselves by promoting good work instead of some of the trash they're promoting now, books that don't even meet minimal standards of craftsmanship. Publishers pretty much decide what they're going to sell, don't give many good books a chance, and then say this proves that certain things don't sell. The fact is that a lot of good books would sell if given a chance. The last time I spoke to a group of readers, people who read sf, the first question I was asked was: "Why are so many books so bad?"

It would also help if publishers sent out royalty statements on time and gave an honest accounting—some do and some don't, but almost all of them sit on your money for ages, earning interest on it, before paying it to you. This only encourages the writer to demand higher advances, since she feels that's all she'll see for years, and then the publishers think we're being greedy. It would also be nice—and here I'm talking about courtesy—if an editor treated a book as if it is in fact a book and not some object with which to fill a monthly slot. Nobody wants her book to be treated as though it's yard goods. I don't think some editors realize how psychologically important it is for a writer to have faith in the editor—in the editor's judgement, believing that the editor really cares. I have had editors like that occasionally, and they force me to do better because I don't want to let them down.

I could go on and on, but part of wisdom lies in changing what you can and not pushing against what you can't. Complaining about all this takes time that could be better spent writing. I hear there's a new magazine out called *The Patchin Review* which has lots of terrific writers writing for it and offering their complaints, and I certainly think there should be such a magazine, but I don't want to read it—it's just too discouraging. I'd rather get my work done, and fight when I have to fight.

Elliot: Is there any historical period, other than the present one, in which you would like to have lived?

Sargent: In the words of George C. Scott as General Patton: "God, I hate the twentieth century." I'm definitely not at home in it; I would prefer a more stable society with less rapid change. But there are compensations—there's a hell of a lot to learn, for one thing. Voyager's mission to Jupiter and Saturn was ample compensation for being alive now. The availability of antibiotics and access to skillful surgeons are other compensations—I would not be alive without those things.

If I had been healthy, if I had been a member of a certain class and not a slave, if I had been born a man—when you talk of living in the past, you have to add these qualifications—I wouldn't have minded being a student at Plato's academy, or an advisor to Hatshepsut—ancient Greece and Egypt have always fascinated me. I also would have liked hanging around at the court of Louis XIV, trivial as it often was. I wouldn't have minded being a Neolithic person, either. What I really would have liked to do was to have read everything in the library at Alexandria before Caesar burned it; I might have enjoyed being a scribe.

Elliot: In one article, you observed: "I am, as are most people, extremely fearful of the future. Writing science fiction enables me to confront this fear, satisfy my curiosity about possible alternatives, and feel, for a while at least, more hopeful." What did you mean by this statement?

Sargent: Wouldn't anybody be fearful? For one thing, we don't even know if there will be any future—that's a cliché, but it's also a historical first—we and our leashed baboons in the Pentagon really could destroy everything. And if you think a nuclear war is unlikely, there are plenty of other things to worry about—the degradation of the environment, climate changes, even the Moral Majority. And if we can get past all that, I'm not at all sure how we'll adapt to the demands a complex future society will make on us.

Elliot: In what ways does sf enable you to deal with the future in more hopeful terms?

Sargent: Well, for one thing, the settings in which my characters function are worlds they must take for granted. They're stuck with them, as I'm stuck with the twentieth century—and presumably the twenty-first, if I make it that far. So situations I might personally find appalling are not at all strange to them, and that in itself gives me a different perspective. They, too, manage to find their compensations. In *The Sudden Star,* I was writing about a grim world, with a plague and "limited" nuclear wars in the background, and yet life did go on even though there wasn't much of a future for human beings as we are now. After finishing *The Golden Space,* I can safely say that I wouldn't care to be immortal, but most of the book's characters would disagree with me. I do tend to end up being more optimistic than I expect to be. I prefer, as I've said before, to deal with characters who are ordinary people in their societies, rather than with movers and shakers or the outright evil types. If they can manage—well, maybe there's hope. The only thing you can do with fear is to confront it, and that's what many of my characters

do—they often decide the course of a story as much or more than I, the writer, do. Most of the time, they come to some understanding.

Elliot: Have you found that being a woman presented you, as a science fiction writer, with certain problems?

Sargent: I can honestly say that it hasn't, though that doesn't mean that such problems don't exist. I mean, when I started writing, I was an undergraduate and then a graduate student in philosophy, an area where there certainly weren't many women; I was sometimes the only woman student in some of the courses I took. So the male atmosphere of sf at the time didn't put me off, and I don't recall anyone treating me badly because I was a woman. One problem I did have with writing is common to many women, though—namely that, at first, I didn't take it seriously enough as a career. Women have been trained until recently not to think in terms of careers as seriously as men do, and therefore some of the male writers I knew had more professional attitudes than I did.

Elliot: Are there any advantages to being a woman writer in the sf field?

Sargent: Yes and no. Being a woman certainly doesn't make it easier to be published, but as long as it doesn't make it harder, that's all I ask. I was lucky enough to start writing at a time when more attention was being paid to women in the field, which didn't hurt—but at the same time, most of the readers are men, so that can work against you. The only advantage women writers might have is that we have perhaps been a bit freer than men to question some of the assumptions sf writers in the past have made, can take different approaches to telling stories. But that advantage, which involves skepticism about human societies in general, stems from a disadvantage—namely, that women have not been treated as fairly as men.

Elliot: Can you tell simply from the style of writing or the sensibility, if the writer is a woman?

Sargent: Of course not. Didn't James Tiptree prove that? And Cecelia Holland's historical novels make me think a little of Ernest Hemingway. No—all you can tell is whether or not the writer chooses to deal more with male or with female characters, or is more or less interested in things our society labels masculine or feminine pursuits. Right now, some women writers seem to be interested in sword and sorcery, which has usually been the province of men, while some men are exploring female characters with more depth. A writer has to be androgynous, has to be willing to explore both her male and female qualities, or else she will be denying part of herself. If you get too much into femininity or masculinity, you could end up pointing a gun at your head, like Hemingway, or sticking your head in an oven like Sylvia Plath. It's indicative, I suppose, that they picked those ways to die.

Elliot: In addition to your several novels, you have also edited a number of anthologies, the best known of which is your series, *Women of Wonder*. How did the idea originate?

Sargent: That's easy. I looked at lots of anthologies and said, "There are plenty which have only male contributors; how about one with women?" Of course, then I had to refine the idea a bit—I decided that the stories should be about women as well as by women, since there seemed little point in doing a book that showed that women science fiction writers could write about men as well as men do. Anyone who had read Leigh Brackett or Andre Norton already knew that. I should point out that two men helped me decide on the title—George Zebrowski, Jack Dann, and I were sitting around talking about Wonder Woman, and suddenly somebody said "woman of wonder", and we all

shouted: "Women of Wonder! That's it!"

Elliot: When you began, what hopes did you have for the series?

Sargent: Well, it didn't start out as a series; it was only one book in the beginning, and would have remained that way if it hadn't been successful and the publisher hadn't had faith in it. I wanted to do a book that displayed the various kinds of stories women sf writers had written and were writing, so I consciously tried to get a variety, all the way from the "hard science" sort of thing to the surrealistic and fantastic. I wanted readers to see that women were writing stories and books that they might want to read, and that they would enjoy. I wanted them to see that there was a tradition of such writing in a genre usually thought of as masculine. This seems obvious now, but it wasn't then. It took me over two years to sell the project, and I sold it only because Vonda McIntyre, who knew about it, had written to tell me that Vintage Books might be interested.

Elliot: What was the challenge of editing *Women of Wonder*?

Sargent: Let me put it this way. When I was working on the book, one intelligent editor asked me if I would be able to find enough stories to fill such a book. I thought: If he, of all people, can ask me that, there's obviously a need for the anthology. I knew that I couldn't do a shoddy book, or one that exploited what was then becoming a trend in publishing, a vogue for feminist writing; it had to be a serious and carefully-done book. I owed that to the writers in the book and the readers who would pick it up. That was the challenge. I felt that it wasn't really my project, but that of the writers whose stories I had chosen—that if I didn't represent them fairly, I would be doing harm. It was almost an accident that I was doing it, after all; any number of women could have edited such a book, and though each book would have been a little different, the goal would have been the same. Such an anthology is a collective thing, not an individual one; the editor may be the least important person, or certainly no more important than any of the other people involved.

Elliot: How was the series received?

Sargent: Reasonably well—if the first book hadn't been successful, there wouldn't have been two more. The reviews were mostly favorable, and all the books are still selling. Of course, there were people who picked on the *Women of Wonder* anthologies, but some of them simply objected to the idea of an all-female anthology—I don't recall hearing their voices raised in protest when all-male anthologies were published, or when certain "men's magazines" weren't buying stories with female bylines. But I don't remember anyone picking on the stories in the books all that much, though some reviewers found fault with my introductions, which I felt were necessary in order to convey a historical context to readers. One reviewer was especially cruel—he seemed to feel I'd got everything all wrong, but his argument consisted mainly of assertions that he knew more than I did. I also had the distinct feeling that he was working out an old grudge he may have had against one of the authors. But I'm breaking one of my rules—never to respond to a reviewer. I'm afraid some of the nastier remarks only demonstrated how necessary it was for the anthologies to be published. The fact that no one has to edit such anthologies now also shows some progress.

Elliot: What explains the tendency in science fiction to treat women in traditional terms? Why have women not been presented as fully-rounded people?

Sargent: There are many reasons, most of which I mention in the *Women of Wonder* books. But here are the main ones—there hasn't traditionally been much of an emphasis

on characterization at all, so even male characters could often be lacking. And some of the writers, sad to say, may not have had much experience with unconventional women. You can also ascribe part of the failure to the sort of boys' clubhouse atmosphere certain writers wanted to maintain—to them, female characters were useful only as "love interests" for the heroes, so if the hero wasn't going to be romantically involved with a woman, there was no point in having women in the story. And sf reflects the society around it, so many writers reflect the prejudices of their society. Some of the failure was simple laziness—not wanting to think seriously about future societies or possibilities. Our feelings about men's and women's roles run very deep—we don't always want to acknowledge them, and it is painful to confront them.

Elliot: Has any real progress been made in this area?

Sargent: Definitely. The popularity of writers such as John Varley, Elizabeth Lynn, Lisa Tuttle, Samuel Delany, and many others prove that. At least now a writer has to have a damn good reason for showing traditional roles. But there's still a long way to go, and still many people who think women should be concerned primarily with home and family. The cover of the British *Women of Wonder* shows a woman and baby in spacesuits, for God's sake! We might go into space, but we'll still be raising the kids—that cover contradicted everything I was trying to show in the anthology.

Elliot: Besides writing, what other activities do you enjoy?

Sargent: There's always reading, and listening to music. I enjoy long walks, partly for the exercise and partly to see the scenery. It's especially beautiful here in the fall, when the leaves are turning. I also like to see friends in the evenings or on weekends. I enjoy cooking, which is a break from writing. I can't stand just opening a can; since I have to eat in order to live, I want the experience to be as aesthetically satisfying as possible, even when there isn't much money and I have to use my ingenuity.

Elliot: Are you interested in the other arts at all? In painting, sculpture, opera, dance?

Sargent: I studied piano for several years and wish I could have spent more time studying art. I've also taken modern dance and ballet. I try to keep up with what's going on. My parents, quite wisely, felt that everyone should be able to play at least one instrument and should pursue artistic interests, if only to have a hobby or to be able to enjoy the performances of others more.

Elliot: How would you spend your time if you were retired with income?

Sargent: The same way I do now, except that I'd travel a lot more and write a lot less—I'd spend much more time on each story or book. I can't imagine being completely retired—not writing at all.

Elliot: Where would you like to be, as a writer, in the next ten years or so?

Sargent: Obviously, I'd like to be better off financially—not rich, but reasonably secure. I want to write different sorts of things. For years, I've been making notes for two autobiographical novels which I couldn't have written earlier because I didn't have enough distance from the events and hadn't learned enough about technique—I would have ended up being self-indulgent. I've also done research for a novel about seventeenth-century Russia which I hope I can get to before I start to get grey hair. I've also outlined a book which you could call a kind of ghost story. I'd like to be a more proficient short-story writer; I've always found that form difficult to master, maybe because it's more like writing a poem than writing a novel, and I've never been any good at poetry. And there are sf novels I want to do, too. My problem isn't ideas—I have plenty of things I want to

do—rather it's getting to the point where I have the ability, the skill, and the time to do the book or story well.

In the end, the worst that can happen to a writer is that he can die too soon or die too late. I don't want to go before I've finished the work I want to finish, but I also don't want to live long enough to be tempted to publish senile ravings. And if I do live long enough, I hope I'll know when it's time to stop writing—at least for publication.

Elliot: Finally, what are you working on at the present time?

Sargent: I've just finished a novel for "young adults" and have been working on a long novel for years, *Venus of Dreams*. After I finish that, it would be nice to take some time off, but that probably isn't going to be possible. There are so many things I want to write that I don't expect to run out of work for quite some time. Time itself is my only problem; I hope that I don't run out of it before I've finished everything that's planned.

Following on from previous articles in Foundation *about foreign-language sf (in Japan, France, the USSR and Hungary) and fulfilling our promise in* Foundation 23, *we are delighted to present the following lively survey of Chinese sf by a member of the recently-founded Kwangtung SF Association. The author, Tan Yunji, is an electronic engineer by profession and a translator of several English-language sf novels.*

SF In China: A Brief Historical Review

TAN YUNJI

China is a nation with a civilization of long standing. Among the tremendous amount of ancient Chinese literary classics, there are many masterpieces rich in lively fancies. The most famous of them are Wu Chengen's (c.1500 – c.1582) *The Pilgrimage to the West* and Pu Songling's (1640 – 1715) collection of short stories, *Strange Tales from the Carefree Studio*. The former tells the adventure of a senior monk called Xuan Zang and his three disciples, while the latter takes its material from stories about ghosts and fox spirits. Some people consider them as "prototype science fiction" in a manner, but in strict sense they are fantasy stories through and through.

Like modern sciences, which were called "Western learning" in the late Qing Dynasty, sf was introduced from the West. The pioneer who first translated an sf novel into Chinese was China's most famous writer Lu Xun, whose centenary of birth was celebrated throughout the country a few months ago. In 1902, when he was still studying in Japan, Lu Xun had translated Jules Verne's *From the Earth to the Moon* into Chinese from a

Japanese version by Igamikin. Later on, Jules Verne's *Journey to the Centre of the Earth* was also translated into Chinese by the same translator and again from Japanese. Both books were published in Japan.

In 1932, the well-known Chinese writer Lao She wrote China's first sf story, "A Tale of the Cat City", which was about a man's experience among the cat-like Martians. The story is quite fresh and interesting.

In 1939, a popular science writer named Gu Junzheng published China's first collection of sf stories, *Under the North Pole,* which consists of three short stories: "A Peaceful Dream", "A Strange Epidemic in London" and "Under the North Pole". The first story was about radio hypnosis of the masses. The theme of the second was to form nitric acid at room temperature and normal atmospheric pressure with a man-made catalyst. The last is a story about magnetic theory. As is stated in the preface of the book by its author, these are tentatives under the influence of H.G. Wells and Hugo Gernsback and others. Through the whole 1940's, there were no sf works worth naming.

After the founding of the People's Republic of China, sf began to prosper. It benefited by a slogan put forward by the government, which read "March Towards Science". In China sf was then looked upon as a kind of popular science writing instead of a genre of literature and was expected to play a role in spreading scientific knowledge. In such a favourable climate sf began to take its roots. In 1954 there appeared a short sf story, "From the Earth to Mars", written by Zheng Wenguang who later turned out to be one of China's most important sf writers. The plot of the story is quite simple. It is about the adventures of three children who stole into a spaceship and lifted off. They faced great danger en route to Mars and were finally rescued by another spaceship. This story together with three other stories by the same author, "An Expedition to the Sun", "The Second Moon" and "The man who Conquered The Moon", was put into a book which was published in 1955 under the title *An Expedition to the Sun.* Intended to be supplementary science reading material for children, these stories suffered from the defects of stuffing the stories with science facts. Nevertheless, they are of significance, not only because they mark the author's individual debuts but they are also the first sf works which appeared in the new China.

The stories written by two writers named Yu Zhi and Chi Shuchang a few years later are much freer from the above defects. Their short stories such as "Elephants with their Trunks Cut" (1956), "The Missing Elder Brother" (1957), and "The Fancy of a Science Prodigy" (1958) are of higher literary quality. Yu Zhi's "The Missing Elder Brother" is very interesting. The story happened in 1975. One day a man's elder brother, who had been missing since 1960, was found in the refrigerator of a factory. His life had stopped for fifteen years, but his body was not frozen thanks to the rapid drop in temperature. The story ends in a happy reunion of the ten-year-old boy with his twenty-two-year-old younger brother. Chi Shuchang's "The Fancy of a Science Prodigy" shows how the fancy of biological mining has come true. "Elephants with their Trunks Cut", a collaboration of the above two writers, is a story about breeding a new variety of pigs which have grown into elephants.

Due to the causes known to all, sf works introduced from abroad in the early 1950s (along with many other things) were mainly Russian-made. Many sf works by Russian writers were translated into Chinese. Among them are A. Tolstoy's *Engineer Galin's Hyperbola,* and A. Belayev's *The Amphibian,* etc. They were well received by Chinese

readers.

By the beginning of the 1960s a number of spirited young people took part in sf writing. They gave the readers many more mature sf works. The representative works of this period are Chao Shizhou's "The Animate Monkey King", Tong Enzheng's "Guests from Fifty Thousand Years Ago" and "The Hazy Mist over the Obsolete Valley", Xiao Jianheng's "The Strange Story of Bu Ke" and "The Strange Machine Dog". "The Animate Monkey King" (1958) consists of pages from a boy's diary which describes a wonderful picture story book with pages printed in a kind of photochemical ink. In each page there are twenty-four layers of ink which could, under the influence of light, appear and disappear one after another at such a speed that the Monkey King, the hero of the picture book, seems to be in continuous motion.

"Guests from Fifty Thousand Years Ago" combines the historical data of astronomy with imagination. In the story a scientist with the help of a boy proved his hypothesis, that a great meteorite which fell on south China in 1645 was a spaceship launched by the Martians, to be valid. "The Strange Story of Bu Ke" depicts how a dog, which had lost its body in a traffic accident, was saved by transplanting its head on a new body. "The Strange Machine Dog" by the same author is a story about making automata. "The Hazy Mist over the Obsolete Valley" is the most successful novelette of that time. It tries to probe the secrets of how an ancient tribe which lived in ancient south-west China had become extinct. At the same time it depicts the life and work of the modern archaeologists. The story is quite attractive and imbued with patriotism.

In this period, many of Jules Verne's classics were translated into Chinese and printed in great numbers. The most popular of them are *Five Weeks in a Balloon, The Mysterious Island,* and *Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Sea, Propellor Island* and *The Begum's Fortune.* Jules Verne's early novel *Journey to the Centre of the Earth*, which was already translated into Chinese in 1912, was also retranslated. Jules Verne's novels aroused great interest among Chinese readers. This is probably due to the fact that his exuberant optimism suits the taste of Chinese readers, who hold for a truth that mankind will surely triumph over nature. At the same time, the Chinese versions of H.G. Wells's *The Invisible Man* and *The War of Worlds* were also published. They were also excellent sellers throughout the country.

From the mid-1960s to the mid-1970s, the political turmoil called "Cultural Revolution" left a big blank in Chinese literature. Not a single Chinese sf story was published, not to mention translations of foreign works. As a result, Chinese readers knew nothing of the masterpieces of foreign sf after Jules Verne and H.G. Wells.

At the end of the 1970s, with the downfall of the "Gang of Four" (the four adventurists who tried to usurp the authority of the country), sf began to revive in China. Since 1978, the tempo of its development has quickened unexpectedly. Some long-established sf writers like Zheng Wenguang, Tong Enzheng and Xiao Jianheng, who had given up writing for more than a dozen years, took up their pens, while a good many new writers like Ye Yonglie, Wang Xiaoda and Jin Tao also took part in producing significant sf works. By the end of 1981, more than three hundred sf works had been published, while the total number of sf works before the "Cultural Revolution" amounted to no more than a few dozens.

Collections of sf short stories proliferated like desert flowers after rain. There appeared Tong Enzheng's *The Magic Flute in the Snow Mountain,* Xiao Jianheng's *Tiger*

Trail in the Thick Woods, Zheng Wenguang's *The Shark Scout, The Selections of Zheng Wenguang's SF* (Volume 1), and *The Collection of Zheng Wenguang's New Works,* Ye Yonglie's *The Man Flying to Pluto* and *After the Nose Had been Lost.*

Sf novellas also began to flourish: Guo Zhi published his *Little Ping-Pong has Changed,* Zheng Wenguang his *Flying Towards Sagittarius,* Tong Enzheng his *The Death Light on the Coral Island,* Ye Yonglie his *The Well-informed Boy Roaming in The Future World.*

Zheng Wenguang's *Flying Towards Sagittarius* is a novella consisting of one hundred and thirty thousand Chinese characters. It is about space-travel — one of the most popular sf themes of all time. One day in the twenty-first century, on a Chinese space base, there fell an enemy spy satellite, out of which sprang four robots. They were meant to hijack China's most powerful spaceship, the Orient, which was bound for Mars. The plot was frustrated by the guards defending the ship but one of the robots succeeded in launching the Orient, on which two young men and a girl happened to embark. The ship accelerated to 40,000 kilometres a second in 185 hours before the fuel was used up, and left for Sagittarius. They spent an unusual nine years in the ship and were rescued by another ship in the end. The novella was published in 1979 and met a frantic welcome by readers who had been longing for new sf works for more than a decade. It sold out in a few days and was reprinted in the same year. Inspired by this success, the author gave the readers three more novellas in the next year: *The Unusual Man in an Old Temple, In the Depth of the Ocean* and *The "Destiny" Night Club.*

In the Depth of the Ocean is one of Zheng Wenguang's most successful sf works. It shows that the author's language skills have reached maturity. The story is quite romantic and goes as follows: A Chinese ship was attacked by a UFO and disappeared in the South Pacific. One of its crew found himself in a testing base at the bottom of the ocean among a group of three-eyed aliens. There had already been two human captives there—Professor Lowell and his daughter Annie Laurie—and he was forced to cook for them. The seaman had successfully managed to send messages to his son and daughter. The two brave young people were also captured by the aliens when they came to search for their father. Annie Laurie fell in love with the seaman's son at first glance. To the readers' surprise, the three-eyed aliens turned out to be merely robots controlled by Professor Lowell who was a gifted scientist exiled from an unidentified country as a heretic. He had built up the submarine testing base with the help of the robots and engaged in studying the interchange of material and field. He had gained such achievements as to convert a man into a field and then send him to the Moon. When he found out that the seaman's family had discovered his secret and tried to run away, he decided to destroy them all. Out of her love for the young man, Annie Laurie prevented her father from doing so. At this moment a violent seaquake threatened the existence of the submarine base. All young people left the base in a flying object while the two fathers stayed behind: one meant to destroy the flying object, the other succeeded in stopping him and both were buried in the depth of the ocean.

Tong Enzhen's *The Death Light on the Coral Island* is a novella that created a deep impression on the readers. Its subject is laser weapons using an atomic battery as their energy source. The author is an experienced sf writer who has successfully combined the scientific content with a tightknit plot. Here science and literature make a rewarding blend. One thrilling scene is followed by another: a Professor Chao was murdered – an

aeroplane crashed – adventure on an island – the death of a Dr Ma – revenge by the death light. The book is a type of thriller. Its drawback is probably that the theme is somewhat commonplace, for laser weapons have come into being in recent years. The novella has been made into the first sf film in the country, and won the applause of audiences.

Among the hundreds of sf novelettes and short stories published since 1978, we can do no more than enumerate a few famous examples of them. They are Zheng Wenguang's "The Pacifician", "The Shark Scout" and "The Mirror Image of the Earth"; Tong Enzheng's "The Magic Flute in the Snow Mountain"; Xiao Jianheng's "A Needn't-Sleep Son-in-law"; Ye Yonglie's "The Man Flying to Pluto"; Wang Chuan's "The Astounding Everest-Hengduanosaurus" and Jin Tao's "The Moonlight Island".

"The Shark Scout" depicts how a shark with an electronic detector fitted in its head can be used to monitor the enemy's submarines. In "The Many Flying to Pluto", the hero called Ji Bu was placed in suspended animation by freezing his body into a state of indefinite hibernation in order to overcome the time problem of flying to remote planets, as often resorted to by foreign sf writers. "A Needn't-Sleep Son-in-law" shows how a man who had undergone a treatment by a special electric current for several minutes can go on working without sleep. "The Magic Flute in the Snow Mountain" vividly depicts the discovery of the prehistoric man. "The Astounding Everest-Hengduanosaurus" offers a story of how a scientist called Professor Xia had discovered the descendants of the dinosaur in Tibet. The story aroused great interest among the readers. Some of them even wrote congratulations to the "discoverer", for they took the story to be true.

The most successful sf novelettes are Wang Xiaoda's "Waves", Zheng Wenguang's "The Pacifician" and "The Mirror Image of The Earth". The plot of "Waves" is really marvellous. The hero of the story, a correspondent, witnessed how an intruding enemy aeroplane had fallen into a trap under the influence of an image built up by information waves. The correspondent was attacked by a spy when he visited the designer of the wave defending system, Professor Wang. When the correspondent fought the spy with the help of the professor in the laboratory, he noticed various strange phenomena, such as images which appeared to be real not only visually but also audibly. These even presented a dozen professors who are exactly the same in appearance. The story of "The Pacifician" is rather exciting. It tells how a group of Chinese scientists had captured an asteroid which proved to be a part of the Pacific and blown off two million years ago. Bringing it back to Earth, they found two apes, who had stifled to death in a primaeval cave and succeeded in reviving them. "The Mirror Image of the Earth" is quite amazing. Once a Chinese space ship sailed to a planet which was the exact mirror image of the Earth. Also its colours were the complementary colours of the Earth. Hence it had red prairies, yellow lakes and trees with leaves as red as fire. The crew of the spaceship called this planet the Htrae, the mirror image of the Earth. They climbed up to the highest mountain of the Htrae, Mt. Tsereve, which was the mirror image of Mt. Everest, and found a crater at its black peak. Deep in the crater, they found an underground palace, in which a holofilm was shown at the touch of a switch. They saw many famous, or rather infamous, great havoc scenes of Chinese history in the film, for it was prepared for them by aliens who had identified them as Chinese. But the aliens were nowhere to be seen. Maybe they were Noahs who had embarked on their arks and withdrawn to other planets in order to preserve their civilization before the arrival of the fierce floods and savage beasts—the human beings. The story is looked upon as wonderful social sf in Chinese style and has been translated

into Japanese and English. The English version can be found in *Asia 2000,* an English magazine published in Hong Kong.

In recent years, many foreign sf masterpieces have been translated into Chinese. Novels include Isaac Asimov's *I, Robot, The Caves of Steel,* Arthur C. Clarke's *Rendezvous with Rama* and *2001: A Space Odyssey.* Novellas and novelettes include Howard Fast's "The First Men", Arthur C. Clarke's "No Need to Speak" and "Summertime in Icarus", Isaac Asimov's "The Talking Stone" and "The Billiard Ball", Ray Bradbury's "Frost and Fire" and "The Million-year Picnic". Short stories include Brian W. Aldiss's "Who Can Replace a Man?", "One Blink of the Moon" and "The Small Stones of Tu Fu", Isaac Asimov's "The Immortal Bard" and "The Fun They Had" etc. But few of them have attracted general readers' attention. This was probably due to the fact that there exists a cultural gap between the East and the West, which was enlarged by the big blank left by the "Cultural Revolution" which tended to repel all foreign cultures, and there are no proper literary criticisms or commentaries to help the readers to get it right. They are puzzled by bold inventions such as FTL and ETs, which are merely truisms and trite enough to the readers in Europe or America. However, these masterpieces of the foreign writers are highly valued by the Chinese sf fans.

Sf is a newly cultivated field in China. It is only strewn with young saplings here and there. Most of the sf works published are novelettes and short stories. There are only a few sf novellas published each year and no book-length sf is ever written. The only two pure sf magazines are *The Tree of Wisdom* (edited by Zheng Wenguang), which is published bimonthly and *SF Ocean*, which is published quarterly, though many popular science magazines (like *Scientific Pictorial* and *The Age of Science*, etc.) often carry sf short stories. There are only two sf organisations: The Shanghai SF Club and The SF Association of Kwangtung Province. Both were founded one year ago (late 1980 and early 1981 respectively). The members of the Association consist mainly of sf fans, sf writers and translators and sf magazine editors. However, sf is starting to flourish in China and we can expect a beautiful scenery when the sf trees are in full blossom.

Appendix:

Zeng Wenguang; born 1929, China's most important sf writer. He began writing sf in 1953. His main works include: *From the Earth to Mars* (1954), *The Men who Conquered the Moon* (1954), *The Second Moon* (1955). *An Expedition to the Sun* (1955), *The Sea Girl* (1961), *The Iron Goalkeeper of the Buffalo* (1962), *The Shark Scout* (1979), *The Cranes and Men* (1979), *The Pacifician* (1979), *Treasures in the Wilderness* (1979), *No. 7 Woman Volleyball Player* (1979), *The Prehistoric World* (1980), *The Star Barrack* (1980), *The Dolphin God* (1980), *The Mirror Image of the Earth* (1980), *Swimming Across the East Sea* (1980), *The Inspiration* (1980); Novellas: *The Black Jet* (1956), *Flying Towards Sagittarius* (1979), *The Unusual Man in an Old Temple* (1980), *God's Wings* (1980), *In the Depth of the Ocean* (1981), *The "Destiny" Night Club* (1981).

As an associate professor in the Peking Astronomical Observatory Academia Sinica, Mr Zheng also published some monographs on astronomy: *The Philosophical Significance of Immanuel Kant's Nebula Hypotheses* (1974), *Cosmology in Ancient China* (co-writer, Xi Zezhong, 1975), *The Origin and Development of China's Astronomy* (1979).

Tong Enzheng; born 1935, associate professor of the History Department of the Si Chuan University, author of many novelettes and novellas. His main interest lies in archaeology which is the major theme of his sf works. His best novella is *The Hazy -Mist over the Obsolete Valley.* Other works include: *Guests from Fifty Thousand Years Ago, The Missing Robot, The Miracle of an Electronic Brain, The Lost Memory, The Magic Flute in the Snow Mountain, The Man Trailing the Dinosaur, The Return of an Astronaut, Hui Hui's Little Fellow* and *The Death Light on the Coral Island.*

Ye Yonglie; born in 1940, published his first literary works at the age of 11. He has hitherto pub-

lished over 1000 articles, more than 50 books. He began to write sf in 1961, but his first sf works did not appear until 1976. He is a diligent writer who has published 13 sf works in a few years. They are: *The Well-informed Boy Roaming in the Future World* (1978), *After The Nose Had Been Lost* (1979), *The Man Flying to Pluto* (1979), *Miracles at the Peak of the World's Highest Mountain* (1979), *The Strange Patient* (1979), *Live or Die* (1980), *Disguising and Trimming* (1980), *The Mysterious Jacket* (1980), *A Spy in the Green Island* (1980), *A Peculiar Case of a National Treasure* (1981), *The Secret Contest* (1981), *The Black Shadow* (1981), *A Spy Case Outside the Football Field* (1981).

Letters

Dear David July 1982

I've just been reading John Clute's destructive review of *Twentieth-Century Science-Fiction Writers* in *Foundation* 25.

As I have not read or seen the book I cannot comment on the veracity of most of what Clute says; suffice to say that I normally find him to be a meticulous, thoughtful and mostly fair-minded critic with whom I can identify. Unfortunately I find one glaring error in his review of Curtis Smith's book which to my mind makes the entire review invalid. The error is precisely the kind of mistake that John Clute is lambasting Smith for allowing. On page 68 Clute refers to *Where Have You Been, Sandaliotis?* as a "ghost" title. I take the term "ghost" title to mean a book planned but unwritten, or written but unpublished. This novel of Lafferty's was however published in 1977 (not 1979, which may have been Smith's lesser error) as one of the two complete novels in the book *Apocalypses* (Pinnacle Books, L.A.)

Surely if a reviewer wishes to use criticism of this nature to indicate his displeasure with a book it is absolutely imperative that he makes certain that his own review is factually correct, otherwise his review is as worthless as he finds the book he is reviewing. John Clute knows this, and so I can only imagine that his own elegant way with words momentarily got the better of him.

James Goddard *Nomansland, Wiltshire*

The Reviews Editor replies:

Mistakes happen, as I think I said once or twice in my review of the Curtis Smith book, and I'll deal with mine in a moment; but as I think I also said, or implied, there are simple mistakes and there are category errors. In dealing with Smith, I tried generally to concentrate on the latter—on errors caused by failures of methodology rather than on slips of the pen, misreadings, Printer's Glitch and so forth. The Lafferty mistake was cited as one of several examples of what happened when projected titles were accorded the same status as books that actually existed when a bibliography was being compiled.

However, though there is no question that *Where Have You Been, Sandaliotis?* does *not* exist as described by Smith, I did rather muddy up the waters by making an example of

it. As Smith lists the (non-existent) title as having been published in 1977—not 1979, as I put it, which was a slip of the pen on my part, or a misreading, *not* a methodological assumption that all 1977 titles should be regarded as 1979 titles—it might have been fair to assume that all along he'd really been intending to cite *Apocalypses* (1977), the volume in which "Where Have You Been, Sandaliotis?" actually does appear, and that by virtue of a simple error had cited it by its sub title alone. I think this is what Mr Goddard assumes, fairly enough, not having had the chance to read Smith. And it's here I should have been clearer about the nature of the error I was pointing out. I failed to mention the fact that Smith does in fact cite *both* titles, Apocalypses (1977), which exists, and *Where Have You Been, Sandaliotis?* (1977), which assuredly does not, and lists both as having been published by Pinnacle Books. It was because both titles were cited—on what seemed to be the usual Curtis Smith Cite Unseen basis—that I made the assumption that there'd been a projection error of the sort I'd been castigating with so much reason.

Which brings up the very slightly vexed question of the definition of *ghost title*. I'll admit to being rather slack in my use of the term as pointing to any significant misrepresentation of projected reality, regardless of whether the projected title ever comes into being at all, just so long as it does come into being in a form significantly—and damagingly—different from that projected. After sending my review off, I had come to the conclusion that this was sloppy usage on my part, and that, better to encompass the kinds of methodological obtuseness I was adducing, I should substitute for *ghost title* the term *projection*. I duly requested that this change be made at certain points, but was too late; the copy had already gone to the printers.

John Clute *London*

Dear David July 1982

A few lines offered in addition to my article on *Star Trek* and *Blake's Seven* in *Foundation 25*. The article was composed before the end of the final series of *Blake*, and things happened in the final episode, screened on 21st December 1981 on BBC One, which confirmed much of what I suggested in "Spock, Avon, and the Decline of Optimism". It was a shattering experience for those who, like myself, had become involved with the characters and the fight against the Federation. Some of the best writing and acting of the whole series (yes, I know there's a strong body of feeling that neither was ever any good, but some of us were hooked) manipulated the viewer's emotions to the point, in my case anyway, of actual tears. We were swung violently from one apparent status quo to the next, every character's motives, words and deeds were even more opaque to interpretation than usual. Blake reappears; (oh, good, he's not dead). He appears to have become a brutalized bounty-hunter for a corrupt planetary government (oh dear, our hero's destroyed). No, wait, it's all OK, he's secretly still working against Servelan, building up a strong resistance movement, and anxious for Avon and the rest to get there (hooray, won't it all be lovely when they meet and rejoice and Avon at least half-admits to being glad to be back with Blake!).

But the real twist in the tail, the scorpion sting, dropped us out of the bottom of our hope and showed us what fools we were to allow optimism to creep back. Big Sister was watching; they were drowning, not waving. They got together in time to die together. Oh,

it all came out at last; Avon's love and commitment, Vila's courage, one's desire to protect and save the others. But matters were so arranged that Avon's caring came out in a cry of anguish; "Have you betrayed us? Have *you* betrayed *me*?" And by the time he learnt the truth, he'd killed Blake. At least he held him while he died. And then they all died, and those faceless guards closed in round Avon, their dominance restored. Of course, it's just possible that, as we didn't see his death, Avon could be brought back—(Avon Alone?)—in a spin-off. But the overwhelming impression was of despair and hopelessness. The system was too strong. That last Avon smile (*isn't* Paul Darrow gorgeous?) was meant to be:

> "The long last look on the ever-dying face
> Turned backward from the other side of time." *

And if that's the future, does anyone know a quick way into an alternative universe where they've got Spock and Co? I've always read sf and fantasy for the message of hope I find there—a way into life's positive potential, not the escape so many people see it as. I am truly alarmed by this apparent commitment to the negative view of the future, and the cruelty of its presentation. I *liked* those people. Is trust really dying? Let's hope sf doesn't start to trail along behind public mood, but continues to suggest, urge, sub-create, delineate for contemporary human beings, the glorious possibilities, the may-be's of human-ness that could so easily become actualities.

Sue Jenkins *London*

* Edwin Muir, "The Difficult Land". See *Ten Twentieth Century Poets,* edited by M. Wollman, London: Harrap, 1957.

Dear Sir July 1982

CALL FOR PAPERS
FANTASY AND HORROR AESTHETICS AND THEORY
A Special Issue of *Extrapolation*

Essays are invited that focus on the essential natures of horror and/or fantasy fictions for a future special issue of *Extrapolation*. They should deal with a wide spectrum of works, may be interdisciplinary or comparative (such approaches are encouraged), and should reflect the essayists' strong understanding of the existing scholarship. New and varied approaches are particularly encouraged, and successful essays will reflect amplification, not repetition, of earlier scholarship.

Those who wish should feel free to submit five-hundred-word proposals at their earliest convenience. However, it is not necessary to submit an advance proposal for a complete essay to be considered. Length should be a maximum of 3500 words, and note form should follow the *MLA Handbook*. Essays, inqueries, and proposals should be sent to: Dr Roger C.Schlobin, Department of English, Purdue University—North Central, Westville, IN 46391, USA.

The final due date for submission of completed essays is March 31, 1983.

While there are additional studies that may be examined, the following are necessary background ones that should be consulted before submission:

Alpers, Hans Joachim. "Loincloth, Double Ax, and Magic: 'Heroic Fantasy' and Related Genres". *Science-Fiction Studies,* 5 (1978), 19-32.
Attebury, Brian. *The Fantasy Tradition in American Literature from Irving to Le Guin* (1980).
Brook-Rose, Christine. *A Rhetoric of the Unreal: Studies in Narrative and Structure, Especially the Fantastic* (1981).
Fredericks, S.C. "Problems of Fantasy". *Science-Fiction Studies,* 5 (1978), 33-44.
Irwin, W.R. *The Game of the Impossible: A Rhetoric of Fantasy* (1976).
Jackson, Rosemary. *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion* (1981).
Lovecraft, H.P. *Supernatural Horror in Literature* (1945).
Manlove, C.N. *Modern Fantasy: Five Studies* (1975).
Mobley, Jane. "Toward a Definition of Fantasy Fiction". *Extrapolation,* 15 (1974), 17-28.
Mosiac, Winter 1977. Special fantasy issue.
Prickett, Stephen. *Victorian Fantasy* (1979).
Rabkin, Eric S. *The Fantastic in Literature* (1976).
St. Armand, Barton Levi. *The Roots of Horror in the Fiction of H.P. Lovecraft* (1977).
Schlobin, Roger C., ed. *The Aesthetics of Fantasy Literature and Art* (1982).
_____. "Fantasy Versus Horror". In *Survey of Modern Fantasy Literature* (forthcoming 1982—copies will be furnished on request).
_____. "Introduction". In *The Literature of Fantasy: A Comprehensive Annotated Bibliography of Modern Fantasy Fiction* (1981).
Todorov, Tzvetan. *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre* (1970).
Tymn, Marshall B., ed. *Horror Literature: A Core Collection and Reference Guide* (1981).
_____, Kenneth J. Zahorski, and Robert H. Boyer. "Introduction". In *Fantasy Literature: A Core Collection and Reference Guide* (1979).
Wolfe, Gary K. "Symbolic Fantasy". *Genre,* 8 (1975), 194-209.

Roger C. Schlobin *Indiana*

Reviews

The Transmigration of Timothy Archer
by Philip K. Dick *(Timescape, 1982, 253 pp, $15.50; Gollancz, 1982, 253 pp, £6.95)*

reviewed by Colin Greenland

Edgar Barefoot, the Sausalito sage who presides over the beginning and end of Philip K. Dick's last novel, recalls the day of his own enlightenment. On the way to the postbox one afternoon, Barefoot suddenly realized the absolute nature of reality. As he hurried home to write it down he was distracted by two tiny Mexican children playing in a busy street, and the fear that they would get run over. By the time he had made sure they were safe, the understanding had gone, leaving only a dim memory of its epiphany.

Timothy Archer, Bishop of California, tells a parable from the second century A.D. A certain monk, sent to deliver vital medicine to a great saint in another city, came upon a beggar lying ill in the gutter, and gave the medicine to him instead. "You did the right thing", said his father abbot.

What happened to the medicine that would have saved the life of Philip K. Dick? There were always pills that he had to take, and no lack of human care and affection either, to judge from the tributes and memorials to him on both sides of the Atlantic. Dick, as we know, had his own sense of enlightenment, an ambiguous awareness of the cosmos that comes flashing off the pages of all his latest books, *VALIS* and *The Divine Invasion,* and especially *The Transmigration of Timothy Archer.* Yet he died; the cure never arrived.

Timothy Archer is all about death and loss, despite the ready availability of medication and love and the secret of the universe. It's hard to be so angry about Dick's death after reading his clear and shrewd last observations on it, on the consolation that comes from knowing there is no consolation. The equation of fame and death is still irritating, that Dick's death will gain him publicity he should have had in his life, just as the airwaves of California were full of Beatles songs on the day John Lennon was murdered. But if more people read *Timothy Archer* now, more attentively, perhaps that will be good. It may be the sort of medicine we need to keep us going. Timothy's daughter-in-law Angel, narrating the novel, says,

> We each must find our own solution, and, in particular, we each must solve the sort of problem that death creates—creates for others; but not death only: madness also, madness leading to final death as its end-state, its logical goal.

We all have to cope eventually with the fact that we shall die, and that in the meantime others will too: presidents, poets, parents, lovers, friends. We have to live with the continuous possibility of global destruction, and the madness now current that has forced that possibility into being. This novel addresses these things.

Dick's best work is not science fiction, except insofar as any fiction based on fact assumes the status of an alternate history. In our world, Bishop Timothy Archer was somebody called Bishop James Pike; in that world, Angel Archer read an issue of *Howard the Duck* which never existed here. But the problems in this book are Dick's perennial

fascinations, the enigma of reality and unreality, of "noise posing as signal", of people turned into machines by an overpowering obsession, emotional overload, or withdrawal. Dick's strange pilgrimage led him back through the metaphors of sf to philosophy, to Heidegger and the question of "inauthentic Being". Timothy Archer recalls,

> "Someone pointed out to Descartes that a malicious demon may cause our assent to a world that is not there, may impress a forgery onto us as an ostensible representation of the world. If that happened, we would not know. We must trust; we must trust God."

But how shall we know that God *is* God, and not a malicious demon, Palmer Eldritch by name? *The Transmigration of Timothy Archer* is medicinal, but it is not a prescription. It is not nasty to taste, nor was Dick trying to force anything down our throats because it would be good for us. He had no message, no gospel. The book contains plenty of theological and metaphysical discussion, Dick's main concern towards the end of his life, but here it is part of the characterization (because they are concerned with that sort of thing), not the structuring myth that it was in *The Divine Invasion* or the given reason for the text, as it was for *VALIS*. The discussion is far from academic. In fact *Timothy Archer* contains some of Dick's most intense and vigorous dialogue, although the characters are at cross-purposes or lecturing each much of the time about the Dead Sea Scrolls, the history of Mercedes-Benz, Prometheus, caviar, or Frederich von Schiller. Dick expresses the poignance of Bishop Archer and his friends speeding around California and the world carrying enormous cargoes of finely-detailed information which they deliver to any listener at the slightest conversational opportunity, while suffering the most profound uncertainties and lacking any direction at all. Timothy Archer dies by driving out into the Dead Sea Desert alone, looking for the sacred mushroom, with only a petrol station map for guidance.

Timothy Archer dies, but before that his lover, Kirsten Lundborg, deliberately takes a barbiturate overdose, and his son Jeff shoots himself in the face. Only Jeff's widow Angel and Kirsten's psychotic son Bill are left to learn to cope with their deaths and memories. Angel, an unbeliever, does exactly that: learns to cope. She does not experience any blinding pink flashes of revelation or freezing fogs of alienation, or at least no more than come with any bereavement. She does not transcend the misery. She suffers and learns, described by Dick with humour, compassionate insight, crazy invention and delicate accuracy. She comes to no conclusion which is not obvious from the start. There is death; life goes on.

Friday
by Robert A. Heinlein *(Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1982, 368 pp, $15.95)*

reviewed by Douglas Barbour

Poul Anderson, Harlan Ellison, and Frederik Pohl all vie to give the most superlative welcome to Robert Heinlein's *Friday*, with Ellison winning my vote because he at least implicitly admits that Heinlein has of late been awful: "*Friday* is Heinlein back in control, a seething performance drenched in professionalism." Well, hmm. The good news is that these gentlemen are essentially correct. If you enjoyed the Heinlein of the early days, or even the Heinlein of *The Moon Is A Harsh Mistress,* his last worthwhile novel and one with which *Friday* has a lot in common, you'll enjoy this new novel for it is at least free of

the appalling senile garrulousness of such works as *Time Enough for Love* or *The Number of the Beast*.

What *Friday* has: a fairly good, though essentially picaresque, plot concerning the activities of its eponymous heroine as she pursues her life as a courier for a top secret organisation run by the by now well-known Heinleinesque wise-old-man-in-charge; her ingenuous character as she reports, wide-eyed, on the strangeness of much "human" behaviour—for she is an AP ("Artificial Person"), a truly marvelous example of genetic engineering who can "pass for human" because she *is* human, except to all the ordinary folks who can't accept such things; some of Heinlein's best extrapolative description in years: this future world is lived in as most of his recent ones have not been, and it's politically interesting too—all the large countries Balkanized and the whole world rather like South America is now, with the real power in the hands of the multinationals, especially Shipstone, a huge conglomerate which controls cheap energy and much else, and which Heinlein backgrounds beautifully for more than half the book before providing any explanation for it; lots of "philosophical" chit-chat concerning the state of the world and how it got that way, which readers of *Expanded Universe* took straight but which is better handled here than in the recent novels, and which, I have to admit, makes good sense as often as not.

To tell you what Friday does would be to give away "the story", but—one more plus—Heinlein handles her various activities, and the craft and knowledge she brings to them, with the kind of technological efficiency that made him the Old Master of American sf back in the early days; I think this is the "professionalism" Ellison refers to, and he's correct: Heinlein gives us the discourse of *knowing how* things are done here, and that must fit one of the definitions of science fiction.

If this is Robert Heinlein writing the way he did thirty to forty years ago, the question still must be asked: does it matter anymore? I admit it: I am here siding with Christopher Priest in his attack on Lester del Rey. Heinlein is better than Del Rey, and, as Bruce Franklin has shown, his technologically proficient prose is both important to the development of certain forms of sf discourse and centrally American. Nevertheless, what I might have thrilled to thirty years ago is no longer necessarily the most exciting writing I can imagine. I've certainly changed in those thirty years; so have some of my favorite authors—growing in craft, ability to characterize, subtlety of style, etc.—so why hasn't Heinlein? *Friday* is packaged in the same efficient and dogmatic prose that worked so well in "Gulf," say, which is fine, if you still find "Gulf" to be the summit of science fiction's potential.

Hey, I *was* entertained by *Friday,* but nothing more, finally. And some things distressed me—a lot. For example: *Friday* is dedicated, on a first name basis, to almost all the well-known female sf writers, and its narrator is a superbly trained woman, able to look after herself in all situations. Yet she adores her "Boss", who trains her *and* gives her the wisdom she needs to survive in this world. I'm not sure either Ursula or Vonda would approve, let alone Joanna, who isn't on the list. Again: Heinlein's philosophy of sexuality strikes me as eminently sane, but his presentation of sex and love has the same cheery technical efficiency as his presentation of the world-wide computer net and its working—if anything, the latter is rendered with greater believable feeling. And what am I to do with a heroine who can toughly take a gang rape with no qualms or emotional

suffering because it's her job but who later marries one of the rapists since he only did it because he was pretending to be part of the gang and besides she was just so damned sexy and attractive and at least he's a pretty good guy otherwise (especially as he turns out to be an AP too, who, sadly, was not trained by the "Boss", and therefore couldn't be expected to know any better. Right?).

I admit that I find many of Heinlein's satiric thrusts at human foibles exquisitely on target. On the other hand, Friday's emotional suffering because she "knows" she isn't accepted as fully human (while the "Boss" and the other good guys, and we, recognize her intrinsic worth from the beginning) is supposed to be the solid core of human sentiment on which the book turns. But it becomes sentimental in Heinlein's hands; he tells us through Friday's memoirs that she feels certain things but is unable to show us these feelings in action. Rather he has her "fall in love" (as opposed to sex) with three nice guys and two nice girls in one weekend, and later (having coincidentally found them there after being unable to track them down during the troubles which have disrupted political life on Earth) settle down with them and a few others on a colony planet at the end. The phenomenology of emotional encounter is not one of Heinlein's strong points, nor the speech of lovers, yet these are central to the development of the story. Because he fails to make me believe in the emotional depth of Friday's responses to other people, or theirs to her—because he can only tell me about them—he fails to make me really care about her or what happens to her.

So I enjoyed reading *Friday*, especially for its intelligence-eye view of a future world on the downslope from our own politically and ethically—as the "Boss" points out to Friday, it's a civilization about to collapse, one of the biggest signs of which is the loss of common politeness. But there's nothing here to draw me back to renew and deepen my experience of this work, and works of art, even in sf, do draw one back.

Yes, Heinlein is back, and for many readers the old Heinlein is all they want or need—it's been a long time since *The Moon Is A Harsh Mistress*. For those who, like me, found even that novel no more than a fairly good read marred by sentimentality and a careless sexism, *Friday* is no cause for rejoicing, really; just another example of safe popular science fiction that takes no chances where they count—in language, in art, in the heart.

Majipoor Chronicles
Robert Silverberg *(Arbor House, n.d., 314 pp, $5.95)*

reviewed by Ian Watson

Majipoor Chronicles is a set of linked stories located in various eras of the giant planet—the linking theme being that of Hissune, a humble though precocious lad who helped Valentine to regain his throne, who is now poking around surreptitiously in the Hall of Records, where people's memory recordings are stored. At first he does so to alleviate the monotony of being a dusty clerk—the role with which the restored Valentine rewarded him—and then this becomes his secret education in the history and ways of Majipoor and the geography of the soul; after which Valentine, of course, turns up and reveals in a fairytale finale that he has been keeping an eye on Hissune all this time, while the lad unwittingly grooms himself for Great Things; and the back blurb is kind enough to

inform us that this commoner Hissune is the new Coronal in the making.

I suppose that this injects a certain "Log Cabin to White House" note of meritorious democracy into the regal hierarchies of Majipoor (so long as you're in the right place at the right time, or heed the omens); just as the business of dream-sendings either from the nice Lady of the Isle or the chastening King of Dreams, as exemplified herein by the tale of a murderer, suggests that every little sparrow, at least potentially, is noted in the harmonious multi-billion-thread weave of Majipoor life, by a blend of human wisdom, fate and deity. As does the tale herein of a swindled shopkeeper sold a false inheritance, who nevertheless becomes the lady of the manor, suggest that people (and aliens too) will tend to get their proper deserts. "Whatever is, is right," could be the motto of these life-gleanings by Hissune; an excellent one to imprint on a future prince.

Of course there are black threads in the tapestry, too, but all in all Majipoor is a very civilized and peaceful and obedient place, where no one would wish to untune the status quo, and where a murder is an almost unheard-of atrocity; and tension in these stories comes largely from the stripping away of illusions about oneself, and others, for good or for ill, and from the tempering of character. Which makes the stories herein a shade bland, compared with many of Silverberg's tighter and more emotionally harrowing tales. But neat withal; neat.

And, as ever, wonder proceeds from the inexhaustible cornucopia that is Majipoor; though there is rather less babble about this than in *Lord Valentine's Castle.* And I still wonder, myself, at the size of this planet. Surely, if we're to believe the story "In the Fifth Year of the Voyage", Majipoor just has to be either a hollow shell or a gas-giant. How else could it take a ship a whole decade to circumnavigate it? Mere dearth of heavy elements alone doesn't allow a planet to be as vast as this, and still possess gentle gravity. Perhaps the world is really an alien artefact . . . ? Like *Orbitsville?*

Curiously, too, Majipoor has welcomed mass immigration by alien races within the past few thousand years; yet nowhere is there any hint—not even in a story of the early days, when the aliens are first arriving—of how they got there. No spaceport or starships; nor does Majipoor ever seem to receive subsequent off-world visitors, other than these hordes of immigrants who simply seem to have materialized. There is no hint, later, of any disused or neglected spaceport anywhere. It seems as though everyone got over the business of star travel in a rush and just settled down calmly for the next million years. At the end of Shaw's *Orbitsville* we discover the true and subtle purpose of such vast real-estate: restless humanity is soaked up and tranquillized by it, instead of boldly marching forth to colonize the universe. The Majipoor universe rather tends to have this cake, and eat it too, since thousands of star systems have been colonized—but there's no contact with any of them; though hordes of immigrants have arrived by agreement with alien governments who are also feeling overcrowded—said agreements conducted by what channel of communication?

Orbitsville settles down, quite logically, to the long Sunday afternoon of time, since there's no point in travelling around (let alone hunting for new worlds), because of its vast sameness; but on Majipoor by contrast the topography is so exotically varied that there's no need even to think of other worlds. Or starships.

Yet Majipoor has not relapsed, and risen again. Genetics, climate control machines, mind science and anti-gravity floaters are all working perfectly well, in continuity with the past. It's a little as though Gormenghast has double glazing, fruit machines, and

microwave ovens in the kitchens, and nothing else; and has recently settled dozens of Vietnamese refugees in the West Wing, then promptly forgotten that airports exist.

But surely this is cavilling. *Majipoor Chronicles* is a pleasant book, of nicely crafted, well-balanced and colourful morality entertainments, set in a framework which only becomes all too predictable when we reached the epilogue (continued on the back blurb). And again it is a high-juvenile, with just enough sex and growth-pains and ambiguous life-choices and risks to make one feel almost mature. And with quite enough overall presidency by a benign status quo to make one feel reasonably safe.

The Man Who Had No Idea
by Thomas M. Disch *(Gollancz, 1982, 186 pp, £7.95)*

reviewed by Richard Cowper

The entry on Tom Disch in *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction* concludes with the words: "TMD is perhaps the most respected, least trusted, most envied and least read of all modern sf writers of the first rank; his reputation can only grow. He has won no awards." Since those words were written Disch has in fact picked up a couple of awards but, that apart, the judgement still strikes me as a remarkably acute summing up of the position he holds in the sf world. And no more so than in the phrase "least trusted". I am tempted to wonder whether Disch's main problem vis-à-vis the fans is that he is a deal too clever for his own good. Certainly he is a rare sort of fish to be finning around in the warm placental water of the sf pond. Only consider: one, he is a highly skilled (and highly conscious) literary stylist; two, he is extremely well-read (at times *Camp Concentration* all but foundered under the weight of erudition); three, he is the possessor of a needle-sharp ironic wit. It is this last attribute which makes him so suspect. His moving finger writes and having written ends up, as often as not, pointing directly at the reader. As one of his protagonists in the present volume remarks, "Then they'd spend a large part of their social life exposing each others' impostures and laughing at them. A sense of humour they called it. He was glad he didn't have one, yet."

The Man Who Had No Idea collects seventeen of Disch's stories. The earliest—and one of the best—"The Apartment Next to the War"—was first published in 1974—the latest in 1982. Their length varies from the slenderest of *feuillton* ("How to Fly"; "The Italian Lesson") to near-novella ("Concepts"; "The Man Who Had No Idea") and each is prefaced with a personal note by the author. To start with I found these preludes somewhat whimsical and obtrusive but by the end I was relishing them almost as much as the tales they introduced. Only rarely did they elucidate the accompanying story but they certainly gave me a number of fascinating insights upon the person who wrote them. At least I *thought* they did. Now, upon reflection, I am not so sure. For instance in the preface to "Planet of the Rapes" Disch records how a woman reader had taken him to task on the grounds that the story was a sincere wish-fulfilment fantasy in the spirit of John Norman's *Gor*, instead of being "a lampoon upon male chauvinism". He adds, disarmingly, "On cross examination it became clear how this confusion had arisen." There is a curious, uneasy ambivalence in the tale which is of the type that has given New Wave satire a bad name in certain circles. It recalled to me my instinctive feelings of doubt when first confronted by Nabokov's *Lolita* and Fowles' *The Collector*. Something was

amiss somewhere—there was altogether too much *relish* and too little irony in the fictional situation. Anyone who needs reminding how such things can be handled successfully should go back and re-read Swift's *A Modest Proposal.*

If, as I believe, "Planet of the Rapes" was an experiment which failed for reasons of auctorial ambivalence, "Concepts", which was published in the following year, 1978, falters for a different reason. It is a long story with a nice central idea and, in Mrs Manresa, a convincing central character—Disch, incidentally, is extraordinarily good at creating credible middle-aged female characters. Having set up the situation (Mrs M falls in love with a man on the other side of the universe via a hyper-space link-up and they "beget" a child, non-physically, in limbo) Disch then runs out of steam and the story drifts off course and finally peters out into something which comes perilously close to tedium. By Disch's own high standards I must rate both these stories as failures but they are both *interesting* failures and neither is without those felicities of style and observation which place his work in an altogether different category from that of most other sf writers.

He makes use of sf concepts for his own droll purposes, usually by confronting the reader with a fait accompli—the cool assumption that the technology already exists because it is accepted by his characters just as we ourselves accept the existence of the TV and the telephone. Thus he avoids getting himself bogged down in those boring attempts to fabricate a spurious scientific/technological rationale which make the work of some writers in the genre all but unreadable. Stories in which he pulls this off most successfully are "The Pleasure Centre" (hypothalmic stimulation); "Concepts" (interstellar communication via psychic (?) contact); "Understanding Human Behaviour" (personality erasure à la David Karp's *One*), but in each of these tales, as in almost all the others, his real interest lies in the characters he has created. Indeed his involvement with the creatures of his imagination is such that he is sometimes constrained to fabricate a happy ending which goes against the grain of the story itself.. "Understanding Human Behaviour" really should not end that way, but I can perfectly understand *why* it does.

Two of the tales can claim classification under "horror", but horror is not Disch's true forte. Easily the best of the "nasty" stories is "The Foetus" whose heroine, Agnes Brill,

> wanted quite desperately to get laid, and she resisted, just as desperately, every attempt. She was your average Irish-Catholic sexpot—half ripe tomato and already at the age of twenty-four, half fading rose—one of those rare beauties of whom it could actually be said that her eyes were *not* her best feature, for her eyes, unless animated by a spark of calculation, were rather lacklustre and tended, unless she were very careful, to squint.

Not the kind of lass you'd ever find shacked-up on Ringworld, that's for sure. As a skit on such stories as *Rosemary's Baby,* "The Foetus" is both funny *and* creepy, though I estimate the ratio to be three parts fun to one part *frisson.* Of the other potential "nasty"—"The Black Cat"—which Disch pronounces to be "a sincere, old-fashioned horror story", I can only report that my thinning hair remained wholly quiescent.

The most recent stories in the collection appear to show a slight change in emphasis towards pure fantasy. The delightful "Josie and the Elevator: A Cautionary Tale" looks forward to "The Brave Little Toaster" which, unfortunately, is not included in the present volume. But the point about Disch (as indeed about any really good writer) is that he persuades the reader to accept the perspectives he offers virtually without question

and, at his best, he has the enviable Kafkaesque ability to draw the reader into the story by the intensity of his vision. In "The Apartment Next to the War"—a brilliant and chilling little fable—we accept what is a manifestly impossible situation by the sheer skill of the presentation: the story astonishes us both by itself alone and by reason of its gruesome subject, and what more can one ask?

Over all these tales and their prefatory notes there hovers the wry spirit of their author, popping up in such by-the-way comments as "It was odd and rather awful to think of the past as something real that people had once actually been stuck in, like mafiosi in cement or knights locked into suits of armour." Confronted by the wealth of such asides I find myself irresistibly drawn to envisage TMD as a sort of Cheshire Cat, melting away into the ghost of a grin. Long may he continue to delight us.

Burn This
by Tom Disch *(Hutchinson, 1982, 63 pp, £7.50)*

reviewed by Patrick Parrinder

Burn This continues the partial metamorphosis of Thomas M. Disch, a science-fiction writer much eulogized by Samuel Delany, into Tom Disch of *TLS* fame, verbal dandy and comic poet. Both poets and sf writers delight in the speculative imagination, and critics have occasionally tried to argue that some—even the greatest—poetry is a continuation of sf by other means. Not so, however, in Disch's case. He is not a visionary travelling into the unknown but an urbane and civilized poet whose *urbs*—"the entire range of beings in between/ The subatomic and the astronomical", "the plenum of all imaginable/ Transformations that any one of us might undergo"—is the whole universe. Once this multitude of beings and transformations has been evoked within the borders of a poem, Disch's task with them is to make the reader feel at home.

There is a good deal of science in this collection, but no scientific romance. Only once does Disch look into his crystal ball, and then the vision he offers (of "the Great Collapse/ to which our fatal Progress has brought us") is as offhand as it is discouraging. More characteristic is his response in "On Reading Shelley" to that most vatic of poets:

> Oh, I would love to know, the way they knew!—

but he must know that the wistfulness is too easy to be convincing. Wistfulness predominates in his "MS. Found in a Bottle", with its happily shipwrecked poet for whom survival takes second place to art; for if

> one can't worry about sharks
> Twenty-four hours a day

one can incontrovertibly worry away at one's art.

Worries of various kinds do occasionally raise their head in these poems ("We are too fretful, you and I," Disch writes in "For Marilyn Hacker") but the prevailing mood is one of tongue-in-cheek affirmation. His last book of poetry was titled with the letters of the alphabet, and here he is closer to writer's manuals and spelling books than to the casting of spells. Relaxed, feet up ("Do you think *my* feet aren't comfortable?") he sets out to please but also to instruct the reader in the literary arts. It is not for nothing that the opening poem is subtitled "A Primer". Rarely, in fact, can a poet have favoured his

readers with so much advice, admonition, and graceful lawgiving in one volume since the days of Horace. And should anyone find the advice given too frivolous for their taste, they can always follow the poet's eponymous instruction and burn it.

Burn This is a very unified collection, since every item has some bearing on the art of poetry and the literary life. It would be tedious to list the topics on which Disch touches so lightly and wittily. Sometimes, it is true, a Serious Intention is rather too obviously signalled by an echo from Shakespeare's sonnets or the Pound of "Hugh Selwyn Mauberley". (If this raises the spectre of Harold Bloom and his theory of the anxiety of influence, Disch has a nice little fantasy of Leopold Bloom in the botanical garden "Leading young Harold by the hand" and teaching him the names of the flowers.) Among the many rules he imparts are those he attributes to the science-fiction confraternity:

> Always display a cheerful disposition. Do not refer
> To our infirmation. Help us to conquer the galaxy.

But in this context I would prefer to adapt what he says, in the closing lines of this very enjoyable volume, of the long poem:

> Is it possible, still,
> In the twentieth century,
> To be sublime?
> Science fiction winks at us
> And whispers,
> Any time.

The Eye of the Queen
by Phillip Mann *(Gollancz, 1982, 264 pp, £7.95)*

reviewed by Peter Caracciolo

"What genius I had when I wrote that book!" Swift is supposed to have remarked on looking back at *A Tale of a Tub*. "All that learning fresh in my head!" Perhaps in later years Phillip Mann will regard his ingenious first novel with similarly ironic admiration. For as well as being impressively knowledgeable about anthropology, he has read widely in what may be loosely termed Gothic literature, both mainstream and sf. Dante, Shakespeare, *The Arabian Nights,* Sufi tales and verse, Blake, Coleridge all make their presence felt here; there's a hint of Mary Shelley and two distinct echoes of M.R. James's chilling ghost story "Oh Whistle and I'll Come to You My Lad": first when Mann's hero unwisely catches the frightening attention of chthonic powers in the other world and receives an occult vision of the true appearance of one of the natives—"a shroud, it was like a bundle of clothes that accidentally resembles a face but without life"; on the second occasion, contrariwise, it is an Earthman ignorant of his powers who spellbinds a family of aliens—"wrapped them up in your thought," explains one of his extraterrestrial hosts. "You and the old boy can whistle up a gale when you get aroused." As if to emphasize that what he is giving us here is Gothic sf, Mann displays an amusingly impudent disregard for the technological proprieties of the "hard" sciences in describing the alien space ship: "green and glossy as a ripe Granny Smith . . . It is one of the biggest artefacts I have ever seen . . . it dilates and contracts fractionally from minute to minute . . . has not landed, but hovers a mere ten centimetres above the earth. Why should that be? . . . Exact scent hard

to define—tomato plants maybe." Among genre writers Blish and Budrys are clear influences, possibly Philip K. Dick; the most obvious model though has been surely *Downward to the Earth,* Silverberg's theological fable suggesting the plot of *The Eye of the Queen.*

Retired after years of experience in remote areas of the universe, a distinguished administrator is mysteriously drawn back to renew contact with an extraterrestrial culture; the result is an ordeal that literally makes a different person of him. True, Silverberg's protagonist is an ex-colonial officer conscience-stricken about his past misrule, and Mann's is an "analogue-linguist" as dissatisfied with his translations as with the achievements of anthropology in outer space: "sometimes the banner of our idealism looks like arrogance to me". Basically, though, the plots are the same. The real differences emerge in the handling of the symbolism. Silverberg's hero, seeking to do reparation, makes a pilgrimage to the North, riding up country on the back of an elephantine nildoror, where he participates in one of the pachyderm dances, and encounters an old colleague, Kurtz, who went evilly native, for which he is now punished by an appalling metamorphosis; at last the visitor himself confesses that in the imperialist days he too injured one of the nildoror. The explicitness of the references Silverberg drops to Kipling and to the literature for and against imperialism is hardly necessary: "Toomai of the Elephants," *The Heart of Darkness,* Orwell's experiences in Burma manifestly shape one level of meaning. Yet in this lucidly complex novel there are more than just anti-colonial or even ecological preoccupations. The pachyderm nildoror are one of the two dominating intelligent species (the other is the hominoid primate sulidoror) on what was "Holman's World" but at independence renamed "Belzagor . . . like something out of Assyrian mythology"; again, even in the incident reminiscent of Orwell bolstering his authority by shooting an elephant, significantly the nildoror defer their own pilgrimage to new life in a manner suggestive of the Bodhisattva who postpones Nirvana so as to help mankind on its quest. The Buddha's father, legend has it, was a sacred white elephant and in Wu Cheng-En's classic cycle *Monkey,* telling how Tripitaka the monk sought to bring Buddhism to the "Celestial Kingdom" by a return journey from the jungles of China to the Tibetan plateau, the "stone monkey king" (who escorts the Chinese pilgrim) is plainly ancestor to the simian sulidoror who also act as guide on Silverberg's vividly imagined world. Deeper than the political morality, there's a layer of religious significance in *Downward to the Earth* that is brought out by a subtly coherent symbolism based on a synthesis of such literary classics as *Paradise Lost* and the not unfamiliar theriomorphic iconography of the Hindu, Buddhist and Jain teachings. Plainly something like the same effect was aimed at by Phillip Mann.

Unfortunately, while from the start Silverberg's expressive economy inspires confidence in the reader, there seems to be in *The Eye of the Queen* a plethora of allusions, sometimes recondite, the exact significance of which in several cases remains tantalizingly obscure even on reperusal: eg. what is the justification for conjuring up so haunting a literary ghost as we meet in the opening references to one "Jose Borges, Chairman of the Medical Division . . . and Director of the Forensic Institute?" Belatedly I recognize a teasing allusion to Jorge Luis Borges's account of all-too-human cannibals in "Doctor Brodie's Report", which in its turn echoes Swift's attempt to define human nature in Gulliver's encounter with the Yahoos and those rational horses. Happily I did quickly grasp, that by quoting "Tiger, tiger (sic) burning bright", Mann alerts us to the

questionable ethics of the mysterious inhabitants of Pe-Ellia; and if their galloping recalls the Houyhnhnms, their gigantic reptillian physique and ignorance of "God" suggest also a kinship with the enigmatic Lithians of Blish's *A Case of Conscience*. Mann does try his hand at some Joycean word play but wisely avoids competing with the deft exploitation of *Finnegans Wake* in Blish's version of the Adam and Eve story. Turning instead to another sf classic, Mann takes a leaf or two out of Budrys's Gothic sf *Rogue Moon* in the development of allusions to the Grail legend.

The suspicion that Mann's hero has a lot of the Fisher King about him grows into certainty when Marius Thorndyke's love of angling is established and "the Iron Duke", as he is affectionately known to his colleagues, acquires the religious name of "Diver". Beset with doubts as to his potency, believing the human brain to be a blighted organ, "ill-balanced . . . the rational parts dominated by our darker primitive instincts", Thorndyke finds himself called on to be chief spokesman for an Earth laid waste by its own ultimate weapon: "the loss of millions of acres of Brazilian rain forest", Chicago's skyscrapers "canted over like stripped pine trees after a fire". The gradual religious awakening of this old atheist is contrasted with the scientific objectivity preserved by his companion Professor Mnaba whose Christian name casts him in the role of sceptic. As erstwhile and present Directors of the Contract Linguistics Institute on Camellia, both have been despatching man after man or themselves venturing on "contact quests" (the author nonchalantly leaves us to imagine how in their space suits they look like armoured knights), all hopeful of encountering a more advanced civilization: "Species X . . . the powerful but invisible race which theoretically at least seemed to be able to control the direction of our space exploration". As with the Grail Knights the C.L.I. personnel seek in vain until the object of the Quest itself singles them out, arriving as suddenly as it departs, a mysterious floating vessel variously seen as a "luminous green" or "giant ghostly pearl", moving without the need of wind, tide or engine, and in which at least Thorndyke thinks he sees "the strange figure of the Turin shroud", as the assorted companions of the quest are carried off to the mystic centre of the universe. On Pe-Ellia in a house with the look of a church half buried underground, Thorndyke and his doubting Thomas discover a large oval table; "the effect is archaic, almost the world of King Arthur". The guests of beings as weirdly heraldic as Amerindians or Oriental warriors, the Earthmen take communion in a kind of Mass whose celebrant bears the stigmata. On their quest the Earthmen are cupped in the palm of an immense, almost invisible hand and thereafter repeatedly manipulated, plucked up for inspection by a hierarchy of supernatural creatures. Eventually during a further pilgrimage to the North under the guard of a magnificent dragon, Thorndyke passes beneath the angelic scrutiny of a "Cloud of Unknowing" before removal to a "Perilous Cemetery" on a "turning island" from which one returns only after having been rendered down in "the melting pot" of the deity presiding over this other world. For, as a vessel of initiation and rebirth, the Grail has predecessors among the many cauldrons of fertility known to world mythology.

In like manner the associations evoked by the "Big Apple" of the alien spaceship are subsequently developed in the description of planet-fall as "our honour guard—strung out like berries of mistletoe": the Silver and Golden Boughs of Celtic and Mediterranean belief, traditional passports to the underworld. In *The Eye of the Queen* the very space ships of the Terran explorers, almost all the worlds they discover, the cultures decoded, bear the names of flowers or fruit; there's an autumnal air to much of the story and we

recall that Halloween is the great apple festival, a crossing point on the border between life and death, the haunt of those ambivalent manifestations of the Great (sometimes Terrible) Mother Goddess, the Lady of the Beasts. Mann's ambition is to do something more than just indict once again empire, post-colonialism, or even celebrate that return to religious conviction typical of the menopause: Thorndyke is too old for his change in sexual direction to be explicable in terms of the mid-life crisis; the mention of "the Indian Rope Trick" rather insinuates there is something Shamanistic in his "Marriage of Heaven and Hell".

One glimpses among the riches pouring from this cornucopian novel a wish to deal with all the different *rites de passage* and the accompanying changes in the relation between the rational mind and unconscious. The telepathic power of which Mann's aliens are in conscious control, of which his Earthmen are dangerously ignorant, looks like an elaboration of those travellers' tales that by some indefinable means pre-literate peoples such as the Bushmen can transmit information over vast distances. The anatomies of the three types of Pe-Ellian indeed show the author using the widespread beliefs of primitive societies that the ancestor of Man was a frog or lizard or insect; the Mantissa, the Pe-Ellian spirit of the place, is revealed as having the form of an immense praying mantis—the shape most commonly taken by Cagn the Trickster god in the profound and beautiful myths of the Bushman. The ecstatic dance of the Pe-Ellians which leads to the "spoiling" (Mann uses the Bushman term) of the participants, and subsequently the degradation of Cook, one of the most touching of Mann's aliens (who are very plausibly characterized by, among other things, their delightfully inadequate grasp of English idioms)—this whole poignant episode derives from one of the few cycles to have survived the Bushman massacres in the 1870s. Could there be in the surname of Mann's hero an echo of the "Thorns"? These children of Cagn, deceived into thinking the disguised Trickster is dead, proceed to dismember him. Before the threatened act of cannibalism can occur Cagn reconstitutes himself, just as with the aid of his wife's pot the Mantis can resurrect the dead game. In these wonderful myths which reconcile the guilt, occasioned by a legitimate desire for food with those taboos on parricide and incest that were necessary to bind the adolescents (jealous of their elders) into the early hunting societies, anthropologists argue we see the origins of religion and art. The manner in which these wisdom stories surface from murky, terrifying depths in Mann's imagination goes beyond suggesting how old is the problem of human aggression, or how our forebears dealt with it. The Pe-Ellian, who finds the Earthmen as fascinatingly monstrous as they do him, represents the alien rummaging at the back of our own minds, the shadowself, and ancestral ghost to be exorcized only through recognition and acceptance. I think Swift too would have welcomed this immensely talented new writer.

The Sword of the Lictor
by Gene Wolfe *(Timescape Books, 1981, 302 pp, $15.50)*

reviewed by Douglas Barbour

In the field of science fiction—most specifically post-*Amazing Stories* American sf—I would have to say that the new masters are far more interesting and entertaining than the so-called old masters. A case in point: I happened to read both Robert Heinlein's *Friday*

and Gene Wolfe's *The Sword of the Lictor* within a few days of each other. The former is a good beer-money book by a seasoned entertainer returned to form (when it comes out in paperback: the price of one, maybe two beers); but the latter is art, by a writer still growing in richness and depth of vision (and he would get my *cognac* money any day!). If we look back in sf, unless we look to the father of it all, H.G. Wells, we tend to find writers whose imaginations and sensawondas far outstrip their craft; the result is an oft-times unwittingly risible confusion of vision and pulp conventions, or, in cases like Heinlein's, a spirited technological sentimentalism that can at its best be oddly moving (see, for example, "Requiem", written in 1940 and still able to bring a tear to the eye of a NASA controller), but is essentially a hardware advertisement for the future. In contrast, the really interesting writers today are, like Gene Wolfe, capable of writing damn near anything and making their vision live in their *language*. Wolfe's The Book of the New Sun, of which *The Sword of the Lictor* is the third and latest part, is ample proof of this assertion.

As Colin Greenland pointed out in *Foundation* 24, Wolfe has not only written a truly marvelous science fantasy set millions of years in our future on a dying "Urth", he has also written the book on such works, a kind of Borgesian sub-textual reference guide where every formal development in this sub-genre is both laid out for our inspection and then done *right,* the way we always knew it should and could be. Greenland's critique celebrated the good things of this massive work so well that I find I have little to add, except to say that denying yourself the pleasure of these texts is manifest masochism of the cruelest kind. This is, as only too many commentators from Algis Budrys and Thomas M. Disch to Ursula K. Le Guin and Theodore Sturgeon have pointed out, one of those rare works which not only stake their claim as major works within the genre but rewrite the genre's possibilities, its potential future, as well. It's true that *Star Wars* spinoffs will probably earn more money, but Wolfe's opus will continue to affect its readers and its genre long after the former is forgotten. It will, I believe, prove to be a central and critical text in the development of sf.

Although Severian (who began as an apprentice torturer and is now a wanderer escaping the law he refused once again to uphold and falling in with old companions and enemies, often confusedly reversed) follows an essentially picaresque route to his eventual writing of his own story, and although this third volume is somewhat lacking in obvious "plot", *The Sword of the Lictor* repays the careful and loving reader on every page. Wolfe has created one of the most fully imagined fantastic backgrounds in sf: he convinces us that Severian's world is new and changed utterly, full of terrible beauty indeed. The most ancient myths found there reach back only to our far future. The world is in a near pastoral phase; even the great cities are mere remnants of the splendid civilizations they once signed. At one point Severian climbs a mountain *carved* in the likeness of an ancient autarch: Ozymandias writ larger than ever before (and that particular kind of imaginative enlargement of past glories through technology is surely one of the things science fiction alone does), yet although he is awed he also accepts it as the singers of the Odyssey simply accepted the tales of the golden age of the gods—as something to believe in which once made the world a more wondrous place than it is now. But, of course, by demonstrating Severian's faith in his past Wolfe makes his present all the more magical to us.

Wolfe also tells marvelous tales *within* his larger fiction; here "The Tale of the Boy

Called Frog" is his gift from the largesse of story: it is clearly a myth or legend of Severian's past and our future and thus it is a lovely, archaic-sounding, mixture of science fictional and fantastic discourse; it is also a beautiful example of human archetropism. Many of Severian's own adventures remind us of other stories, told many times, too, yet they also belong there, then. Wolfe's point being perhaps that human nature has always been so broadly defined, its possibilities always explored to the furthest in the act of fiction, that even in the (obviously not) unimaginable future the parabolic outlines of a life will have some fictional familiarity in the midst of all that's newly imagined about it. Thus he is simultaneously creating a new story and offering a fictional commentary on all the other stories which have tried to tell this new story before.

Sf has seldom been thought of as a field where style is of central importance (only Samuel R. Delany has ever insisted upon this), yet the most interesting writers have always struggled to find a language that would truly express their visions—Bester and Sturgeon; Aldiss, Delany, Le Guin, Russ, Zelazny; and lately, or only noticed lately, Crowley, Disch, Moorcock, Roberts, Wolfe; and there are others, especially some of the newer women writers (and there was Dick, whose vision always outstripped his craft yet whose craft always caught, somehow, the essence of his vision, once again proving the fallibility of critical categorization in these matters). At any rate, in The Book of the New Sun, Gene Wolfe isn't simply writing better than most sf writers, he is crafting a prose to stand with the best.

If I have given the impression somehow that The Book of the New Sun is one of those "great" works which only academics or literary elitists would read, let me clear away that misconception. If you're looking for profundity here, believe me you will find it. But, like its predecessors, *The Sword of the Lictor* is great entertainment, presenting a magical world full of odd, intriguing, and oddly endearing characters such as lesser talents simply cannot create. Is The Book of the New Sun destined to be a genuine sf masterpiece? I don't doubt it; but, more important, it's a major addition to imaginative literature in our time. I only wish I didn't have to wait for Volume Four; I want to sit down and read the whole thing through. Now. That will be a great joy, indeed.

The One Tree
by Stephen Donaldson *(Sidgwick & Jackson, 1982, 475 pp, £8.95)*

reviewed by Ian Watson

I must begin this review with an advertisement. A couple of days before my review copy of *The One Tree* arrived in the post, I received a 25-page duplicated magazine entitled *Flay, Swelter & Groan* consisting of three articles on the Fantasy genre by Geraldine Pinch, Nick Lowe, and editor Phil Palmer; and this contains, to my mind, some of the best thinking on the subject that I've come across; and quite iconoclastic, too. (Copies of *Flay, Swelter & Groan* are available on request from Phil Palmer, 62 Beaufort Mansions, Beaufort Street, Chelsea, London SW3. It might be nice to send a stamped addressed A4 envelope. Hurry, while stocks last!)

Anyway, Phil Palmer's essay gives cogent reasons why I shouldn't be writing this review at all; while Nick Lowe's essay explains why Donaldson's *Chronicles of Thomas Covenant* are a rotten confidence trick, and sheer drivel; and only Geraldine Pinch's essay

leaves me some room for manoeuvre . . .

But I do have one advantage when I approach Donaldson's books: I have never read a single word of fiction by Tolkien—consequently on the subject of thematic plagiarism I cannot comment. (And Geraldine Pinch suggests good reasons why this might not matter.)

So, to *The One Tree* itself. With, as usual, its immense length detailing every morsel of the quest and every thought en route; and doing so, often, by disemboweling the dictionary. Loth as one is to give editors free rein to hack and slash, but shouldn't the odd fifty thousand words have been blue-pencilled—not least those of recondite arcanery?

But equally, might this act of surgery not have betrayed the whole spirit of the book, and likewise of its antecedents? And might not the correction of Donaldson's deliberately heightened language have betrayed his mood of beauteous fulgurating anguish? Donaldson's faults are ones which, once pointed out and registered in one's critical soul, tend to make a sensitized reader thereafter gibber and squirm; and this, I feel, is a mite unfair—for perhaps they are no more faults than the deliberate Latinate diction of *Paradise Lost* is a fault; rather, it is part of the whole weave.

(But admittedly Donaldson's penchant for refulgent diction does seem to lead him into deep waters sometimes, as when on page 5 he writes: "The obverse of her sharp vulnerability was a peculiar and necessary usefulness". The obverse is, of course, the side facing you: the opposite of the reverse. But hist, even my humble dictionary allows that another meaning of "obverse" is "forming a counterpart", "complementary to something else". So maybe Donaldson is choosing precisely and exactly; but suspicion lingers, when the well-known meaning contradicts the lesser-known, if appropriate definition.)

In *The One Tree* Covenant and his crew travel out from the Land, now Wounded, overseas to the Land of Faery (which isn't at all whimsical), thence to an unwished-for landfall at a desert-side port, and onward to the isle of the One Tree, where they fail to make a new Staff of Law from one of its branches. (But have they not succeeded, without realizing it? Vain's lignified arm may well be that Staff . . .)

In his invention of new and relevant locales, utterly unlike the Land, I think Donaldson succeeds magnificently. The whole episode of the Sandhold is, I'd say, right up there with Gene Wolfe's *Book of the New Sun*—upon which much praise is heaped by the discerning, whilst the even more discerning are busy consigning Donaldson to Purgatory. One *lingers* over Wolfe because of the quality of his prose; and perhaps one hastens through Donaldson because of the quality of *his*. (Yet is Donaldson not perhaps writing in a different *dialect* of the same choice prose, which happens to jar on our cultivated ears, as somewhat uncouth?)

Nevertheless I have a nagging suspicion that the quality of vision in Donaldson is superior. Boiled down to its bones, Severian's quest is relatively aimless, picaresque and trivial (so far). Covenant's—and Linden Avery's—isn't; and I find, too, that I am much clearer in retrospect about the events in the *Chronicles* than I am about what has actually happened on Severian's peregrinations. Conceivably this all revolves around a distinction between Prophecy, and the Literature of civilized demeanour, as touched upon by E.M. Forster in *Aspects of the Novel*. A conspicuous feature of the former is lack of humour, and complete lack of authorial humour (as well as of wit, irony etc.) is evident in every sentence of Donaldson's—however humorous the fellow may or may not be himself, in person—compared with Wolfe's undoubted urbanity, which promptly enfolds him

within the bosom of civilized art; but may I suggest, without in any way wishing to belittle Wolfe's achievements, that Donaldson's vision is the more disturbing—and that it is better to disturb the reader than to entrance him in admiration.

In as much as the content of a book and its style reflect one another, interestingly the whole theme of the *Chronicles* is one of fatal flaws in everything which offers any hope—flaws which must nevertheless somehow be tortured into constructive use, in a contest that is by no means bound to end triumphantly; and it would actually be a great coup on Donaldson's part if he dared, having already displaced Covenant from centre stage in favour of Liden Avery, to let the quest fail, despite the heroism and sacrifice of all concerned. A terrible tragedy this would be; but as Donaldson's garrulous Giants would say, what a tale it would be in the telling! (If Donaldson dared . . . and if Del Rey let him.)

Anyway, just as the garrulousness of the Giants, who insist that a tale is spoilt unless every last detail and nuance is set down, is a mirror image of Donaldson's own narrative technique, so do the many literary "flaws" of the *Chronicles* seem to me, in a strange way, to refelect those other, moral flaws which are the subject, and indeed the lengthening-force, of the books; so that it may well be that the *Chronicles* have to be written the way they are precisely because of what they are about, ethically.

And whenever the reader begins to despair (say, of refulgent, fulgurating angst explored to extremes) suddenly the creative wonder bursts through. Just as, after much straining and straining for it initially, and much subsequent straining to keep it in check, the wild fire of the white gold suddenly bursts forth and genuinely illuminates and amazes. And terrifies.

Wolfe's *Book of the New Sun* is, of course, admirable; but maybe it is more of a closed universe—aesthetically closed, sustaining itself by the force of style in a Flaubertian way—compared with Donaldson's nominally separate, parallel, fantasy cosmos. And perhaps this is because the literary warts of the *Chronicles* are simply the skin texture of a different kind of creature, with morally prophetic values, not the values of Art. What rough beast slouches . . .

The Men from Ariel
by Donald A. Wollheim *(The Nesfa Press, 1982, 116 pp, no price shown)*

reviewed by Brian Stableford

This is a collection of ten short stories published to commemorate the appearance of Don Wollheim as guest of honour at the convention Boskone XIX. It is a very well-produced book, competently designed and professionally printed with good quality binding. It includes Wollheim's first-published story, "The Man for Ariel", from *Wonder Stories* way back in 1933, and also his most recent, written for Harlan Ellison's *The Last Dangerous Visions* but re-routed to Ken Bulmer's *New Writings in SF* after being returned by Ellison with instructions for an extensive rewrite, which Wollheim did not care to do. Only one of the six other fantasy stories appears to have been previously published, but there is also a pulp Western vignette and a curious attempt at psychological realism which appeared in a girly magazine. At heart, this is basically a collection of fan fiction, but this is well in keeping with the nature of the exercise—indeed, anything else would be almost lacking in propriety.

As a writer of short stories Wollheim has always been a dilettante. In his introduction to the collection *Two Dozen Dragon Eggs* he pointed out that he produces material of this kind mainly in the service of passing whims, and does not greatly care whether the stories sell or not. This is not to say that his stories are all inconsequential or even that they are mostly poor (though some suffer badly from the characteristic awkwardness of his prose style) but merely that Wollheim is a man who maintains a hard-and-fast boundary between his professional activities and his amusements, and short story writing falls on the latter side of the line. Don Wollheim the hard-headed editor would never consider publishing a collection of stories by Don Wollheim the short story writer as a commercial venture. Nevertheless, even the stories in *The Men from Ariel*—the ragged edge of his productivity in this line—are lively enough to make pleasant reading. Some of the pieces—"The Lost Poe", "The Horror out of Lovecraft" and "Miss Whortle's Weird" —are essentially in-jokes addressed specifically to the fantasy fan community. They show a greater surety of touch than the attempts at more ambitious forms. "Who's There" is a psychological horror story whose shock ending seems very dated, while "Ishkabab", an awkward political fable about Britain being taken over by coloured people from her colonies, has a tone of calculated silliness which fails to make up for its careless bad taste. "The Rules of the Game"—the story which failed to make *The Last Dangerous Visions* and thus actually got into print, unlike the stories which *were* accepted—is the best sf story in the book, though even that depends a little too heavily on its self-consciously naive charm. It is the same capacity for reproducing a tone of gauche self-consciousness which is turned to much more powerful effect in "The Hook", the girly-magazine story which is more substantial than its place of publication would imply.

Publication of *The Men from Ariel* seems to me to have been a happy inspiration on the part of NESFA. It provides a most appropriate way of honouring their guest and an excellent souvenir for those attending the convention. The capacity to make this kind of gesture is one of the nicest things about the science fiction fan community.

The Space Eater
by David Langford *(Arrow, 1982, 301 pp, £1.75)*

reviewed by Colin Greenland

Langford's fan writings are very funny and, to my mind, deserve a wider audience than the fanzine distribution circuit can provide. I picked up this, his first novel, hoping to find the same spirit animating his fiction. In fact *The Space Eater* is not a comedy, it's a space adventure, a technical thriller—though there is, as one reader pointed out, something implicitly facetious about a book that opens, after epigraphs from Sir Thomas Browne and G.K. Chesterton, with: "A mantrap bit my foot off; I dropped between two rocks because I had to, and took stock of the damage." Ken Jacklin, hero and narrator, is a killer commando in a future army which inures its members against the fear of death by killing them over and over again in training, regenerating them each time in special culture-baths. Though Jacklin is, to say the least, hardened by his experiences, he remains ironically alert to ridiculous aspects of situations, his mission, and himself. This steadiness helps readers who are not keen on combat fantasy, mantraps and "the smell of spilled guts", through the opening chapters into Jacklin's new mission: to frighten

experimenters on a colony world off matter transmission projects which could wreck the fabric of the universe. Though the danger is real, the reprisals he has to threaten are a desperate bluff. This calls more for ingenuity and thought than the crafts of mayhem, and Jacklin starts to unfreeze, becoming more senstive, less violent. A complicated but linear plot follows his moral regeneration from killing machine back to human being (though the structure has to include one last tight corner from which he can escape only by a burst of chopping and gouging).

The skill of sympathy that is part of Langford's repertoire ensures that Jacklin is a very likeable person. Other assets the author displays include a lot of physics, chiefly in the area of gravity/black holes/spatial gateways, bound to baffle me but a feast for buffs, I'm sure; also an abiding good sense that compensates for many defects of the traditional form. His second protagonist is Rossa Corman, a strong, self-possessed woman who dispels most of the lingering machismo; both she and Jacklin retain severe character scars from brutal training, which qualify the blitheness of their heroics; and their individual competence is everywhere confined and manipulated by military and political interests too big and powerful to be shrugged or even punched off. Langford's novel manages to be both light and substantial, trad space entertainment but without the old infidelities to terrestial experience.

In the Valley of the Statues
by Robert Holdstock *(Faber, 1982, 223 pp, £6.95)*

reviewed by Stratford Caldecott

The stories in this collection are well worth reading. Like all good sf writers, Holdstock has the ability to submerge his readers so effectively in an alternative world that they start to feel nostalgic for everyday life, and are pleasantly surprised to find it still there. These stories are unified by several themes. All of them enact industrialized man's alienation, or his cure. Most of them end with the hero completely isolated, meeting a dark fate alone. (The few of which this is not true turn out to be the least convincing—"Travellers", for example, with its rather gratuitous happy ending.) In "The Graveyard Cross", a deep space pilot returns to the solar system desperate to see whatever is left of England. But landing permission is refused, and when he lands on the moon he is told that earth has "evolved": to go there he must be adapted to the new conditions. So they turn him into a kind of super-cyborg and send him down. At this point Holdstock's style changes suddenly and brilliantly. Like the cyborg Summerson, the reader feels himself thrust into a post-apocalyptic environment so violent and strange that no amount of preparation could make it seem natural. It is only at the most extreme point of this isolation, flung into an English prison, that Summerson recognizes what he was looking for. Alienation is movement; home is stillness.

In another of the best stories here, "Mythago Wood", the theme of human isolation links up with two others, which might be labelled "ecology" and "time travel". The hero is left hiding among his father's books and specimens from the "encroaching dark" of his own unconscious mind. The deadly "mythagos" that issue from the greenwood are generated by the unconscious, working through an "oak vortex". The wood has an aura that enables the archetypal past to take on flesh. So Nature is in league with the collective

mind; it is her we come from, and it is our departure that has marooned us in the isolation Holdstock so often evokes. In the words of one of the characters in "A Small Event", "Idleness, self-centredness, indulgence . . . they've all perverted art in our hands. I'm sure of it. We've lost that very valuable sense of the primitive." By travelling back far enough into the past—in the story "Travellers" this means beyond the reach of the security forces—we can find what we have lost, and become whole. Holdstock isn't one of those who believe in technology as the saviour of mankind. He tends to see it rather cutting us off from our roots, from our compassion and creativity, and from each other. He must sympathize with the hero of "Earth and Stone", who turns his back on the future to live in the third millennium BC. We follow him into the literal sexual embrace of the earth herself, becoming a channel for the gods of wind and sun and sky and rock: "*I have found life, at last, at last . . .*"

The Nameless
by Ramsey Campbell *(Fontana, 1981, 253 pp, £1.25)*
Childgrave
by Jessica Hamilton *(Sphere, 1981, 278 pp, £1.50)*

reviewed by Lisa Tuttle

I like a good, scary story—same emphasis on both adjectives, please—and despite the spate of books marketed as horror in recent years, the real thing is hard to find. Too much of what passes for horror is just unpleasant: a *frisson* of apprehension and the apprehension of nausea aren't the same thing at all. A lot of the paperback horror novels on the racks are hackwork, or so badly written they might as well be, and the few good ones are easily lost among them. These two are books that don't deserve to be lost; they deserve some attention.

Ramsey Campbell is one of the names I always look for amid the red and black swirl of the paperback covers—not that I've always liked what he writes, but his is a distinctive, authentic voice, and that commands attention. There is an underlying sense of strangeness, something genuinely disturbing and original, in everything he writes. Even Campbell's descriptions of something as ordinary as city streets contain more lurking horror than the most determinedly horrifying scenes in other books. He's excessive at times: the piling on of bizarre images and the relentlessly skewed, paranoid vision of so many of his characters, can be hard to take. His prose is clear, never muddy, but the intensity and strangeness of his imagery is almost hallucinogenic.

The Nameless is Ramsey Campbell's best book yet. The use of disturbing, suggestive images to transform even the most ordinary situations into scenes of menace continues ("In the village a giant razor-blade dangled outside the hairdresser's, rifles the colour of stormclouds gleamed ominously in the gun-smith's window."—p.26) but it is a strategy more under control now. Instead of an unrelentingly mad view of the world, the disturbing images are more sparing, reflecting the changes in the viewpoint character as she is alternately aware and unaware of the danger she is in. The style is not as oppressive as in some of Campbell's earlier works, perhaps because his main character, Barbara Waugh, is so sane and sympathetic.

My only objection to this character is that Campbell has made her a literary agent, and

her lover a publisher who is writing a detective novel—the resulting insider chat about authors and agents and books made me cringe. This is probably a purely personal quirk, and readers who aren't writers may be perfectly happy with it, but I couldn't help wishing, throughout most of the book, that Campbell had taken the risk of making his protagonist an architect or a social worker or a pipe-fitter instead.

That quibble aside, I found this story of a mother who comes to believe that her child, abducted and apparently murdered nine years before, is still alive and in the clutches of a group that make Charles Manson's group look like the Mouseketeers, everything I look for and seldom find in a horror novel. Campbell has the enviable ability of writing absolutely convincingly about supernatural evil, without it ever seeming silly or old-fashioned or unbelievable. The supernatural element in *The Nameless* is interwoven with the horrors we read about in the newspapers: senseless murders, the abduction of children, urban violence, weird religious cults. Campbell makes the idea of a powerful evil force lurking behind and invoked by human violence utterly believable and compelling, as real as the dangerous city streets where it all happens.

One reason Campbell is so good at scaring us in *The Nameless* is that he knows that the most frightening things are those we don't see—our own imaginations can frighten us far more effectively than the concrete images presented by any outsider. M.R. James knew this, and so did Lovecraft although he was somewhat crude with all his unnameable, unspeakable horrors—and Campbell brings this idea very effectively into the modern world. He doesn't have to define his horrors, he scares us by painting in the shadows that surround them, and leaving us to guess at how big they really are.

There's a scene in *The Nameless* which takes place in a deserted house in Glasgow which is one of the scariest things I've ever read. I won't say what happens—not only because I don't want to spoil it, but also because the terror lies not in what happens, but in how Campbell describes it. Reading it the first time I was too afraid to stop reading, because stopping would have meant turning out the light and facing the darkness . . . Can't think of higher praise than that for a good, scary book.

All I know about Jessica Hamilton is that I want to read more of her books. I bought *Childgrave* because I loved the first page:

> There was a time when my life was like yours. I ate veal occasionally and avoided people who had a serious interest in God. I smiled at clients during the day, disappearing beneath the black velvet hood from time to time to steal their souls.
>
> 'Watch the birdie.'
>
> I actually said that to them. It astonished them all: perturbed executives, goose-eyed professional beauties, ascetic rock singers, worldly clerics.
>
> 'Think about what interests you most.' After I said that, there was usually a puzzled look. I waited for it to subside. 'Don't move. Thank you.'
>
> I would smile again and shake hands, my grip carefully gauged to respond with slightly less pressure than offered. For the feminine, a hint of caress.
>
> At night, my daughter would sit on my lap, her toes like pale beans.

The whole book is well-written, full of lovely scenes and unexpected images. As a story about need and desire, about the conflict between the love adults have for each other and the demands of their children and of society, *Childgrave* is wonderful: suggestive, eerie, and full of promise. It is when it attempts to become a traditional horror story, to build suspense, to create fear, to explain and justify the meaning behind the haunting suggestions, that it falls rather flat.

The narrator, Jonathan Brewster, is a widower with a young daughter who has fallen

in love with a mysterious woman named Sara Coleridge. Coincidentally with meeting this woman, his daughter begins speaking to invisible friends, and ghosts appear in the photographs Jonathan takes for a living. The strangeness and the suggested links between the living and the dead are very well done, as are the various characters: everyone in the book is a unique, quirky, believable individual. But after Jonathan pursues the enigmatic Sara to the village of Childgrave in upstate New York, once the mystery begins to be revealed, the story falls dangerously into the cliches of the horror story. It's giving away no more than the back jacket to reveal that the mystery of Childgrave involves a regular, ritual sacrifice. Even though Hamilton is good at depicting the results and emotions of obsession and stubborn belief, she can't make the basis of life in Childgrave convincing. In fact, it's ludicrous. We're supposed to accept that for more than three centuries the inhabitants of one tiny village have been murdering their own—killing off one a year, and still surviving. Even accepting that their belief is strong enough and that the spiritual rewards are great enough to keep them all there, breeding like rabbits, I can't believe it would work out mathematically. The author's attempts to justify the village's continued, secret existence by outside financial aid only shows up the basic improbability of it all.

Yet despite this major flaw, despite the failure to convince, *Childgrave* is worth reading for the hints of what it might have been. There are rewards, and even if it doesn't scare you, there are plenty of *frissons* before the final disappointment.

The Best Science Fiction of Arthur Conan Doyle
edited by Charles G. Waugh and Martin H. Greenberg *(Southern Illinois University Press, 1981, 190 pp, $14.95)*

reviewed by Brian Stableford

The compilers of this collection inevitably found themselves faced with a couple of awkward problems. Arthur Conan Doyle did not write enough science fiction short stories to fill a book, and virtually all the ones he did write are not only familiar but easily available elsewhere. It seems to me that the logical thing to do, in respect of the first problem, would be to include one or two longer pieces. *The Doings of Raffles Haw* is by no means a great novel, but it has the virtues of being fairly short and providing an interesting variation on a common theme. *The Parasite* is even shorter—a mere novelette—and though it is likely to strike the modern reader as being more pseudo-scientific than scientific it has better claims to be considered science fiction than most of the material which Waugh and Greenberg have used to pad out this volume. In fact, six of the fourteen stories here included have virtually no sciencefictional interest at all, and only one of them (an item of juvenilia entitled "The American Tale", a conventional anecdote about a man-eating plant) even has the virtue of being unfamiliar. The other draftees include two Sherlock Holmes stories, "The Adventure of the Devil's Foot" and "The Adventure of the Creeping Man", a story of reincarnation-revealed-by-momentary-vision ("Through the Veil"), a story about the Roman conquest of Carthage ("The Last Galley") and a story about a madman who sabotages a lift ("The Lift"). The three last-named titles can all be found in the standard John Murray collection of *The Conan Doyle Stories,* as can several of the *bona-fide* sf stories: "The Los Amigos Fiasco", "The Great Keinplatz Experiment", "The Terror of Blue John Gap", "The Great Brown-Pericord

Motor" and "The Horror of the Heights". The remaining three stories are the two Professor Challenger shorts, "The Disintegration Machine" and "When the World Screamed", and "Danger!" Only "Danger!" would be difficult for a contemporary reader to find, but it is a story which is interesting only within its very specific historical context. Needless to say, it appears here without editorial comment and without any attempt to say anything about the significance of the story or the reactions which it provoked when published in *The Strand.*

There might still be some point in bringing together easily-available stories if something significant could be said about them as a group, and if the stories could be supported by a reasonable amount of background information which sets them in context. The editors of this book, however, have provided no information about the provenance of the stories save for their dates of first publication. George E. Slusser contributes an introduction remarkably short on data but long on florid mock-academic analysis. Unsurprisingly, Doyle's "science fictional vision" turns out to be "restrictive in its depiction of the dilemma of modern technological man", though it has a "dynamic" which is represented "on a more basic morphological level" by the film *Alien.* Or, to put it another way, most of these items are hack-written horror stories in which Doyle invested relatively little effort and attention. This is, in a way, not inappropriate given the nature of the exercise which this book represents, for it is itself merely a potboiler from the world of academe, churned out by the ubiquitous Martin H. Greenberg and one of his many collaborators to occupy one more line on the list of publications. Perhaps the editors should not be blamed—after all, the American academic system is designed so as to encourage such activity and one can hardly blame career professionals for playing the system—but one might be more prone to condone their cynicism if they had ever shown that they *could* produce books which had some thought invested in them and some kind of respectable *raison d'être.* At present, one is forced to harbour the appalling suspicion that perhaps this really is their actual intellectual level.

Science Fiction (Erträge der Forschung series, No. 139)
by Reimer Jehmlich *(Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1980, X+170 pp, no price given)*

Science Fiction
by Ulrich Suerbaum, Ulrich Broich and Raimund Borgmeier *(Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1981, 215 pp, DM 26.80)*

reviewed by Tom Shippey

Reimer Jehmlich's, the shorter of these two works of German sf criticism, is in most respects an irritating and unhelpful book. Its author seems not to have recovered from exposure to the library of the SF Foundation (to the staff of which he expresses his thanks at the start). There is too much to read, he complains; it is getting harder and harder even to keep up with the secondary literature of a subject; science fiction criticism is listed under "science" in *Dissertation Abstracts,* so you have to wade through enormous lists to make sure you haven't missed anything. These are the laments of a professional scholar, and the book shows the defects of professionalism: it wants to reduce things to proper form, to

"put sf in its place in the existing category-system of literary science" (my translation).

But what if it won't go? What if the existing category-system needs to be stretched? A writer who refers to "amateur critics", betrayingly, as "laymen" is unlikely to be bothered by such queries, because if amateurs are laymen, then professionals are presumably clerics in the service of a faith, and faiths are not open to doubt. It is easier to deplore fannish questioning as "wild" or "unsystematic", and to get on with the business of taking the field over. But Mr Jehmlich has trouble even with fellow-professionals. He plays with some definitions of sf as if to show how bad some criticism can be—sf is what's sold as sf, sf is that stuff about interplanetary rockets, and so on—but then turns sternly on the much more exacting definition of Darko Suvin (that sf depends on the presence and interaction of cognition and estrangement) and says it aims too high. "Cognitive estrangement" is only present in *good* sf, he declares; *bad* sf couldn't possibly contain anything as intellectually respectable as that!

This must be a misapprehension. I'm sure Professor Suvin meant exactly what he said when he declared that "cognitive estrangement" was a "necessary and sufficient condition" of the genre; and what that means is that even the most awful sf potboiler ever written must contain some flash of it. Professor Suvin could be wrong, of course, but to confuse a definition with an evaluation is an elementary error. Mr Jehmlich is aiming too obviously at those members of his own profession who are sure already that they know what "exact knowledge" is, and who are concerned above all to raise themselves above *Trivialliteratur*. It is revealing that the whole 170 pages (60 of them notes, bibliography and index) contain almost no detailed study of any fictional work at all. One may add that even to professionals this may seem something of a denial of professional standards: I recall *en passant* that one of the items from *Dissertation Abstracts* to which Mr Jehmlich refers so approvingly was passed by its examiners only after delay and without enthusiasm, and with more than a touch of the feeling that in this area one couldn't hope for much better. The takeover of sf by literary critics has been presented as release from the "ghetto". It's possible, though, that it only marks admission to a new ghetto—of the peripheral, the third-rate, the cow college. Nothing is more likely to bring this about than too great a concern for what is guessed to be "respectable".

One can be much more positive about the collaborative work by Messrs Suerbaum, Broich and Borgmeier. It too shows some slightly irritating characteristics, notably the German critical habit of working by numbers, so that chapter 3, for instance, is themes, 3.5 is the theme of "Homo futurus", 3.5.1 is supermen, 3.5.2 is degenerates, 3.5.3 is aliens, and so on. Clarity is bought at the expense of creating a doubtful illusion of objectivity. Still, at least you have something clear to disagree with. The book begins with quotations, and held my interest from the moment on page 17 when it began to analyse the opening page of *The Space Merchants*. What a banal start, comments Mr Suerbaum. A man shaving—you'd never get away with that in a mainstream novel! So why is it good? Because, he suggests, of its very strong riddling effect, by virtue of which you know a lot about what's going on (it's an everyday human situation) but you can't imagine it's exactly why it is (Consies and loyalty raids, rich men with salt-water taps).

From this promising beginning the authors go on to develop an argument, for the most part in chapters 1, 5 and 6, on "Theory", "Form" and "World-picture" respectively, which explains among other things that good sf riddling depends less on single novelties than on integration and consistency, that the rules of the game demand a strong overlap

with "mainstream" literature and common experience, that these rules perhaps also explain why "flat" characters are more common in the genre than "round" ones. Mr Borgmeier at this point suggests that the "flatness" is perhaps a tendency rather than a condition; sf could produce "rounded" characters and maybe already has. I would myself be tempted to come back and repeat Dickens's remarks (when people made the same sort of complaint about *his* books) to the effect that he had observed people pretty closely, and that in his opinion a large majority of them were in literary terms "flat", if not two-dimensional! However the substantive points are that the authors of this book have a very wide experience of sf, which has not daunted them at all; and that they are prepared to judge it as good critics would judge any unfamiliar genre (such as medieval romance), i.e. by trying to discover first what are its aims and intrinsic features, not by measuring it against some imaginary ideal standard.

Their sections on sf as *Robinsonade* (or Crusoe-story) and as much-altered "Utopia" are particularly good; so is the account of sf as fascism; while the most striking easily-quotable thought is the remark by Mr Borgmeier on page 115 that maybe sf is not, *pace* Professor Suvin, defined by "estrangement of the known" but by "familiarization of the alien"—a thought supported, as usual, by several clear and specific examples. The objective stance of these three critics, leads, I feel, to only one handicap, which is that they do not allow themselves to dismiss the vapid statements of sf authors as just so many publicity handouts. Yes, Theodore Sturgeon said a science fiction story was "a story built around human beings, with a human problem and a human solution"; "Human" is for some reason a hurrah-word in the United States. Yes, H.L. Gold said that *Galaxy* stood for "democracy, human decency and dignity, peace, progress, scientific advance, better standards of living, education, international and intergroup relations, and individual awareness"; he could hardly have said he was against motherhood and all for the man-eating shark. Nevertheless there were stories in *Galaxy* (Pohl's *A Plague of Pythons* for one) which challenged strongly many preconceptions about humanity and decency too. That may have been part of what people read them for.

Still, all this carping amounts to is the thought that the authors could have tuned their strings a little sharper. This would be a useful book to translate.

Vaneglory
by George Turner *(Faber, 1981, £6.95)*

reviewed by Sue Jenkins

George Turner's second science fiction novel functions always at a level slightly below where it should be. The governing *idea* is clever enough; the immortal "Children", blessed and cursed by their inexplicable genetic peculiarity, at odds with the rest of humanity, provide a promising starting-point. But basically, Turner never lives up to the promise or exploits the possibilities fully enough. There are one or two compelling and stirring scenes, such as the description of Glasgow—of a whole culture—waiting for inevitable death under the radioactive dust.

What Turner fails to explore or realize in depth is character, and beyond that, relationships. There is the liaison between Donald and the immortal Jeannie; there is Angus with his sense of responsibility towards Donald and Will; but these relationships

are described rather than experienced, because Turner has not endowed his individuals with enough reality to allow us to enter into their feelings or even to care very much what happens to them. Coupled with a certain heaviness of style, this lack of psychological interest renders dull what should have been an exciting work. It is open to all the attacks that science fiction *is* open to—of being mere genre work, not "real" literature at all. And this is a great pity, because it comes close to being a very good novel indeed.

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